



# Forest Schools Policy

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## Our Mission Statement

At Holy Cross, we are very proud of our school motto and our Catholic ethos; **Loved, Valued, Challenged.**

**Loved:** We love one another as Jesus taught us – our friends, our families and those who we may never meet.

**Valued:** We value everyone – everyone is important; pupils, staff, parents, governors, and members of the community– no matter their race, religion ability or need. We try to live like Jesus taught us.

**Challenged:** We challenge each other – not only with our learning but challenge each other to be more merciful to others, have a little more understanding of others’ needs and challenge each other to be better people.

## Our Vision

At Holy Cross, we aim to develop a caring Catholic community based upon the life and example of Jesus Christ, which envelopes the life and lives of everyone and everything in our school. It is through Christ’s message of love and forgiveness that the children, staff, both teachers and ancillary, parents and governors, preserve the essential Catholic ethos of the school.

The school aims to provide a challenging curriculum that reflects our philosophy, broadly balanced and relevant, and to support the development of the whole child to his/her full potential. At Holy Cross, everybody matters, therefore we encourage all to show respect to each other and the environment.

## Inclusion Statement

The Governors are committed to `inclusion` in education: this involves minimizing barriers to learning and participation.

We believe that each child is unique and has unique needs *‘belief in the individual leads Catholic schools to have the duty to care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged’* Catholic Bishops’ Conference May 2014.

## Equal Opportunity Statement

The Governors and Staff at Holy Cross believe that all people are entitled to equal opportunities, respect and consideration regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, disability or personal circumstances. Therefore, we are opposed to any form of prejudice or discrimination which denies people this equality. This principle applies to both adults and children in our school.

## Introduction

Forest School is a holistic sensory approach to learning. It is fully inclusive, aids with neurological development, gets children ignited, inspired, and motivated, promotes positive relationships between

everyone involved, encourages problem solving and creativity through observing and engaging with the environment all year round.

The outdoor environment is a place to develop language and communication skills while learning behaviours of resilience, independence, teamwork, curiosity, and responsibility.

As a Catholic school, we celebrate the wonders of creation. We are called to be stewards of the Earth. Pope Francis in his encyclical letter 'Laudato Si' observes that, "the world cannot be analysed by isolating only one of its aspects, since the book of nature is one and indivisible, and includes the environment, life, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that the deterioration of nature is closely connected to our culture which shapes human coexistence."

Forest Schools fosters the need to care for our earth as well as each other. We look to St Francis who wrote the Canticle of the Sun as we recognise that God created the Earth, and we are stewards of this common home.

## Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School. We aim to build on pupil's motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risk, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. Within this policy, the term 'Forest School Leader' refers to a member of staff who holds a fully recognised Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification.

### The aims of Forest School are:

- Develop self-esteem
- Develop self-confidence
- Form positive relationships with others
- Develop emotional literacy
- Learn to co-operate
- Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety
- Learn specific skills
- Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and our common home
- To enjoy Forest School sessions

Forest Schools at Holy Cross is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will worn.

## Environmental Consideration and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both children and adults are encouraged to be aware of conservation issues of the site. Where appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our site. We will also work with the Friends of Moor Pond Woods to further extend the children's experiences.

## Resources

Resources are kept mainly in the resources room, in boxes which are clearly labelled. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to keep these stocked and source new items to add to them. Tools which will be used with the children are kept in this room which is kept locked at all times. The Forest School Leader will keep these maintained. A tool talk is given to all participants before they are used. Children will only use tools under close adult supervision and an inventory is checked at the end of each session.

## Health and Safety

The health and safety of the adults and children are paramount. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders. Whilst the children are being independent in their learning, they will also develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their own actions have consequences. Risk assessments will be carried out at the beginning of each half term with the site manager, which will consider any seasonal changes.

Risk assessments will be undertaken before each session to assess the area for dangers. Heavy rain, cold temperatures and strong winds may risk the child's safety and in these conditions Forest School will not go ahead. Children need to be wearing appropriate clothing.