

FOREST SCHOOL RATIONALE:

2025/26

SUPPORTS SENSORY REGULATION – Natural environments offer calming, rich sensory input (textures, sounds, smells) which can help children with sensory processing difficulties.

ENCOURAGES COMMUNICATION – Open-ended, play-based activities naturally promote verbal and non-verbal communication, especially beneficial for non-verbal or speech-delayed children.

IMPROVES EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING – Being outdoors reduces anxiety and stress, helping children feel more relaxed, grounded, and emotionally regulated.

PROMOTES PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT – Activities like climbing, digging, and balancing support gross and fine motor skill development in a motivating way.

BOOSTS CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM – Child-led learning and achievable challenges allow children to experience success at their own pace, building a sense of capability. Child led learning also promotes intrinsic motivation, when children choose their activities, they are drawn by curiosity and interest, not external pressure. This builds a love for learning, self-direction and a deeper engagement with the activity.

FOSTERS INDEPENDENCE AND DECISION-MAKING – Freedom to explore and make choices helps develop autonomy and problem-solving skills.

PROVIDES STRUCTURE WITH FLEXIBILITY – Forest School routines offer predictability, while still allowing room for child-led exploration, which suits many SEN learners.

ENHANCES SOCIAL SKILLS – Group activities in a low-pressure setting encourage turn-taking, teamwork, and positive peer interactions.

INCLUSIVE BY DESIGN – Forest School can be easily adapted for all physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities, ensuring every child can participate meaningfully.

ENCOURAGES ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION – The natural environment reduces barriers to learning, often re-engaging children who struggle in traditional classroom settings.

LONG TERM – over time pupils learn self-regulation, boundaries and decision making. SEN pupils have time to adjust and form relationships with the forest school leader.

REMEMBER EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE – some may want to build shelters; others explore bugs or just sit quietly and observe. Allowing the child to choose shows that you respect their individual learning styles, interests and development stages.