



BELIEVE. ASPIRE. SUCCEED.

As Jesus welcomes and values children, we at St Michael's aspire to welcome and value all members of our community. We believe that this welcome and value provides opportunities for all to succeed. Matthew 18: v.2-5

Forest School Policy

This policy was written by	S Liley February 2026
Review Cycle:	Bi- annually
This policy was subsequently reviewed:	February 2026
Next review Date	February 2028



Philosophy

Forest School is a unique programme of specialised, practical and hands-on learning in a woodland environment. It allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem, and a deep awareness and knowledge of the natural world. This fully supports our school vision and our six core Christian values: **friendship, thankfulness, honesty, forgiveness, respect, and responsibility**. We have specially trained staff who deliver the Forest School curriculum in a safe, inclusive and creative way. When children are well supported by knowledgeable, enthusiastic staff, they are able to achieve their goals and much more.

Forest School plays a vital role in advancing our school's sustainability plan by giving pupils meaningful, hands-on experiences that build their understanding of climate change, conservation, and environmental stewardship. Through regular outdoor learning, children develop a deep appreciation for local ecosystems, learn how their own actions impact the planet, and engage in practical activities such as habitat protection, biodiversity monitoring, and responsible resource use. The experiences the children have in our Forest school provision link to our other curriculum areas. Our Forest school connects classroom learning in science, geography, art and PSHE with real-world environmental challenges, empowering our children to become informed, proactive guardians of our natural world.

Inclusion, Equality and Diversity

At CSM we are committed to ensuring that Forest School is accessible to all pupils, regardless of background, ability or need. Our provision is designed to promote equality of opportunity and to celebrate the rich diversity within our school community. Activities are adapted where necessary so that every child can participate fully, feel valued and experience success. We believe that an inclusive Forest School environment strengthens children's sense of belonging, encourages respect for others, and ensures that every child is able to flourish as the unique individual God created them to be.

Spirituality at CSM within Forest School

At Coningsby St Michael's, we believe that spirituality is the unique way you connect with yourself, others, nature, and what you believe lies beyond our world—giving you a sense of purpose, belonging and meaning. This understanding of spirituality underpins our approach to nurturing the whole child and is deeply reflected in our Forest School practice.

Forest School provides rich opportunities for spiritual development by enabling children to:

- Connect with themselves through moments of calm, reflection, and personal challenge in the natural environment.
- Connect with others as they collaborate, problem-solve and support one another in shared outdoor experiences, developing empathy, compassion and respect.
- Connect with nature through hands-on exploration that sparks awe, wonder and curiosity, helping children appreciate the beauty and complexity of God's world.
- Explore belief and purpose by engaging with big questions, reflecting on their place in the world and developing their own sense of meaning and responsibility.
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Through these experiences, Forest School actively supports our whole-school definition of spirituality and contributes to the holistic development and wellbeing of every child.

What is Forest School?

The Forest School approach, first developed in Scandinavia, emphasises regular, long-term learning in natural spaces. Children develop strong social and communication skills, high self-esteem, and confidence through participant led, hands-on experiences that integrate observation, reflection, and progression over time. Our ethos enables teachers to observe, scaffold, and facilitate learning rather than direct it.

Forest School Association Provider:

CSM is proud to meet the benchmarks for good practice and minimum professional standards recognised by the Forest School Association. We work to the six core principles agreed by the UK Forest School community (2011) and evaluate regularly to maintain high quality.

How CSM meets the six principles (summary):

1. Regular, long-term programme: Sessions occur frequently across terms with the same learner groups; planning and review are informed by observation and pupil voice. (Children use a FS Passport to show progression.)
2. Woodland/natural environment: We use our Mystical Garden woodland area (on school grounds) to build meaningful relationships with nature and practise sustainable site management.
3. Holistic development: We foster physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, spiritual development—cultivating resilient, confident, independent, and creative learners.
4. Supported risk taking: Learners take age appropriate risks through a Risk–Benefit approach (including fires and tools where suitable and assessed).
5. Qualified practitioners: Led by a Level 3 Forest School Leader (Mrs Gates), with appropriate ratios and current paediatric + outdoor first aid; leaders are reflective practitioners.
6. Learner centred processes: We prioritise play, choice, curiosity, observation, and reflection to personalise learning and build a strong community of practice

Forest School activities:

Organisation of Sessions and Activities

- Format: Typically small groups participate in a six-week block (around two hours per session), building skills and confidence week by week.
- Pedagogy: Sessions are designed and led by trained staff and increasingly participant-led as learners take more responsibility.
- Curriculum links: Activities connect with PE, Maths, English, D&T, Science, Music and Art and complement our topic based curriculum.-based curriculum.
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Example activities (adapted to age/need):

Tree investigations • Climbing and balancing • Natural art • Shelter building • Knots and lashings • Woodwork (e.g., simple tools) • Bug homes & bird feeders • Fire lighting (where appropriate) • Animal tracking • Bug hunts • Classifying natural materials • Team games.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Forest School Leaders:**
 - Lead planning, delivery, and review; maintain documentation and equipment; carry an emergency pack.
 - Conduct site and activity risk assessments; uphold Health & Safety and Safeguarding policies.
 - Keep accident/incident records and inform parents/carers as appropriate.
- **Support Staff and Volunteers:**
 - Briefed on site rules, risk assessments, and relevant policies.
 - Hold enhanced DBS checks where required and follow safeguarding procedures.
- **Named personnel:**
 - Forest School Leader (Level 3): Mrs Gates
 - DSL: Mrs Stephanie Liley; Deputy DSL: Mrs Eden, Miss Wise and Miss Williams.

Site: The Mystical Garden (CSM Grounds)

- Small woodland area (mixed deciduous, mainly Elder) to the left of the school field past the junior playground.
- Not publicly accessible; perimeter monitored as the site backs onto the Alan Barker fields.
- Children learn to minimise their impact: respect habitats, leave deadwood in situ, take litter/materials out, and leave the site as found.

Our Forest School Code of Conduct:

- We will enter the Mystical Garden area respectfully and know that when at Forest School specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Woodland environment. We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.

Health & Safety and Risk–Benefit:

- Forest School develops children's responsibility and safe decision making through guided, proportional risk taking. Making through guided, proportional risk-taking.-making through guided, proportional risk-taking.
- A site risk assessment is completed by the Leader at the start of the day, with a pre-session check before each session.

- Activity risk assessments are in place for higher risk tasks (e.g., whittling, shelter building, fire lighting/cooking, palm drilling).-risk tasks (e.g., whittling, shelter building, fire lighting/cooking, palm drilling).
- Individual risk assessments are completed where medical/behavioural needs require.
- First aid: sessions are staffed by a qualified first aider; a first aid and burns kit is on site; a mobile phone/radio is carried; the office holds emergency contacts.

Balanced approach to risk:

We do not eliminate risk but weigh risks and benefits. If risk can be managed to an acceptable level and educational value is clear, the activity proceeds. Children are involved in discussing hazards and controls to build ownership, judgement, and confidence.

Fire Safety (Policy and Procedures):

- Fires take place only in the designated fire pit within the Mystical Garden, with log seating arranged to form a clearly defined fire circle.
- Entry/exit points are established and rehearsed; no running or carrying items within the fire circle.
- Fires are lit and supervised by a trained/insured adult; never left unattended.
- Safety equipment (water/sand, fire blanket, heat-proof gloves) and a burns kit are present and checked beforehand.
- Hair tied back, loose clothing secured; enhanced supervision (e.g., 2:1, 1:1, or 4:1 for simple toasting with skewers) applied as appropriate.
- Extinguish safely (allow to die down, then douse with water/sand); signage placed at the gate to alert others while embers remain hot.
- In case of burns: first aid administered immediately; parents informed; CPOMS updated; emergency services called if required.

Safe Use of Hand Tools:

- Tools are central to Forest School and used under close supervision (typically up to 1:4 in KS2; reduced ratios when first introduced or for younger children).
- Leaders demonstrate good practice and use a consistent "Tool Talk" script.
- Tools commonly used: bow saw, loppers, peelers, sheath knife, mallet, hammer, palm drill.
- Tools are checked, cleaned, and stored securely in a locked box in the Mystical Garden (access limited to leaders/site manager).
- Damaged/unsafe equipment is removed and repaired/replaced.
- Tool risk assessments are maintained and reviewed regularly.

Food and Allergies:

- Check allergies, medical needs, and dietary/religious considerations in advance (MCAS).
- Hygiene: hand-cleaning before handling food; clean equipment; airtight storage; cook food thoroughly; clear and dispose of waste appropriately.
- See Forest School Handbook for procedures on disposal of food, litter, and wastewater.

Clothing Requirements:

Appropriate clothing is essential for safety and comfort. The woodland is often cooler under shade.

- Winter: vest/t-shirt, long-sleeved top, jumper, waterproof coat and trousers, socks, wellies, hat, gloves, scarf.
- Summer: t-shirt/top, light long trousers (school summer dresses require forest trousers), socks, trainers/shoes/wellies (no sandals/flip-flops), sunhat; sunglasses if needed.
- Participants bring their own insect repellent and sunscreen (permissions as required).
- Spare waterproofs/clothing are available and should be matched to pupils in advance.
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We work on the principle that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing”, while remaining responsive to pupils’ sensory and health needs.

Toileting:

- All children use the toilet before leaving the classroom.
- During sessions, pupils use their own year group toilets.-group toilets.
- EYFS uses a buddy system.

Emergency Procedures:

- All participants are briefed on emergency signals (e.g., Forest School Call), stop-and-listen routines, and assembly points.
- The Leader assesses the situation, ensures group safety and supervision, and follows the Emergency Procedure in the Handbook.
- Accidents/incidents are recorded; parents/carers informed as appropriate. Forest School has its own accident book

Cancellation and Contingency:

- Sessions may be postponed in unsafe weather (e.g., high winds, thunderstorms, extreme cold) or due to insufficient staffing/ratios.
- Where possible, an alternative indoor/adapted session is provided.
- Campfires will not take place without a Qualified Forest School Leader present.

Essential Equipment (typical):

First aid kit • Burns kit • Emergency procedures • Medical/contacts list • Risk assessments • Radio/mobile phone • Emergency blanket • Accident forms • Individual medication (clearly labelled; staff trained; parental consent) • Appropriate clothing • Fire blanket.

Additional items as needed: wet wipes/hand gel • sunscreen (permissions) • spare clothing • hot water • high-energy snacks • plastic bags • roll mat/blanket • torch • bucket of water • emergency fire kit • knife • emergency shelter • tick remover.

Legislation and Linked Policies:

- Key legislation includes: *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Children Act 1989*; current safeguarding and data protection legislation.
- Trust/School policies (see website/handbook): Safeguarding; Health & Safety; First Aid; Risk Assessment; Behaviour; Equality & Diversity; Confidentiality; Forest School Handbook (including fire, tools, toilets, animals).
- CSM operates as part of the LAAT Academy Trust and follows Trust policies and procedures.
- School policies are available at: <https://www.coningsbyprimary.co.uk>

Training and Professional Development;

Training needs are identified through appraisal and ongoing evaluation. Within financial constraints, staff are enabled to access relevant CPD. Leaders maintain **Level 3** practice and **first aid** certifications and engage in reflective practice.