

Forest School at SSJS

Intent

The Forest School curriculum for Years 3–6 is designed to complement the National Curriculum by promoting pupils' personal development, wellbeing, and resilience through regular, high-quality outdoor learning experiences. It aims to develop independence, confidence, teamwork, and environmental responsibility, supporting pupils to become reflective, motivated, and capable learners.

Implementation

Forest School sessions are delivered by a professional Forest School practitioner. Each year group experiences Forest School for one whole term following the principles of progressive skill development, learner-led exploration, and managed risk-taking. Sessions focus on practical outdoor skills, nature connection, teamwork, and emotional wellbeing. Learning builds sequentially from Year 3 to Year 6, revisiting and extending key skills over time as can be seen below.

Skill strand progression

Skill strand and topic	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Safety & Risk Management	Understand Forest School rules and boundaries; identify simple hazards with adult support.	Apply safety rules independently; begin dynamic risk assessment.	Explain risks clearly; model safe behaviour for others.	Independently assess risk; act responsibly and mentor others.
Tool Use & Practical Skills	Use basic equipment safely; tie simple knots; build simple shelters.	Use knots and lashings with purpose; introduce simple tools with supervision.	Use a range of tools safely; construct more complex structures.	Select and apply tools independently for planned projects.

Shelter & Construction	Work collaboratively to create basic shelters.	Improve shelter strength and weatherproofing	Design and build shelters for specific purposes.	Plan, adapt, and evaluate complex builds independently.
Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness	Identify common plants, animals, and seasonal changes.	Explain habitats, food chains, and sustainability.	Identify native species accurately; understand human impact.	Apply conservation principles and make informed environmental choices.
Teamwork & Leadership	Work cooperatively; take turns and share resources.	Take responsibility within group roles.	Demonstrate leadership and support peers.	Lead groups confidently and resolve conflict independently.
Personal Development & Wellbeing	Express feelings verbally; develop confidence outdoors.	Reflect on challenges and successes.	Demonstrate resilience and perseverance.	Reflect thoughtfully on learning and personal growth.

Year 3 (12 sessions over 2 terms)

Lesson	SSJS progression statements	Lesson focus & core learning activities	Resources + safety / assessment evidence
1	Safety & Risk Management: Understand Forest School rules and boundaries; identify simple hazards with adult support. Teamwork & Leadership: Work cooperatively; take turns and share resources. Personal Development & Wellbeing: Express feelings verbally; develop confidence outdoors.	Induction: boundaries, routines and respect. Site walk, boundaries game, 'stop & listen' signal, introduce reflection circle/journal prompts.	boundary markers, whistle, clipboards. Adult-led risk walk; agree group rules; evidence: pupil voice + photos.
2	Safety & Risk Management: Understand Forest School rules and boundaries; identify simple hazards with	Dynamic risk: spotting hazards. Hazard hunt (sticks, trip hazards, nettles), create simple	cones, laminated hazard cards. Reinforce 'look up/down/around';

	adult support. Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Identify common plants, animals, and seasonal changes.	'hazard map', practise safe movement.	evidence: hazard map + observation notes.
3	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Identify common plants, animals, and seasonal changes.	Seasonal change & tree ID (local species). Identify 3–5 common trees; bark/leaf rubbings; seasonal change discussion.	ID cards, crayons, paper. Teach safe foraging rule: 'pick only with permission'; evidence: annotated rubbings.
4	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Identify common plants, animals, and seasonal changes.	Minibeasts & microhabitats. Mini-beast hunt with pots; classify by features; return carefully; create habitat pledge.	bug pots, magnifiers, mats. Hygiene routines; evidence: tally chart + pupil reflections.
5	Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use basic equipment safely; tie simple knots; build simple shelters. Teamwork & Leadership: Work cooperatively; take turns and share resources.	Knots 1: overhand & reef knot. Teach two knots; partner practice; knot relay; apply to simple tarp/rope task.	ropes, picture instructions. Safe rope handling; evidence: checklist of pupils demonstrating knots.
6	Shelter & Construction: Work collaboratively to create basic shelters. Teamwork & Leadership: Work cooperatively; take turns and share resources.	Shelters 1: simple group shelter. Build basic shelter using tarp/rope; test for 'dry' and 'space'; reflect on improvements.	tarps, ropes, pegs. Trip hazards and peg safety; evidence: photos + evaluation sentence stems.
7	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Identify common plants, animals, and seasonal changes. Personal Development & Wellbeing: Express feelings verbally; develop confidence outdoors.	Nature art & mindful noticing. 'Sit spot' mindfulness; create transient natural art; vocabulary for feelings and senses.	timer, reflection prompts. Environmental care: no damage; evidence: pupil voice + photographs.
8	Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use basic equipment safely; tie simple knots; build simple	Weather & simple navigation. Read wind direction; simple compass	compasses, clue cards. Boundaries reinforced;

	shelters. Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Identify common plants, animals, and seasonal changes.	points; follow a short trail using clues.	evidence: completed trail card.
9	Teamwork & Leadership: Work cooperatively; take turns and share resources. Personal Development & Wellbeing: Express feelings verbally; develop confidence outdoors.	Team challenges: build/solve. Problem-solving tasks (bridge for toy, carry water, 'spider web'); roles and turn-taking.	ropes, buckets, small toys. Clear rules, safe lifting; evidence: teacher observation of teamwork behaviours.
10	Safety & Risk Management: Understand Forest School rules and boundaries; identify simple hazards with adult support. Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use basic equipment safely; tie simple knots; build simple shelters.	Tools introduction (adult-led): peelers/whittling basics. Tool talk and rules; safe sitting positions; peel sticks for den building/craft (high supervision).	peelers, gloves if used, sticks. 1:1 or small-group supervision; evidence: safety quiz + photos of correct posture.
11	Shelter & Construction: Work collaboratively to create basic shelters. Teamwork & Leadership: Work cooperatively; take turns and share resources.	Mini project: 'Improved shelter'. Use knots + design tweaks to improve shelter; peer review using success criteria.	tarps, ropes, pegs, checklist. Check for strain points; evidence: peer assessment notes.
12	Personal Development & Wellbeing: Express feelings verbally; develop confidence outdoors.	Celebration & reflection portfolio. Review learning; 'skills stations' recap; create a class display page with photos and reflections.	templates, photos, pens. Celebrate safe practice; evidence: end-of-unit reflections + practitioner notes.

Year 4 (12 sessions over 2 terms)

Lesson	SSJS progression statements	Lesson focus & core learning activities	Resources + safety / assessment evidence
1	Safety & Risk Management: Apply safety rules independently; begin dynamic risk assessment. Teamwork & Leadership: Take responsibility within group roles.	Re-induction: routines and expectations (Y4). Revisit boundaries; pupils co-create 'how we keep safe' poster; introduce roles (timekeeper, kit monitor).	poster paper, markers. Risk walk led by pupils with adult prompts; evidence: pupil-led poster.
2	Safety & Risk Management: Apply safety rules independently; begin dynamic risk assessment.	Dynamic risk assessment: 'stop-think-do'. Scenario cards (weather, broken branch, slippery area); pupils decide actions; practise reporting hazards.	scenario cards, cones. Model escalation procedures; evidence: completed scenario responses.
3	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Explain habitats, food chains, and sustainability.	Habitats & food chains in our area. Explore woodland/field habitats; build simple food chains; discuss producers/consumers.	ID guides, string/cards. No disturbance of nests; evidence: food chain diagram.
4	Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use knots and lashings with purpose; introduce simple tools with supervision. Shelter & Construction: Improve shelter strength and weatherproofing	Knots & lashings: clove hitch intro. Teach clove hitch; practise on poles; begin simple lashing with guidance.	ropes, poles, instruction cards. Pole carrying rules; evidence: knot check.
5	Shelter & Construction: Improve shelter strength and weatherproofing	Shelters 2: weatherproofing and stability. Improve shelter against wind/rain; test and modify; introduce 'site selection' discussion.	tarps, ropes, pegs. Check ground hazards; evidence: evaluation using 'what worked/what changed'.
6	Safety & Risk Management: Apply safety rules independently; begin dynamic risk assessment. Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use knots and lashings with	Tool skills (supervised): bow saw / loppers demo + safe zones. Introduce tool zones, carrying and passing; adult demo; pupils practise on deadwood as appropriate to site policy.	bow saw/loppers, PPE, deadwood. High supervision; clear stop signal; evidence: safety rules recall + photos.

	purpose; introduce simple tools with supervision.		
7	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Explain habitats, food chains, and sustainability.	Sustainability: 'take only what you need'. Ethical foraging talk; make cordage from found materials or simple natural craft; litter pick/impact audit.	gloves, bags, natural materials. Hygiene and sharps awareness; evidence: impact audit checklist.
8	Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use knots and lashings with purpose; introduce simple tools with supervision. Teamwork & Leadership: Take responsibility within group roles.	Orienteering basics (mapped area). Simple map symbols; mini-orienteeing course in pairs; follow bearings with support.	maps, compasses, markers. Boundaries and buddy system; evidence: completed course card.
9	Shelter & Construction: Improve shelter strength and weatherproofing Teamwork & Leadership: Take responsibility within group roles.	Team build: 'structure for a purpose'. Design brief (e.g., shelter for toy/animal); pupils plan, build, test, and iterate.	tarps, ropes, poles. Safe lifting and spacing; evidence: plan sketch + build photo.
10	Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use knots and lashings with purpose; introduce simple tools with supervision. Personal Development & Wellbeing: Reflect on challenges and successes.	Fireless outdoor cooking: hygiene & prep. Food hygiene; prepare simple snack (e.g., wraps) using safe knives as policy allows; link to nutrition.	portable table, wipes, ingredients. Allergens management; evidence: hygiene checklist + pupil evaluation.
11	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Explain habitats, food chains, and sustainability.	Nature data: simple surveys. Quadrat or transect mini-survey; tally common plants; discuss biodiversity.	quadrats, clipboards. Avoid sensitive areas; evidence: data table + short conclusion.
12	Personal Development & Wellbeing: Reflect on challenges and successes.	End-of-term project & reflection. Choose a 'showcase' build or conservation action; present learning using speaking frames.	display templates, photos. Celebrate progress; evidence: pupil presentation notes + reflection.

Year 5 (7 sessions over 1 term)

Lesson	SSJS progression statements	Lesson focus & core learning activities	Resources + safety / assessment evidence
1	Safety & Risk Management: Explain risks clearly; model safe behaviour for others. Teamwork & Leadership: Demonstrate leadership and support peers.	Induction for Upper KS2: leadership and expectations. Re-establish boundaries; introduce leadership roles; agree 'non-negotiables' for tools and conduct.	role cards, boundary markers. Pupils co-lead safety walk; evidence: role reflections.
2	Safety & Risk Management: Explain risks clearly; model safe behaviour for others.	Risk management masterclass: controls and communication. Identify hazards + control measures; practise clear safety briefings and stop-signal drills.	risk cards, posters. Site-specific RA alignment; evidence: pupil-delivered briefing.
3	Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use a range of tools safely; construct more complex structures. Shelter & Construction: Design and build shelters for specific purposes.	Knots & lashings for strong structures. Revisit clove hitch; add square lashing; build a simple A-frame or tripod.	ropes, poles. Safe pole zones; evidence: structure stability checklist.
4	Safety & Risk Management: Explain risks clearly; model safe behaviour for others. Tool Use & Practical Skills: Use a range of tools safely; construct more complex structures.	Tool use (supervised): purpose and precision. Pupils select appropriate tool for task (saw/loppers/peeler depending on policy); produce components for build/craft.	tools, PPE, wood. Strict tool zones and ratios; evidence: practitioner assessment notes.
5	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Identify native species accurately; understand human impact.	Human impact & conservation action. Investigate impact (trampling, litter, invasive plants); plan a small conservation task (e.g., dead-hedge, signage).	gloves, bags, signage materials. Manual handling and hygiene; evidence: before/after photos + plan.
6	Shelter & Construction: Design and build shelters for specific purposes.	Design challenge: build for a user. Design brief (e.g., waterproof shelter for 4,	tarps, ropes, poles, clipboards. Check stability and spacing;

	Teamwork & Leadership: Demonstrate leadership and support peers.	seating circle); plan, build, test, evaluate.	evidence: plan + evaluation rubric.
7	Personal Development & Wellbeing: Demonstrate resilience and perseverance.	Showcase and reflection: resilience and next steps. Pupils present learning, reflect on leadership/resilience, set personal targets for Y6.	reflection templates, photos. Celebrate safe independence; evidence: written reflection + pupil voice.

Year 6 (7 sessions over 1 term)

Lesson	SSJS progression statements	Lesson focus & core learning activities	Resources + safety / assessment evidence
1	Safety & Risk Management: Independently assess risk; act responsibly and mentor others. Teamwork & Leadership: Lead groups confidently and resolve conflict independently.	Induction: independent routines and mentoring approach. Agree expectations; introduce 'mentor mindset'; pupils support set-up/take-down routines.	role cards, checklists. Pupils lead boundaries brief; evidence: mentoring notes.
2	Safety & Risk Management: Independently assess risk; act responsibly and mentor others.	Advanced risk assessment: decisions and consequences. Pupils conduct a mini risk assessment for a chosen activity area; explain controls to peers.	RA template, clipboards. Adult validates decisions; evidence: completed RA templates.
3	Shelter & Construction: Plan, adapt, and evaluate complex builds independently. Personal Development & Wellbeing: Reflect thoughtfully on learning and personal growth.	Planning a project: from idea to method. Pupils choose a project (structure/conservation); produce plan, resources list, and success criteria.	planning templates. Feasibility and safety check; evidence: project plans.
4	Safety & Risk Management: Independently assess risk; act responsibly and mentor others. Tool Use & Practical Skills: Select and apply tools	Tool use (supervised): efficiency and quality. Produce components accurately; focus on safe pace, neatness, and teamwork in tool zones.	tools, PPE, wood. Close supervision; evidence: practitioner skills checklist.

	independently for planned projects.		
5	Shelter & Construction: Plan, adapt, and evaluate complex builds independently. Personal Development & Wellbeing: Reflect thoughtfully on learning and personal growth.	Build and adapt: testing under constraints. Build project; test (wind, load, space); adapt based on findings; record changes.	materials as planned. Stability checks; evidence: change log + photos.
6	Nature Knowledge & Environmental Awareness: Apply conservation principles and make informed environmental choices. Teamwork & Leadership: Lead groups confidently and resolve conflict independently.	Environmental leadership: sustainability & legacy. Run a pupil-led conservation action or awareness campaign for younger pupils (poster/talk).	poster materials. Supervised delivery; evidence: pupil leadership feedback.
7	Personal Development & Wellbeing: Reflect thoughtfully on learning and personal growth.	Final reflection and transition: 'Forest School passport'. Compile 'passport' of skills; reflection on confidence and teamwork; transition talk for secondary readiness.	passport templates, photos. Celebrate progress; evidence: completed passport + pupil voice.