

What Forest Fridays look Like at Aston Rowant

A values-led outdoor learning approach inspired by Forest School principles, supporting personal development, behaviour, wellbeing and curriculum enrichment.

Gratitude

Intent

Forest Fridays are designed to develop pupils' sense of gratitude for the natural world, the resources available to them and the contributions of others. Through purposeful outdoor experiences, pupils learn to recognise value beyond material possessions and to appreciate shared spaces and opportunities.

This value directly supports pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development by encouraging reflection, respect and thankfulness, helping children to understand their place within a wider ecosystem and community.

Implementation

- Regular bird watching, wildlife spotting and participation in initiatives such as national bird counts, encouraging pupils to notice and value living things.
- Gardening and growing fruit, vegetables and flowers in school allotments, allowing pupils to experience care, patience and reward over time.
- Using natural materials responsibly for art, weaving, collages, ink and paint making, with explicit teaching about sustainability and respect for resources.
- Reflection circles at the end of sessions where pupils share what they noticed, enjoyed or felt thankful for.

Impact

- Pupils demonstrate increased respect for the environment and school grounds.
- Children are able to articulate appreciation for nature, teamwork and shared experiences.
- Improved care for tools, materials and outdoor spaces, reflecting responsible attitudes.

Resilience

Intent

Forest Fridays intentionally provide challenge and managed risk to help pupils develop resilience, perseverance and confidence. Learning outdoors allows children to encounter unpredictability and problem-solve in real contexts.

These experiences support pupils' personal development by encouraging them to persist, adapt and learn from setbacks in a supportive environment.

Implementation

- Den building and shelter construction using branches, leaves and tarpaulins, requiring planning, teamwork and trial-and-error.
- Creative building tasks such as twig rafts, nature sculptures and large-scale constructions.
- Practical activities including outdoor cooking, charcoal making and painting, and willow cutting and weaving.
- Physical games and challenges such as scavenger hunts, Capture the Flag and cooperative movement games.

Impact

- Pupils show increased confidence when approaching new or difficult tasks.
- Children demonstrate perseverance and a willingness to try again when plans do not initially succeed.
- Improved problem-solving skills and collaboration during learning activities.

Outreach

Intent

Forest Fridays promote a sense of responsibility beyond the classroom, helping pupils understand their role within the local and wider community.

The programme supports pupils in developing social awareness, environmental responsibility and positive citizenship.

Implementation

- Engagement with national initiatives such as the Big Bird Watch and seasonal environmental activities.
- Involvement of volunteers, parents and community members to support outdoor learning sessions.
- Caring for shared spaces including allotments, wildlife areas, bug hotels and bee hotels.
- Learning about biodiversity, habitats and conservation through hands-on experiences.

Impact

- Pupils demonstrate an increased sense of responsibility for shared spaces.
- Children develop understanding of how their actions affect the environment and community.
- Strengthened links between school, families and the wider community.

Wonder

Intent

Forest Fridays are designed to inspire curiosity, awe and imagination through direct, meaningful engagement with nature.

By encouraging exploration and observation, pupils develop a deeper love of learning and an intrinsic motivation to ask questions and seek understanding.

Implementation

- Sensory exploration including smelling flowers, feeling bark and moss, and listening to birds and wind.
- Creative activities such as nature art, collages, charcoal painting, mud kitchens and potion making.
- Observation activities including cloud gazing, wildlife spotting and seasonal change exploration.
- Use of natural materials to create art, stories and imaginative play scenarios.

Impact

- Pupils show high levels of engagement, curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- Improved descriptive language and observational skills.
- Increased creativity, imagination and confidence in self-expression.

Trust

Intent

Forest Fridays help pupils build trust in themselves, their peers and the adults supporting them through shared responsibility and clear routines.

Children are supported to take appropriate risks, developing independence and self-belief in a safe, structured environment.

Implementation

- Small-group tasks that require cooperation, communication and shared decision-making.
- Use of simple tools and natural materials with explicit safety guidance and adult supervision.
- Team games such as Herons and Otters and Capture the Flag, promoting fairness and mutual respect.
- Consistent expectations and routines that build security and confidence.

Impact

- Improved teamwork and communication skills.
- Children demonstrate responsible and safe behaviour.
- Stronger, trusting relationships between pupils and adults.

Harmony

Intent

Forest Fridays promote emotional wellbeing, balance and positive relationships, supporting pupils' mental health and self-regulation.

Learning in nature encourages calmness, reflection and respect for others and the environment.

Implementation

- Quiet, mindful activities such as bird watching, sound safaris and reflection time.
- Collaborative creative tasks including willow weaving, nature looms and group art projects.
- Movement and animal imitation games that support physical development and emotional expression.
- Group problem-solving and shared play that reinforces cooperation.

Impact

- Calmer behaviour and improved emotional regulation.
- Positive relationships and respectful interactions between pupils.
- A strong sense of belonging, wellbeing and enjoyment of school life.

