

Forest School Curriculum and Progression Map

EYFS to Year 6

At St Anne's Catholic Primary School, we set out six Forest School skill strands and a progression map from EYFS to Year 6. Our flexible programme framework is rooted in Forest School principals, supports links with the EYFS and National Curriculum, and provides clear examples of what progress can look like for our learners.

Our Forest School curriculum provides a long-term framework for the skills, environment and progression we offer across our programme, rather than a fixed schedule of activities. We establish the conditions for responsive learning through our site, the skills we make available and the increasing levels of risk that learners can earn access to as they demonstrate readiness.

“Preparation is what allows you to respond well when a group finds a dead bird, the wind takes the tarp down, or six children spend ninety minutes investigating one hole in the ground.”

Our forest school progression map, EYFS to Year 6

Six strands across four stages of development

Strand	EYFS	KS1	Lower KS2	Upper KS2
Woodland safety and self-care	Knows the boundary and responds to the call-in signal. Dresses with help.	Explains the boundary and fire circle rules to a peer. Manages own kit and layers.	Carries out a simple site check on arrival and reports what they find.	Leads a group briefing, spots a hazard others miss, adjusts a plan for the weather.
Shelter, knots and construction	Balances sticks, drapes fabric, hides inside a space they made.	Ties an overhand knot. Builds a den in a pair and tests whether it stays up.	Ties a clove hitch. Builds a ridge-line shelter and improves it after rain.	Lashes a frame. Plans, adapts and dismantles a shelter, choosing materials for the forecast.

Strand	EYFS	KS1	Lower KS2	Upper KS2
Tool use	Peels bark by hand. Uses a hand drill with an adult holding the wood.	Uses a palm drill and a peeler under close supervision, with a set carry rule.	Uses a bow saw in a saw horse. Whittles with a knife at a safe working distance.	Selects the right tool for the job and teaches a safe carry to a younger child.
Fire	Sits in the fire circle. Knows walk, do not run, and where the water is.	Explains the fire triangle. Sorts and prepares tinder and kindling.	Lights with a fire steel. Cooks damper bread or popcorn on a managed fire.	Builds and manages a small fire for a purpose, extinguishes it and checks it is out.
Nature knowledge and stewardship	Names three trees. Notices what has changed since last week.	Identifies common trees and minibeasts. Describes one seasonal change and why it happens.	Uses a simple key to identify species. Records findings in their own format.	Explains a food chain on the site. Plans and carries out a habitat improvement.
Collaboration, communication and reflection	Shares a tool. Joins the circle and says one thing about the session.	Works with a partner on a task and says what went wrong.	Negotiates a role in a group build. Gives another child specific feedback.	Facilitates a reflection round. Helps resolve a disagreement without an adult.

Planning draws on three connected sources: observations made by adults during the previous session, the children's reflections and interests, and cues from the site itself. Together, these help practitioners decide what to prepare, what to introduce and when to step back.

As the weeks progress, the programme develops through four overlapping stages. The timing remains flexible because decisions are shaped by learner readiness, emerging interests, observations from previous sessions and changes in the site.

Settling

Establish the boundaries, call-in signal and fire-circle routine before introducing fire. Free play dominates while adults observe the group, identify interests and build trust. Avoid activities that require tools at this stage. The children are learning how to use the woodland safely and that the space belongs to them too.



Skills develop

Introduce tools gradually to learners who show readiness, one strand and one child at a time. Begin with shelters, then introduce fire once fire-circle behaviour is reliable. Use interests observed in the early sessions to shape how the site is prepared, and use the strand progression map to identify appropriate next steps.



Depth and seasonal change

Allow projects to continue across sessions rather than dismantling them each time. Use changes in the site as a teaching resource: revisiting the same patch of ground in October and December provides a clear, lived example of seasonal change. Extend builds, deepen identification work and support more sustained collaboration.



Ownership

Learners begin to lead elements of the programme. Older children can help build, develop and manage the site for younger groups. The group takes responsibility for a stewardship project that remains after they leave, while reflection becomes more structured and increasingly learner-led.

These curriculum links show where our Forest School experiences can support wider learning. We may sometimes introduce subject objectives through practical challenges, such as building a bridge across the mud pit or completing a leaf snap activity. We place these challenges within a wider learner-led programme shaped by our children's interests, readiness and discoveries on the site.

Mapping the strands to the EYFS and the National Curriculum

Strand	EYFS areas of learning	National Curriculum links
Woodland safety and self-care	Personal, social and emotional development; physical development	PE; PSHE and relationships education; risk and personal safety
Shelter, knots and construction	Physical development; expressive arts and design; maths	Design and technology (structures, joining, evaluating); maths (measuring, shape, comparison)
Tool use	Physical development; understanding the world	Design and technology (selecting tools, safe use, materials); science (properties of materials)
Fire	Understanding the world; personal, social and emotional development	Science (materials, changes of state, reversible and irreversible change); PSHE
Nature knowledge and stewardship	Understanding the world; communication and language; literacy	Science (seasonal changes, plants, habitats, living things and their habitats, rocks and soils); geography (fieldwork, mapping, local area study)

Strand	EYFS areas of learning	National Curriculum links
Collaboration, communication and reflection	Communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; literacy	English (oracy, descriptive writing, storytelling); PSHE; geography (recording and presenting fieldwork)

CUSP Curriculum Links

The examples below show possible connections between our Forest School provision and CUSP learning. They are starting points rather than a fixed plan and run alongside the year group's current CUSP modules, lesson sequence and intended outcomes.

Year group	CUSP subject / area	Potential learning link	Possible Forest School challenge	Evidence or reflection
Year 1	Science — Plants and seasonal change	Observe common plants and describe changes across the seasons.	Create a leaf snap collection, compare leaf shapes and revisit the same trees later in the year.	Annotated photographs, oral descriptions or a simple seasonal record.
Year 2	Science — Living things and their habitats	Identify living things in woodland microhabitats and describe why the habitat is suitable.	Carry out a minibeast survey beneath logs and leaf litter, then improve a small habitat responsibly.	Tally, labelled sketch, classification discussion or habitat explanation.
Year 3	Design and Technology — Structures	Explore stability, joining and strengthening in a purposeful structure.	Build a bridge across the mud pit, test it with an agreed load and improve the design.	Design sketch, test results, modifications and evaluation.
Year 3	Science — Rocks and soils	Compare soil samples and consider drainage, texture and organic content.	Collect samples from different parts of the site and carry out simple settling or drainage tests.	Comparison table, labelled samples or spoken conclusion.
Year 4	Science — States of matter	Observe heating, cooling and changes of state in a safe, meaningful context.	Heat water over a managed fire and discuss evaporation, condensation and temperature change.	Sequence diagram, temperature observations or explanation using key vocabulary.
Year 4	Geography — Fieldwork and the local area	Use observation, simple maps and directional language to investigate the site.	Create a route map showing boundaries, features, hazards and useful resources.	Annotated map, route instructions or comparison of two site areas.
Year 5	Science — Properties and changes of materials	Select materials for a purpose and explain reversible or irreversible changes.	Compare natural and manufactured shelter materials, or investigate changes during safe fire-lighting and cooking.	Material-choice justification, test notes or scientific explanation.
Year 5	Design and Technology — Structures and mechanisms	Apply measurement, joining techniques and iterative design.	Construct a freestanding frame, tripod or simple lifting	Plan, measurements, photographs of iterations and final evaluation.

Year group	CUSP subject / area	Potential learning link	Possible Forest School challenge	Evidence or reflection
			system using knots and lashings.	
Year 5	Science / Design and Technology — Forces and mechanisms	Explore how pulleys can change the direction of a force and make lifting or moving a load more manageable.	Design and build a simple pulley system to raise a bucket or move natural materials safely, then compare arrangements and improve the system.	Labelled diagram, observations of effort and movement, design changes and group evaluation.
Years 4–6	Design and Technology — Shelter structures	Investigate how frame shape, bracing, joining methods and material choice affect the stability and weather resistance of a shelter.	Plan, construct and test an A-frame or historically inspired shelter using poles, knots, lashings and suitable coverings; adapt it after wind or rain testing.	Design sketch, material choices, photographs of construction, test notes and evaluation of improvements.
Year 6	Science — Living things and their habitats	Classify organisms and explain relationships within the woodland ecosystem.	Use identification keys, map species and propose a habitat-improvement project.	Classification key, food web, survey data or stewardship proposal.
Year 6	Geography — Fieldwork and map skills	Use maps, scale, symbols and systematic observation to communicate findings.	Plan an orienteering route or produce a scaled map of the Forest School site.	Finished map, route review, peer feedback and accuracy check.
Years 1–6	Art and Design — Drawing and observation	Develop close observation, line, shape, texture, tone and composition through direct study of the woodland environment.	Create observational drawings of leaves, bark, trees, habitats or constructed shelters using different viewpoints and natural detail.	Sketchbook studies, labelled drawings, comparison of techniques and reflective comments about choices and improvements.
Years 1–6	English / Drama — Storytelling and reenactment	Explore character, setting, sequence, dialogue and vocabulary through purposeful speaking, listening and performance.	Reenact a familiar story in the woodland, create settings with natural materials, improvise dialogue and retell events from a character's viewpoint.	Photographs or recording of the performance, oral retelling, story map, character reflection or subsequent written narrative.
Years 1–6	English — Oracy and writing	Rehearse and apply subject vocabulary through purposeful talk and writing.	Give safety briefings, explain a build, retell a woodland experience or write instructions and evaluations.	Recorded explanation, vocabulary notes, instructions, recount or reflective journal entry.

