

Forest Friday – Outdoor Learning and Enrichment at Aston Rowant School

At Aston Rowant School, Forest Friday is our own unique approach to Forest School-style learning. It forms an important part of our enrichment offer and reflects our commitment to providing meaningful outdoor experiences that support pupils' personal development, wellbeing and connection with the natural world.

On 15th March 2024, the whole school took part in a Forest Friday, and it was a truly memorable and enriching experience for all. A heartfelt thank you goes to Miss Williams for organising the day so thoughtfully, and to the whole staff team for their enthusiasm, encouragement and active involvement throughout.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Forest Friday offers pupils regular opportunities to learn outdoors through hands-on, purposeful activities that complement the curriculum and promote independence, cooperation and resilience. During today's session, pupils worked in their house groups, encouraging collaboration across year groups and strengthening relationships within our school community.

Children participated in a carefully planned range of activities, including:

- Shelter building, where pupils worked together to design, construct and evaluate structures using natural materials
- Willow whittling, allowing children to develop fine motor skills while learning to use tools safely and responsibly
- Planting pumpkin and sunflower seeds, supporting pupils' understanding of growth, responsibility and sustainability
- Observational drawing and recording, where pupils illustrated and documented life within our school grounds

These activities were intentionally chosen to support learning across the curriculum while fostering curiosity, creativity and careful observation.

Personal Development, Wellbeing and School Values

Forest Friday strongly supports pupils' **personal development**, enabling children to develop confidence, resilience and teamwork through real-life challenges in a natural environment. Pupils demonstrated:

- Resilience, as they persevered with building structures and planting seeds
- Harmony, through collaboration, shared decision-making and listening to one another
- Wonder, as they explored and reflected on the natural beauty and biodiversity of our school grounds

Time outdoors also plays an important role in supporting pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing, helping children feel calm, grounded and engaged. The opportunity to slow down, notice their surroundings and work together away from the classroom contributes positively to pupils' mental health and sense of belonging.

Quality of Education and Ofsted Alignment

Forest Friday is carefully embedded within the school's wider curriculum and enrichment offer and supports Ofsted priorities through:

- Purposeful enrichment linked to **curriculum intent**
- Opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in a different context
- Development of character, teamwork and resilience
- Promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding

Learning observed during Forest Friday showed pupils making meaningful connections between subjects such as science, art, design, PSHE and wellbeing, supporting progression and retention of learning.

Forest Friday – Impact Summary

Intent:

- To enrich the curriculum through outdoor, experiential learning
- To support pupils' personal development, wellbeing and connection to nature

Implementation:

- Whole-school participation in structured outdoor learning activities
- Staff modelling positive engagement and collaborative learning
- Activities mapped to curriculum and personal development objectives

Impact:

- Pupils demonstrate resilience, cooperation and curiosity
- Strong engagement across all age groups
- Enhanced wellbeing and appreciation of the natural environment
- Clear evidence of pupils living out the school's core values

Forest Friday is a powerful example of how Aston Rowant School uses its environment creatively to enhance learning, nurture wellbeing and develop confident, caring and curious learners

