



*Come as you are and grow with us*



*Our  
Secret Garden*

## Welcome to Our Secret Garden:

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In our exciting Secret Garden, we learn and flourish, following the interests of our children. We make music and rhythm. We make dens and share with our friends. We find bugs, insects and even slimy snails! We build, construct and show fantastic teamwork. We balance, run and climb over the tyres. We look at nature and see how things grow. In our Secret Garden, we explore our amazing world.

## The Forest School approach to learning:

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At St Michaels Catholic Primary School, we value a holistic approach to education, which is endorsed at our Forest School. Our Forest School is held in a safe setting in the Secret Garden. It is very much child led. It seeks to encourage and motivate, building knowledge outdoors. Forest school provides opportunities and encouragement for the children to learn through play and exploration. The children learn to develop their self awareness, social and communication skills, in a natural environment, where they are given the chance to take risks, which is an essential part of growing up. The long term nature of forest school at St Michael's helps children with their resilience, confidence and well being. It heightens their levels of self efficiency, persistence and problem solving skills and has a positive impact on their physical and mental health.

## How we manage risk at Forest School

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Before our forest school session, Mrs Bonham or Mrs Scott will assess the whole area. This will be checked twice throughout the day to ensure risk is managed effectively. If any major risks are found, they will be dealt with immediately and passed onto the appropriate person. If a major risk is found, the Forest School session will be postponed until the matter has been dealt with. Each session will be fully risk assessed prior to the event. Forest School actively develops children's awareness of risk, as well as their confidence in managing risk. One of the first activities children do at Forest School is to take an adult around the boundary of the site, showing them all the things we need to be careful of. This exercise uses all their senses to think, see, feel, and share their perceptions of risk.

All relevant Risk Assessments are held in the Forest School file.

## How we learn at Forest School

- Self-initiated activities
- Making choices
- Exploring
- Teamwork
- Thinking about risks and keeping ourselves safe
- Problem solving
- Being independent
- Trying out our ideas
- Having fun!



## The Pedagogical approach:

At St Michaels Forest School, we seek to encourage, motivate, engage and inspire children through positive play. Children are given freedom to direct their own learning and enter in to a certain amount of risky play. Our forest school offers a sense of independence, which can have positive affects on the child's physical and emotional development. The focus of forest school is to develop children's self esteem, confidence and practical skills which can be transferred to the classroom and make learning practical, meaningful, fun and enjoyable.

## The Role of Adults at Forest School:

Mrs Scott and Mrs Bonham are the Forest School leaders. Mrs Scott is an experienced teaching assistant and has completed level 3 Forest School practitioner training and holds an up to date Outdoor First Aid certificate and an enhanced DBS check. Mrs Bonham is an experienced Class Teacher who is currently completing her level 3 Forest school training. She holds an up to date Outdoor First Aid certificate and an enhanced DBS.

- The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times.
- The Forest School leader is responsible for organizing, planning and running all Forest School sessions.

- The leader will have a First Aid pack with them at all times.
- The leader is responsible for all equipment and tools and will ensure that it is checked before use and put back in the correct place after.
- The leader will have accident forms at each session. These are used in line with our First aid policy. They will record anything that happened in the session e.g. trip, fall, scratched, stung and report back to the parent with this information.

### What do we wear?

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- Appropriate footwear to be worn at all times, ideally these will be wellington boots or walking boots.
- Children must bring a coat no matter what the weather.
- Long trousers and sleeves will be worn at Forest School, this is to protect from getting scratched or stung from brambles, thorns or nettles and insect bites.
- Appropriate waterproofs will be supplied for children in EYFS and Key Stage 1, which includes a waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers.
- In colder weather, parents are responsible to provide their child with warm clothing, hats and gloves (gloves will not be worn when using tools).

### Equality and Inclusion

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During Forest School everyone is treated the same. We aim to provide a secure and safe environment in which all of the children can flourish and learn. Our Inclusion and Equality and Diversity Policy can be found on the school's website.

### Behaviour

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At Forest School, we follow St Michael's behavior policy on the school's website. We praise and award positive behavior by using the behavior system that is used consistently, both inside and outside the classroom. When a child's behavior threatens the wellbeing of him/herself or others and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, they will be sent back to class.

### Insurance

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St Michaels Catholic Primary School Forest School leader is covered by DFE Insurance which includes a risk protection agreement for academies. Membership number 144971. This document is held in the business manager's office.

## Health and safety

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The Forest School supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It encourages early risk management strategies that will ensure that the children start to consider the impact of their actions towards others and themselves. A site risk assessment has been carried out and is visible in the Forest school file, held by Mrs Scott and Mrs Bonham. A first aid and burns kit is in the outdoor learning classroom and stays in there within each session. The forest school leader is Pediatric and Outdoor first aid trained. If an accident occurs within forest school requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is held in the office, and a parent or carer will be contacted. During a forest school Lesson, the Forest School leader will carry a walkie talkie at all times to communicate with the class teacher in case of an accident, emergency or toilet issue.

## Safeguarding

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Forest School Sessions are led by trained Forest School leaders, Mrs Scott or Mrs Bonham, anyone who is involved alongside will be made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure they adhere to the guidance contained in them. Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well being will be forwarded onto our safeguarding team and CPOMS will be used to record this, following the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, on the website.

- In warmer weather, school will provide sun hats and water, please make sure that your child has sun cream applied before coming to Forest School that day.

## What do we do at Forest School?

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There are lots of different activities that the children will have access to over the course of forest school. They are free to choose from a range of resources that will be offered. These may include:

- Creative activities (natural arts and crafts)
- Building and making
- Exploring the secret garden
- Finding out about the wildlife (the plants and the animals that live in the woodland)
- Practical skills (using tools)
- Cooking and fire making
- Games
- Imaginative play
- Scavenger hunts
- Seasonal celebrations

## Forest School Rules

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In the first Forest School session, children become involved with our secret garden setting and the understanding of the Forest School rules to ensure their safety. At the beginning of every session, a quick recap of the rules are reinforced.



## Policies and Procedures

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### Toileting

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the classroom. Any children needing the toilet during the session will use the nearest toilets, which are situated in the early years classroom or key stage 1.

### Cancellation procedure

There may be times when Forest School sessions have to be cancelled, due to unforeseen circumstances. These may be due to a staff illness (which will prevent staff/child ratios being met) or severe weather conditions, or any situation that poses a health and safety risk.

### Accident and First Aid in Forest School

Mrs Bonham and Mrs Scott, the Forest School Leaders, will hold an up to date outdoor First Aid qualification, alongside an up to date pediatric first aid certificate. The person responsible for reporting accidents at forest school is the forest school leader. They must record any incidents on the accident forms and report it to the teacher, parent and head. Also, a copy of this will be given to the school business manager.