

## Forest School at Bleakhouse

**Forest school** is an **approach** to learning that takes children into the great outdoors whatever the weather to explore the natural environment. **Forest school** is a long-term, nature-based outdoor learning program that focuses on holistic development and growth in children. It allows children the **freedom to explore and make their own choices**, all

while **respecting the environment** around them and the **safety of themselves and others**.



Forest school at **Bleakhouse Primary School** is mapped out across the school with planned outdoor activities for each year group. These sessions enhance our thematic approach and make links across the curriculum. **Forest School connects many National Curriculum subjects**. For example: in **English** pupils ask and answer questions, write descriptions, participate in discussions and debates, present to others and develop an extensive vocabulary; in **maths**, they solve problems, measure and record when building dens and make comparisons; in science, the children investigate plants, observe the seasons and develop scientific vocabulary and enquiry skills; in **geography**, they use maps and plans, find and follow geographic directions and compare and contrast environmental and physical land-use through fieldwork. They also develop **art** skills, using natural stimuli, as well as **design and technology** skills through practical shelter building.



This year, Year 1 and Year 2 have explored the importance of, and relationship between, animals. They have looked for animal clues, such as footprints, droppings or habitats in the school grounds and discussed food chains, using scientific vocabulary including herbivores, carnivores, predator, prey, mammals and birds. Children identified deciduous and evergreen trees, learning what trees and plants need to survive. They also enjoyed studying leaves and making leaf rubbings. After looking at artwork by Andy Goldsworthy, the children designed and made their own mud sculptures. Den building and using compasses to follow maps around school were used to give children the freedom to explore and make their own choices.

Forest school was used in Year 3 to support their Stone Age theme. They became hunters and gatherers and explored edible plants in the school environment. Children used tools to make 'spears' from twigs and pretended they were tribes hunting for mammoths. Again, key vocabulary such as herbivores and carnivores

was reinforced. A bare foot obstacle course was created for the 'cavemen' to enjoy as well as making their own paintbrushes to explore textures and patterns when mud painting. Children were taught the importance of fire and how to use a flint or stone to create fire.

During lockdown, children participated in forest school sessions in school and similar activities were set for children working remotely. The focus of these activities was on **mindfulness and well-being**. Some of the tasks set were potion making, based on the text George's Marvellous Medicine, making bird feeders and identifying which birds enjoyed their creations, an environmental photography challenge, finding sticks and tying knots to make a 'Stickman' as well as a lichen hunt and colour match activity. When the snow arrived, we couldn't resist some snow play and the children were encouraged to build snowmen, have snowball fights and enjoy sledging – with the teachers!

Further activities are planned throughout the year, giving all children in school the opportunity to experience forest school.



