



Wednesday 12th January 2022

Dear Parents / Carers

Vernon Park Primary School is delivering Forest School sessions to support your child's learning. Children in Year 5 will receive Forest School sessions beginning in February and continuing through to the start of the summer term. I hope to answer any questions you may have below.

What is Forest School?

Forest School is a holistic approach to educating children in the outdoors on a regular basis, with the ultimate aim of improving children's wellbeing, engagement, confidence and independence. Through the mastery of small, achievable tasks that are challenging and exciting, children improve their communication and language, social skills, physical development, emotional awareness and intellectual abilities. As you may be aware, children already have regular opportunities to learn in the school's environmental area (the small woodland on the slope at the back of school). This is one of the children's favourite places to learn!

When will the children be doing their Forest School sessions?

The children will take part in a 1 to 2 hour session on the following dates:

Tuesday 1st February

Tuesday 22nd February

Tuesday 1st March

Tuesday 8th March

Tuesday 15th March

Tuesday 22nd March

Tuesday 29th March

Tuesday 19th April

Tuesday 26th April

Please be aware these dates may change due to unforeseen circumstances, you will be informed by text message either the day before or on the day if this is the case.

What do the children need to wear?

An important part of the Forest School experience is that children experience the outdoors in all weathers. We believe there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes and we will be going out, regardless of weather conditions with the exception of gale force winds and thunderstorms. Therefore, it is essential that the children are dressed appropriately. Children do not need to wear or bring their school uniform but must come in their school shoes. We ask that on the dates above, your child comes to school dressed in appropriate clothing. This includes:

- Wellies or sturdy boots (which will be kept in school)
- Thick socks
- School shoes for wearing in school
- Waterproof coat with hood (which should already be in school)
- Waterproof trousers if possible
- Hat and gloves if cold, sun hat and sun cream if hot
- Lots of layers of clothing which you don't mind getting muddy (long sleeves and trousers all year round to avoid scratches/stings/bites etc)



What sort of activities will be delivered?

A wide variety of practical activities will be delivered in Forest School. A priority of Forest School is teaching children about caring for, understanding and managing woodlands. As part of this, children will be taught to use small hand tools such as sheath knives and bow saws, as well as learning about fires and their different uses, under adult supervision. I appreciate this may sound alarming but would like to reassure you of the extensive safety procedures that have been developed to make this possible.

Is Forest School safe?

Forest Schools nationally have an excellent safety record thanks to the robust procedures we are required to have in place before we can offer sessions. Forest School sessions may only be delivered by a qualified Forest School practitioner. I am a qualified Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and will be delivering all Forest School sessions. In addition to this, Forest School can only be run with higher than usual adult-child ratios. We are required to maintain a ratio of 1:8 or better at all times. To make this possible, Mrs Singleton will be joining us and sometimes extra members of staff will join the group.

This venture will be a learning experience for all of us - children and staff. Ultimately, by raising your child's independence and self-esteem, they should be able to use Forest School to enhance their learning in other areas of the curriculum whilst developing a love and understanding of the natural environment.

If you wish to discuss any aspects of Forest School further, I am happy to answer your questions.

Many thanks for your support. I am sure this will prove to be a very exciting time for your child and the school!

Mrs Stone
Forest School Leader