**A St John’s Forest School Explorer**

***‘Children are a gift from the Lord’ (Psalm 127 v.3)***

**The vision of our school**

***St. John’s is a caring, Christian community striving to support its members to achieve their God given potential. Exploring our unique gifts and raising aspirations, we prepare our children for the challenges of the modern world. Following Jesus’ example, we seek to grow good people who can make a difference.***

**A Vision Statement for Forest School**

**What is Forest School?**

Forest School is not a new trendy concept. As early as the 1800’s Philosophers, Naturalists and Educators across Europe have been exploring the virtues of outdoor learning.

In the 1970’s the education system moved towards a teacher/outcome centred approach, in attempt to improve literacy and numeracy. As a response to this an “alternative” educational model was formed and so Forest School (as we now know it) emerged.

In the early 1990’s a group of nursery practitioners went to Scandinavia to study the open-air culture (Frulitsliv) in pre-schools. They came back to the UK enthused and they created a similar child-centered/play based pedagogy based on the Scandinavian model.

**What are the guiding principles of Forest School?**

1. Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions. The cycle of planning, observation, adaption and review links each session.
2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to their environment and to themselves.
5. Forest School uses a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.
6. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

**St John’s Forest School Vision Statement**

Forest School is about exploration, resilience and learning in a stimulating relaxing and enriched environment. It allows our children “Freedom with purpose” to connect with the outdoor environment and everything that entails. Forest School promotes risk taking, independence and self-awareness for all children (and adults).

Here at St John’s we have been running regular Forest School sessions for the past year and we believe it will remain an integral part of our enhanced curriculum offer. We are extremely lucky to have a well established woodland on our grounds and we make regular use of it in our curriculum. With regular sessions being held for each class group the children are encouraged to take ownership of the woodland. They are expected to adhere to the environmental impact statement and are also encouraged to assist in maintaining the sustainability of the woodland by creating new pathways, cutting down brambles and ensuring that we leave our woodland area “better than we found it.”

**God in our Lives**

Our school is a safe place where curious children feel they can discuss and develop their understanding. Forest school gives them an opportunity away from the classroom to reflect and think as well as try new things.

**Ignite your fire**

All children can learn and all children benefit from highly structured teaching in the classroom. We believe, however, that children also benefit tremendously from different experiences and being challenged. Forest School provides all of our children with an opportunity to learn new skills and gain new knowledge.

**Family**

At St John’s we help our children to be tolerant and responsible citizens by developing their ability to work with others. Forest School provides a wonderful opportunity to develop their teamwork through communication, problem solving and taking the initiative.

**Truth**

We encourage the children to recognise what it is important to them and to stand up for themselves by doing the right thing. Children are encouraged to explore and develop the Christian values. For example, in Forest School the children are supported to be courageous. We believe this can be achieved by examples in worship and class, discussion and opportunities to be courageous. Forest School provides a great environment for this endeavour.