

Intent

At Stivichall we have a strong commitment to Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) which supports the personal development and character education of our pupils – something we hold dear to our hearts in living our school motto of ‘Learning at Stivichall is a Passport for Life’. LOtC includes: educational visits in every year group; residential trips in years 3, 4, 5 and 6; welcoming visitors with particular expertise into school; taking meaningful and well-planned learning experiences out of the classroom and around our excellently resourced school site; and Forest School sessions each year. Pupil voice work has shown the positive impact that LOtC have on our pupils with them citing that learning from experiences is ‘real’, ‘enjoyable’ and ‘memorable’.

Implementation

Forest Schools plays an important role in our LOtC curriculum offer to pupils at Stivichall in which each year, every child from Reception through to Year 6 has either a series of weekly sessions or a ‘block’ of Forest School time. The progression and sequencing of learning is assured both within and across year groups (see Skills Progression Overview document) so that pupils grow in confidence in the social and emotional and outdoor skills areas of learning.

The outdoor art, forest craft, cooking and play activities in Forest Schools are planned to promote personal development and character building. Social behaviours such as the high quality teamwork skills of listening to others, respecting others’ views and wishes, and keeping each other safe are taught and practised in highly memorable ways (such as the team make a stretcher and carry your teammate challenge) and this results in pupils behaving with integrity and cooperating consistently with others. The personal skills learnt are then referenced to the pupils’ wider school life and (particularly for Years 5 and 6) their onward journey into KS3. The progression in skills is designed such that pupils grow incrementally in justified self-confidence, resilience and knowledge so that they can keep themselves mentally healthy sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them.

Within Forest School sessions, children also learn about the environment and take responsibility for looking after own school environment – for example in litter picking after learning the difference between ‘man made’ and ‘natural’ and helping to maintain our school garden composting system. Craft activities are also used to enrich and add to the quality of our outdoor environment for example in making ‘a house for a mouse’ (YR) and ‘bug hotels’ (Y2). This helps children feel like they are contributing to the community of our school as well as the environment and supports a growing fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them. In the older year groups, the pupils complete a ‘community task’ (such as maintaining wildlife friendly habitats in the copse/spinney outside the school) further engendering a sense of being part of the wider community and broadening their horizons.

The following is an outline of Forest School activities to ensure the progression of skills and knowledge throughout children’s learning experiences at Stivichall. The list is not exhaustive and neither is it prescriptive, but is intended to give a ‘flavour’ of the progression of learning within Stivichall’s Forest School curriculum from Reception through to Year 6.

Class	Tool Use	Knots	Forest Craft	Cooking Outdoors	Play Outdoors
Reception	Natural ‘tools’ e.g. sticks	Observe loop knot	‘Natural’ vs ‘man made’ Mouse House Mud Face Leaf pictures	Hot choc, learning about fire safety	Hide and seek with close boundaries in Forest School Area
Year 1	Peelers	Tie loop knot – make link to ‘Learning to Learn’ (the importance of practice and Growth Mindsets)	Forest School Art Gardening and how things grow Log Dog Forest School jewellery (bracelet)	Marshmallow, toasting forks given, but sharpened with peeler, observe forest school fire lighting and safety	NSEW – North South East West game to learn compass directions
Year 2	loppers	Tie loop knot and reef knot	Micro shelters (Structures) & guided Natural Shelters Group Bug hotels Memory sticks – washing line	Toast, make and use own toasting fork	Perspective Introduce ‘Back to Base’
Year 3	Bow saw	Practise reef, loop and learn clove hitch	Spider Web / Dream Catcher Star – pupils assemble ‘lines’ Team Natural Shelters	Help with making forest school fire and safety procedures Choice of toasting	‘Back to Base’
Year 4	Apply Bow Saw and lopper use skills Drill	Practise clove hitch and learn basic lashing	Window/picture Frame and natural decoration Willow weaving Outdoor Painting	Cook banana in foil Learn to use Forest school fire starting method, one-to-one with teacher	123 where r u?
Year 5	Carving Knives Bill hook	Square lashing and timber hitch – all knots applied to activity	Team Tarp Shelter Bow and arrow – make own targets and controlled firing range on field Cazoo instruments	Cook potato in foil, Start fire in small group, closely observed and managed by adult	Tree climb challenge – shoulder height limited
Year 6	Apply all tool skills with greater independence	All knots applied with greater independence to team ‘project’	Stretcher – carry your team mate off the mountain! Or make a forest chair. Community task – copse or park Survival Challenge – Forest School ‘Graduation’	Variety and choice of cooking and heating water, Start fire in small group, closely monitored by adult	Independent game organisation / creation