

## **Living and fulfilling our Christian vision**

***'Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop- a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.'***  
***(Matthew 13 Verse 8)***

### **Forest School**

Our high-quality Forest School aims to provide our children with a deep knowledge and understanding of the world they live in, their part in it, and the passion to fully engage with it.

It aims to give our children the confidence, resilience, creativity and skills to develop their own potential and to connect with the natural world, both independently and as part of a caring community. This will enable them to explore and discover more throughout their lives. It provides opportunities for peace, stillness and silent reflection, combined with awe and wonder at God's creations.

Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for children to develop in ways which meet their own needs across all aspects of their development - physical, spiritual, social, emotional and intellectual.

At Forest School, children learn vital life skills, take managed risks with support, and learn to be increasingly independent, resourceful, caring and capable citizens.

### **Our Core Curriculum (The Good Soil)**

At Forest School, our children have the opportunity to play in natural areas and refine their senses through engagement with their environment. Children acquire knowledge of local natural environments and the wildlife within them, combined with the skills to explore them safely and respectfully. As children visit the woods in virtually all weathers across the seasons, they learn how situations change and develop resilience and self-regulation.

Our Forest School is a holistic approach, which helps each child learn and develop as a 'whole child'. Whilst our Forest School sessions are learner led, with children having the opportunity to make choices based on their own interests, we make available a wide range of activities which are carefully planned and resourced, enabling children to build their skills at their own pace. They develop practical skills using natural resources and hand tools to design, create and construct works of art, their own tools and to enrich habitats for the local wildlife. Children learn how to identify and harvest suitable resources in a sustainable fashion.

At Forest School, our children learn about looking after themselves, each other and the environment. They learn to assess risk and how to engage with some more risky activities (such as fire and tools) in a safe manner, helping them to develop essential life skills. They learn social skills, increasingly working together and supporting each other. They have opportunities to solve real life problems, stimulating their creative, social and intellectual skills. Moreover, our Forest School sessions inspire curiosity and fascination in our children, developing in them an intrinsic desire to learn.

Wellbeing activities, regular opportunities for being quiet and still, and regular reflections also help children to recognise their emotions, develop self-awareness and identify with the needs of others.

### **Our Enrichment (The Right Conditions)**

Our Forest School sessions offer rich, first hand experiences which help our children to bring alive, and apply, their knowledge and skills to the world around them.

As our children progress, their growing connection to and knowledge of our local area helps them to deepen their understanding of their part within the world around them. They develop empathy for other creatures who live in the woods and learn about their needs, habitats and life cycles. They have the opportunity to extend their application of our school values to the wider world and participate in woodland management tasks aimed at improving the woodland for other visitors as well as the local wildlife.

As part of their Forest School experience, our children learn about other cultures and historical traditions, widening their viewpoint across space and time, and developing compassion and humility to other people and all God's creatures. Carefully chosen Christian and other traditional stories help children to develop a moral compass, along with wisdom and a sense of justice.

In addition to observing how different species and the landscape as a whole, change with the seasons, children can also start to understand the natural cycles of life, death and new life. Seasonal celebrations are incorporated into the Forest School year, with crafts often linked to the availability of natural resources and Christian traditions. These may also be a focus for coming together as a community, cooking local seasonal healthy foods on a camp fire.

At Forest School, children can experience awe and wonder at the beauty of God's creation, whilst also having the time and space to practise gratitude and reflect on their experiences.

### **Shaping the Future (Harvesting the Crop)**

For our children to care for the natural world and all God's creatures in the future, they will need to be connected to it; have a sense of hope and compassion for it; have the personal, practical and intellectual skills to help.

Ultimately, the deeper our children are connected to the natural world, and the greater their compassion for it, the more they will be driven to act as ambassadors and guardians of the world.

Additionally, the greater their level of knowledge, understanding and skill, the more they will be able to engage with nature and others.

By aiming to facilitate our children to develop a sense of peace in the natural world and hope for the future, combined with other personal qualities such as resilience, creativity, the ability to see problems from different perspectives, we will be equipping them with valuable tools to tackle some of the complex issues which are likely to arise in the future.

By facilitating the development of these areas in our children, we hope they will be able to contribute to caring and protecting all of God's creations as they, throughout their lives, explore, learn, play, reflect and work.