FOREST SCHOOL

INTENT

At Claytons, Forest School is a purposeful, skills-rich provision that places children at the centre of learning through regular, meaningful experiences in the natural environment. Led by a Level 3 Forest School Leader, it supports the development of the whole child by strengthening well-being, independence and positive learning behaviours. Forest School empowers children to take ownership of their learning, develop resilience and confidence, and build a lasting respect for the natural world, equipping them with the skills and attitudes needed to thrive in school and beyond.

Through Forest School, we intend to:

- Enable children to become resilient, confident and independent learners
- Provide opportunities to develop essential life skills through practical experiences
- Nurture personal, social and emotional development within a safe, inclusive environment
- Engage learners by following curiosity, interests and child-led exploration
- Promote collaboration, teamwork and problem-solving
- Build confidence in decision-making and safe risk management
- Foster respect for the natural world and an understanding of sustainability
- Provide rich opportunities to develop oracy, vocabulary and communication
- Encourage creativity and imagination through open-ended exploration
- Support positive behaviour and emotional regulation
- Enable children to reflect on learning, manage setbacks and persevere
- Develop physical competence, coordination and stamina
- Instil positive attitudes towards active, healthy lifestyles

IMPLEMENTATION

Children participating in Forest School attend a weekly afternoon session, where learning is rooted in first-hand experiences of the natural environment. Knowledge and skills are mapped across year groups through a Forest School **Progression of Skills and Knowledge map**, with progression based on assessed readiness rather than age. This ensures next steps are introduced when children demonstrate the appropriate physical, emotional and cognitive maturity.

Learning is experience-led and practical. Discrete **Forest School skills** are explicitly taught and revisited, including safe tool use, shelter building, knot tying, fire safety and outdoor cooking. Through these activities, children learn to manage risk responsibly and use natural resources with care and respect. Clear **safety rules**, emergency procedures and hazard awareness are embedded, including consideration of seasonal and weather-related risks. Sessions are adapted or postponed where conditions are unsafe.

Values and emotional development, including resilience, confidence, cooperation and problem-solving, underpin all Forest School sessions. Through repeated hands-on experiences, children deepen their understanding of **sustainability**, learning how to care for the environment, respect wildlife and make responsible choices.

Oracy is a key priority at Claytons and within Forest School. Each session includes planned opportunities for structured and purposeful talk, such as explaining, reasoning, negotiating, storytelling and reflection. Collaborative tasks promote effective communication and active listening, while adults model, scaffold and extend language to support pupils at all stages of development.

IMPACT
Forest School has a clear and measurable impact on pupils' wellbeing, learning behaviours and understanding of sustainability. As a result of Forest School provision: • Pupils demonstrate improved **emotional regulation, well-being and engagement** in learning • Children show increased **confidence, resilience and independence**, particularly when facing challenge • **Collaboration** and **teamwork** are strengthened through shared **problem-solving** and group tasks • **Oracy skills improve**, with pupils confidently explaining, reasoning, negotiating and reflecting • **Physical strength**, stamina, balance and coordination are developed through regular outdoor activity • Pupils engage positively in **managed risk**, showing greater awareness of safety and decision-making • Children demonstrate **respect for the environment**, taking ownership of the Forest School area and caring for wildlife and resources responsibly • Pupils recognise the positive impact of being outdoors on their **mental health and wellbeing** Impact is evidenced through: • Photographs and videos showing skills, progression and engagement • Pupil voice reflecting increased enjoyment, resilience and environmental awareness