



## Forest Schools Curriculum Statement

### **INTENT**

At Milton Mount, we are NATURE-BASED LEARNERS! We believe that outdoor learning is an essential part of a child's development, offering opportunities to build confidence, independence and resilience, to navigate risks, to improve self-esteem and to develop a deep connection with the natural world. Our Forest Schools program immerses children in the natural environment, where they are not only encouraged to explore and play but also to take on physical challenges, solve problems, and work collaboratively.

At Milton Mount, we recognise that the outdoor environment offers rich opportunities to extend and deepen learning across the curriculum. Beyond the physical and emotional benefits, our Forest Schools approach actively links to subjects such as Science, History, Geography, Design and Technology and Art. By integrating these subjects into our Forest Schools curriculum, we ensure that children gain a holistic and meaningful educational experience that connects classroom-based learning to real-world applications.

Our curriculum starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage focusing on the Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Understanding the World, Physical Development and Expressive Arts and Design areas of learning and continues through to Year 6, including relevant elements of the National curriculum content guidance.

#### **Do More**

Children will engage in hands-on, active learning through a wide variety of outdoor activities. They will develop practical skills such as building shelters, navigating the natural environment, and creating art using natural materials. They will also practice physical skills like climbing, balancing, fire lighting and tool use, which promote resilience and confidence.

#### **Know More**

Children will deepen their understanding of nature and ecosystems, learning about plant and animal life cycles, biodiversity, and the environmental challenges we face. They will develop knowledge of outdoor safety, sustainable practices, and the importance of conservation. Through their outdoor explorations, they will also learn about weather patterns, seasonal changes, and the interdependence of living organisms.

#### **Remember More**

The outdoor environment will encourage children to retain key concepts through experiential learning. By repeatedly engaging in activities such as tree identification, fire lighting, tool use or map reading, children will cement their understanding of these topics. By linking physical experiences to academic knowledge, children will form lasting memories that help them recall key scientific, geographical, and environmental principles.

#### **Experience More**

Through regular immersion in natural spaces, children will grow more attuned to the world around them.

They will develop sensory awareness, learn to manage risk, and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of spending time in nature. By participating in a variety of problem-solving scenarios, from den building to navigating outdoor challenges, children will experience increased self-esteem, creativity, and a sense of adventure.

### **Consider More**

The Forest Schools approach encourages children to think critically about their role within the natural world. They will reflect on the impacts of human activity on the environment, consider sustainability practices, and make connections between their personal actions and global issues. Children will be encouraged to develop empathy for living organisms, understand the balance of ecosystems, and think about how they can contribute to a sustainable future.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

At Milton Mount School, we are committed to delivering a high-quality, immersive Forest Schools curriculum across Key Stages 1 and 2, and as an introduction for our EYFS children. Below is a strategy for how we implement our Forest Schools curriculum, ensuring that it meets the developmental needs of our children, builds on prior learning, and integrates with the wider curriculum.

All of our EYFS children go out in the summer term, where they are introduced to our woodland. Adults observe what is interesting to them and provide support or equipment to help them extend their learning.

Every class in Key Stages 1 and 2 has Forest School sessions for at least 12 mornings or afternoons each year. Our aim in Key Stage 1 is to build foundational knowledge of the natural world, develop basic outdoor skills, and encourage independent exploration. Children are free to explore their own ideas in the woodland during each session but there will also be a focused task to take part in. This task will usually be based around extending knowledge of the natural world such as local flora and fauna, the changing seasons and weather. The children will also be introduced to basic tools and how to use them as well as how to build and light a fire.

In Key Stage 2, our purpose is to extend children's learning through more complex, cross-curricular outdoor tasks enhancing their knowledge from classroom-based learning and to build proficiency in outdoor skills and environmental knowledge. Our children will usually have a focused task at the beginning of each session followed by a Forest Schools session afterwards. For example, in History, we learn about Roman catapults and Egyptian shadufs and then build our own versions. Our Science curriculum is enhanced by first-hand experiences such as using keys to identify local flora and fauna in field, woodland and pond ecosystems or discovering how levers work using see-saws. Geography skills are practised through activities such as reading grid references and drawing sketch maps. All children also have two sessions a year where they prepare food and cook it on an open fire.

We have a clear progression of Forest School skills so the children become proficient in the use of a wider range of tools and start to create more complex objects. They will also learn new skills such as willow weaving.

This implementation strategy ensures that the Forest Schools curriculum at Milton Mount is progressive, engaging, and connected to both the children's immediate environment and the wider world around them. By weaving together cross-curricular learning and outdoor skills development, we create a rich, integrated experience that nurtures the child as a whole.

## IMPACT

By the time children leave Milton Mount School, we aim for them to have developed a broad range of skills, knowledge, and attributes that will positively impact their future learning, personal growth, and relationship with the world around them.

Through their Forest Schools experiences, children will have:

- **Increased Confidence:** The freedom, time, and space provided in outdoor learning fosters a sense of independence and self-assurance. By taking on challenges in a supportive and open environment, children grow in confidence, gaining the courage to try new things and believe in their abilities.
- **Stronger Social Skills:** Working together in the natural world strengthens bonds between peers. Collaborative activities such as shelter building, problem-solving tasks, and outdoor games promote teamwork, communication, and social interaction, resulting in children who are more comfortable working with others and building lasting friendships.
- **Enhanced Language Development:** The sensory-rich environment of Forest Schools, with its opportunities for outdoor exploration and imaginative play, provides children with new ways to engage with language. Whether identifying plants and animals, telling stories, or discussing their observations, children's vocabulary and communication skills naturally expand.
- **Improved Imagination and Creativity:** Forest Schools encourages children to engage in imaginative play and creative activities, from crafting art with natural materials to inventing stories or designing woodland structures. This unstructured time promotes creativity, helping children develop a stronger sense of their own ideas and imaginative capabilities.
- **Deeper Connection with the Outdoors:** A key outcome of Forest Schools is the instilling of a lasting respect for the environment. By spending regular time outdoors, children develop a curiosity and care for the natural world, which fosters a sense of responsibility to protect and conserve it for future generations. This love of nature also extends to their families, as children often share their experiences, inspiring others to connect with local woodlands and green spaces.
- **Greater Empathy:** Engaging with nature and other living beings—whether plants, animals, or people—develops children's empathy and understanding. Through their experiences, children learn to consider the needs of others, becoming more compassionate and aware of the world around them.
- **Improved Focus and Concentration:** The outdoor, less-pressured learning environment encourages children to focus deeply on tasks and develop concentration. Forest Schools offers a change of pace from the traditional classroom, helping children to engage with their learning in a relaxed and meaningful way, often leading to better focus when they return to more structured academic tasks.
- **Personalised Learning:** The outdoor setting provides an opportunity for children, particularly those who struggle in a classroom setting, to learn at their own pace and in their own style. Forest Schools allows children to play to their strengths, build confidence in areas where they may struggle academically, and remove the pressures that often come with traditional learning environments.
- **Positive Physical Health:** Regular outdoor activity is key to the development of gross and fine motor skills. Climbing, balancing, digging, and handling tools all promote physical health, while also developing coordination, strength, and agility. The physical nature of Forest Schools also

encourages healthy habits that last into adulthood.

- **Mental Wellbeing and Resilience:** Time spent in nature has been proven to reduce stress and promote mental wellbeing. Forest Schools provide children with the tools to relax, manage stress, and disconnect from everyday worries. The ability to be outside and focus on their environment fosters a sense of calm and balance, helping children become more resilient to challenges.
- **Holistic Understanding of Subjects:** The hands-on, experiential approach to learning in Forest Schools enhances children's understanding of other subjects, such as Science, History, Geography, and Art. By exploring topics like local ecosystems, how people lived in the past, and geographical features in the outdoor classroom, children gain a deeper, more meaningful connection to the curriculum.

Through these experiences, Forest Schools at Milton Mount aims to develop well-rounded, confident, and empathetic individuals who are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and values to thrive in an ever-changing world. These outdoor learning experiences will not only enrich their education but also shape their perspectives, passions, and understanding of the world they are part of.