

Bell Day Nursery Forest School

How our Forest School incorporates and provides activities for all seven areas of learning and development of the EYFS Curriculum



Noakes Grove

Produced by Dave Law



Our Forest School is run at a beautiful reserve teeming with wildlife. Birds, Animals, Insects, Butterflies, Bees, Dragonflies and Damselflies and Wildflowers.

Activities include Rope Walk, Lava Bridge walk, Nature Walks, Den Building, Pond Dipping, Bug Hunting, Birdwatching, Identifying Birds and Birdsong, Animals, Plants and Trees.

Using Hand tools to whittle and Palm Drill, Using a Bow Saw to cut logs for our Log Pile, Leaf and Stick Art and Toasting Marshmallows around the Log Circle Fire.

In the a "Discovery Barn" we have a microscope to look at insects and other natural objects in great detail.

Playing and learning outside improves children's physical and emotional wellbeing and the Forest School experience has proven to be hugely beneficial for children's emotional and developmental needs. Children are curious so we know from experience how much they love using natural materials found in the woodland and enjoy gathering sticks and leaves, making dens, climbing trees, using twigs to write and draw in mud, counting bugs and splashing in puddles. But while we know they are having fun in the great outdoors, Forest School can also help children develop:

- self-awareness
- motivation
- empathy
- social skills
- communication skills
- independence
- self-esteem and confidence
- physical skills including the development of both gross and fine motor skills
- problem solving and risk taking skills
- resilience
- concentration
- knowledge and an understanding of the world around them.

As such, our Forest School fully supports the EYFS curriculum, and children leave their early years education with a keenness for education a motivation to learn and a respect and love for wildlife and the natural world.

In every session we incorporate all seven areas of learning and development;

PRIME areas

Communication and Language

Physical Development;

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

SPECIFIC areas

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design.

Bell Day Forest School Leader is Dave Law a fully trained Level 3 Forest School Leader who has a 16 Hour Forest School First Aid and an ITC Level 3 Award in Paediatric First Aid. The Forest School Generic Risk Assessment is reviewed annually and agreed by the Management Team.

As well as the Generic Risk Assessment an Activity Risk/Benefit Assessment is made for every Session and before each Session, a Daily Safety Site Check is made. We also have a Forest School Handbook that has been written by our Forest School Leader and all EYE's who help at Forest School have read and signed the document.

How do we incorporate all seven areas of learning and development in the activities we provide. Every session one adult led curriculum activity is provided to meet EYFS. The children take part until they are no longer fully engaged and then go and explore the woodland and have fun being creative and imaginative in their own child led activities.

PRIME areas

Communication and Language

Activities:

- Den Building
- Log Pile Project
- Go Find It Game
- Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt
- Under the Microscope
- Log Circle Talk Time

Being in a natural environment there are so many ways and opportunities of communicating, by working together in teams to search for sticks and logs to carry together to build Dens, our Log Pile and cards games where the children work and communicate with each other to solve problems.

Den Building and Log Pile Project

By working in teams to search for sticks and logs to carry together to build Dens and our Log Pile the children communicate in their actions and words and learn that it is easier to carry bigger logs in pairs than trying to carry them alone. A problem shared is a problem halved.

Go Find It Game

Where each team pick five cards find natural objects in categories of size, shape, texture and colour. The teams then come back to the log circle and talk about what they have found.

Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt

Where each team picks five cards to find natural Objects that reflect their emotions, feelings and senses, things that make them smile, feel happy, something beautiful, itchy, heavy, noisy, special , something they enjoy looking at and many more. Once again the teams then come back to the log circle and talk about what they have found.

Under the Microscope

The children love to see bugs and other natural objects and they gather round to look at them magnified showing all the details. It is an opportunity to explain what they are looking at and for them to ask questions which they always do.

Log Circle Talk Time

At the end of each session we return to the Log Circle where we discuss what we have done and the children have an opportunity to say what they liked best and what they enjoyed doing.

This gives us feedback so we can reflect and tailor future sessions to meet the needs and interests of each group.

Den Building



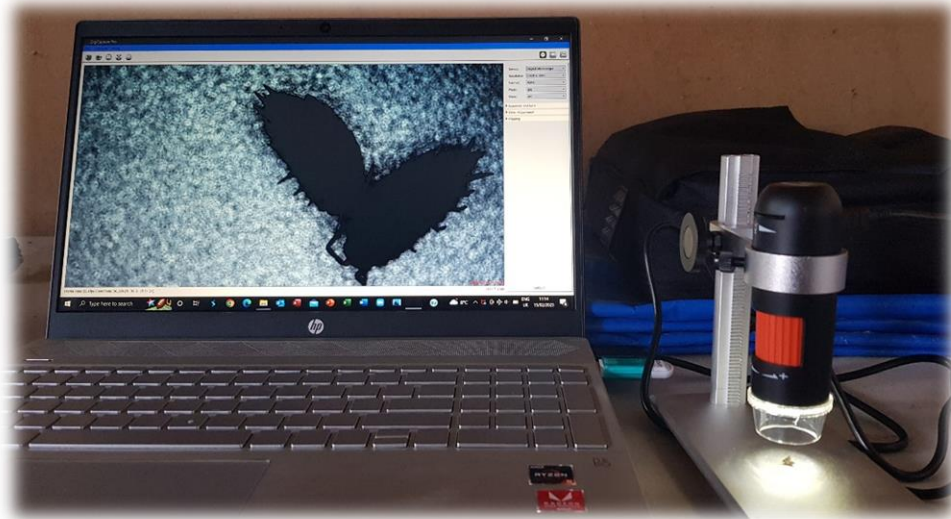
Log Pile Project



Go Find it Game and Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt



Under the Microscope



Log Circle



Physical Development

Activities:

Rope Walk

Lava Walk (Balancing Log)

Using hand Tools:

Potato peelers for Whittling, Palm Drill for making holes, Hammers for creating Leaf Art and Bow Saw for cutting logs for the Log Pile.

Nature Walk

Rope Walk

The children love to traverse along the Rope Walk and have a great sense of achievement when they reach the end and “touch the tree.”

Using the Rope Walk is perfect for Gross Motor Skills as it builds strength in all areas of their body, arms, legs and torso. It also helps balance.



Lava Walk/Balancing Log

This is another activity the children enjoy doing, like the Rope Walk this activity encourages balance and Gross Motor Skills in their legs as they walk along the log aided by an adult. Again when they reach the end they have a great sense of achievement.



Using Hand Tools

Using hand tools for whittling, palm Drilling is perfect for Fine Motor Skills encouraging dexterity in hands and fingers. Using the Bow Saw and Hammer is great for Gross Motor Skills to give strength to arms and eye hand coordination.



Nature Walk

Every session we include a Nature Walk. This gives the children exercise and improves health and fitness to their bodies and gives a sense of Adventure.





Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The regular and significant periods of time spent outdoors at forest school combined with participating in physical activities will support development of both physical and mental health. Higher levels of physical and mental health will equip children to handle negative events and failure in a more positive way.

Setting children challenging but realistically achievable activities will promote a feeling of satisfaction and achievement that will drive the child to challenge themselves more.

The promotion of social skills through group games and activities will enable children to better communicate with others and develop positive friendships and relationships.

Forest school sessions can also support the development of self-esteem by giving children ownership and control of sessions. Opportunities for challenge should be provided and children should be encouraged to challenge themselves but should be free to choose which activities they take part in and in what way. Forcing children to take part in activities they are not mentally or developmentally ready for will likely reduce the chance of them attempting them in the future.

Self-awareness

Forest school can promote development of self-awareness by providing opportunities for children to challenge themselves and take risks. This may be physical activities such as tree climbing that support awareness of physical self or reflective activities that encourage children to analyse their successes and failures.

Self-regulation

Forest school can promote self-regulation in the same way as self-awareness, by providing activities that challenge the child. It is only through experiencing situations that challenge their emotions will children learn to manage them. For this to be effective it is important that children should feel they are in a physically and emotionally safe environment.

Social skills

Forest school can promote social skills by giving children opportunities to work in different sized groups and with a variety of ages both younger and older. Playing games that involve verbal and non-verbal communication support development of social skills. When there are conflicts between children during sessions it is important not to jump in straight away but to allow them the opportunity to resolve problems and agree compromises between themselves. Conflict resolution is an important social skill.

Empathy

Forest school can support development of empathy through developing an environment where all members of the group are equal and encouraging children to talk to each other about how they feel. Staff can model empathy through reflective activities at the end sessions that focus on how members of the group felt and what they enjoyed and found challenging during the session.

Motivation

Forest school sessions that are child led promote motivation as they allow children to explore their own interests and learn in a way that suits their learning style. Keeping sessions as flexible as possible and encouraging children to take ownership of and lead activities will support development of motivation.

SPECIFIC areas

Literacy

Activities:

- Bear Hunt
- Searching for a Stickman
- Teddy Bears Picnic
- Sensory Games
- Log Circle Stories

Bear Hunt

One of the Children's favourite activities is Going on a Bear Hunt where we hide the bear and the children explore the woodland to find it.



Searching for a Stickman

The children use their observation skills and imagination to find twigs and sticks that look like Stickman.

Teddy Bears Picnic

The children bring in a Teddy Bear or Cuddly toy and we all have a picnic snack together.

Sensory Games

By using descriptive vocabulary to describe woodland objects and plants, though sensory games we encourage the children to use their imagination to make up their own stories.

Log Circle Stories

At the Log Circle we have made up short stories that relate to Nature and Wildlife of our Woodland like the Mouse without a House that links with our log pile project and The Forgetful Squirrel about a Squirrel who buried an acorn over 250 years ago and forgot where it was buried and now it has grown into the huge Oak Tree near our Log Circle.

Mathematics

There are so many ways of incorporating Mathematics in Forest School. Using natural objects to see and understand size, shape, weight, length, height volume numeracy and spatial awareness.

Activities:

Go Find It Game

This is an excellent game as it asks the children to find objects according to size, shape, weight, length

Size

The children can have fun learning about different sizes by comparing natural objects like, leaves, twigs, branches, stones, flowers and insects butterflies, bees, dragonflies, damselflies, birds and animals. Children can begin to understand that some objects are bigger, smaller, longer or shorter than others.

A great game is to have a few natural objects and ask the children to go and find an object larger or smaller, heavier or longer.

Shape

The Forest is full of different objects that are different shapes, leaves, flowers, insects, stones, mushrooms etc. A great game is to have three teams and each team has to find objects that are a certain shape and bring them back to the log circle and talk about them.

Weight

When we build a Den some of the branches are too heavy for one child so they have to work together in twos, other branches are light so can be carried by one.

The children love picking up "treasures" that they find on the Forest floor, for example, stones, feathers, acorns, leaves, sticks. The children bring back their "treasures" and discover which objects are heavier or lighter.

Length

A fun game is to find lots of different leaves, sticks, twigs, feathers etc and arrange them from longest to shortest or shortest to longest.

Some sessions we go on long Nature Walks and some sessions shorter.

Height

A great way of getting children to learn about height, taller or shorter, higher or lower, is to compare the different height of trees, bushes and flowers in our Forest as we go on our Nature Walks.

Volume

Children love to fill different sized containers with objects, what better place than a Forest to fill with natural objects like stones, leaves, feathers and twigs to see which container holds the most and why.

For our Pond Dipping activity we use containers of various sizes to contain different volumes of water depending on the size of the specimens/species we find either to look at under the microscope or to look at in jars.

Numeracy

There are so many ways to provide fun activities to incorporate numeracy.
Finding natural objects and arranging them in columns from 1 to 10.
Counting petals on flowers as we go on our Nature Walk, comparing how many petals are on the different species we find.
Counting legs on insects and spiders, counting the spots on a ladybird.
How many sheep are in the meadow, how many lambs have been born.

Spatial Awareness

Our Forest School location is a great place for Spatial Awareness, with a small wooded area where everything seems close and closed in, our Meadow where sheep graze in wide open space to our Thorn Scrub pathways.
Our Forest is an ideal location for hide and seek, to build Dens and take them apart, to make large ones so all children can get inside or smaller ones to hide in.
As we mentioned before children love to fill containers and empty them and enjoy stacking and rearranging objects like stones and twigs.

Understanding the World

Being out in nature and enjoying wildlife, feeling a warm summer breeze as you walk through the forest, the hedgerows, the thorn scrub that are teeming with butterflies, bees, dragonflies and insects in spring summer and autumn.
To be thrilled when you see a Muntjac, Fallow or Roe Deer or see a Rabbit or a Fox going about their business. Seeing lambs recently born jumping about in the Meadow. To see and hear the birds around us.
Pond dipping to see the wonderful world of nature in and above the pond.
To smell the fragrance of wild flowers and enjoy all the beautiful colours of nature.
To watch as Willow Emerald Damselflies, Ruddy Darters and Common Blue Damselflies fly past in all their dazzling metallic colours.
Seeing the children wide eyed and open mouthed in wonder and amazement as they see something new is a privilege and never ever ceases to touch my heart.
Forest school runs through all the seasons Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter so children can experience how the Forest changes throughout the year.
Different months bring changes to the landscape, flora and fauna.
We can experience the different weather patterns month by month.

Activities:

Nature Walks

We have a nature walk every session, during the walk we look at one or two different species each session and identify them. We look at trees, bushes, flowers, fungus, mushrooms, insects, butterflies, bees, damselflies, dragonflies, birds and animals. We learn how things grow from seeds to plants, and from eggs to birds etc.

Bug Hunting

Children love looking at bugs, insects, worms and slugs and our Forest is teeming with them, under rocks, logs, in the pond in fact everywhere.

Butterfly Watching

There are many species of butterfly in our forest and they are beautiful to watch collecting nectar as they flutter from flower to flower.

Each week we will identify one or two species.

We have a butterfly net that is used by our forest school leader to safely catch a butterfly and a butterfly cage to put it in so the children can see it close up.

It is then carefully released unharmed.



Birdwatching and learning Birdsong

Birds are in abundance in our forest because of the various habitats it contains.

We never know what may turn up as we go on our nature walks.

They are all around us and sometimes as we sit around the log circle a Robin or Great Tit will perch on a nearby tree and sing to us.

Once as we were having a snack at the Log Circle a Fallow Deer walked past us as if we were not there.

We have a Kestrel nesting box in our woodland which at the time of writing (March 2023) has been used the past two years. Hopefully it will be used again this year so we can see the Kestrel Chicks from the telescope.



Pond Dipping

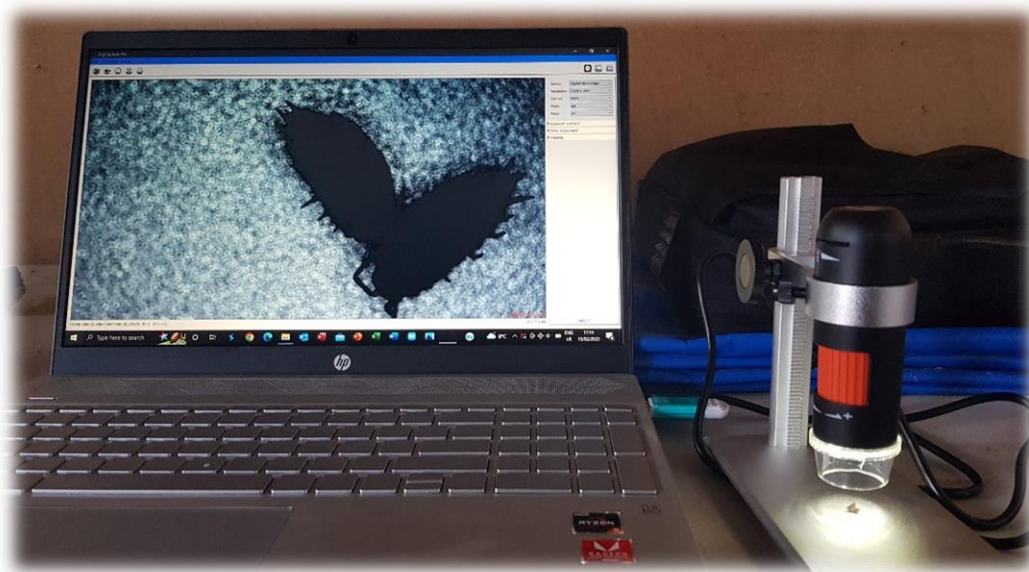
Beneath the surface of the water, there is an unseen world of amazing wildlife ready to be discovered.

Pond dipping is great fun and reveals all sorts of interesting creatures that live in our pond and we never know what may be lurking in it. Maybe a mysterious alien-like dragonfly nymph, or a great diving beetle.



Under The Microscope

We have a microscope that connects to a laptop where we can look at insects and natural objects in more detail and learn about their anatomy and how they move. It is amazing to see the intricacy and fragility of insect's wings and see how a worm moves.



Expressive Arts and Design

In the Forest there is a great array of natural materials for the children to be creative and use their imagination to make beautiful art work.

Activities:

Leaf Art with Hammer and Cotton Cloth

This is a favourite with the children as they place a leaf on a log and under the cloth and gently hit it producing beautiful images of a small tree.



Woodland Creatures

Using a potato peeler to whittle sticks and a palm drill to make holes and using their imagination, the children can make amazing woodland creatures



Woodland Creatures



Leaf Animal Faces

Children have great fun arranging leaves of different colours, shapes and sizes into animal faces.



Forest Pictures

Using sticks, leaves, moss, twigs and stones, children use their imagination and creativity to make beautiful forest scenes.



Our Fire Circle

At our Fire Circle the children are taught about being safe around a fire.

Here they learn what three elements are required for a fire.

Heat (Dragon's Sneeze), Oxygen and Fuel.

It is here that we gather around the fire and toast our Marshmallows, Crumpets and make Hot Chocolate.

