

St. Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School
CASTLE STREET, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB10 1BQ



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Headteacher: *Mr Christopher Jarman*

Dear Parents,

Forest School at St Mary's School

We have been running Forest School sessions at St Mary's for many years now and believe that all children should have a 'Forest School experience' during their time with us. For Reception children, Forest School will be starting on Thursday 19th September. They will have their session every Thursday morning and Year 1 will have their session on a Thursday afternoon (Y1 will start on Thursday 12th September). On those days, children should come to school in their Forest school clothes (see below) and please make sure that you also provide your child with **uniform (including spare shoes) to change into for the afternoon as well as a large plastic bag for all of their wet forest school clothes.**

The location will be the woodland area on the lower school field near the outdoor classroom. The Forest School leader is Mrs Katie McInnes who is qualified at the top level of forest school qualifications (level 3). Please read the following important information.

Information about Forest School

Forest School is run by trained Leaders and aims to build up children's skills, abilities and confidence week by week through practical hands-on activities in the outdoors. It gives them the chance to explore, learn and discover at their own pace in a safe and supportive space.

Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation.

Activities can include:

- Woodwork using tools e.g. making musical instruments, jewellery, decorative items
- Natural art (including Hapa Zome)
- Fire lighting
- Using knots and lashings
- Shelter building
- Bug hunts
- Relaxing in hammocks
- Loose parts play
- Rope swings and balance on slacklines

There are many benefits to Forest School. For example, it can:

- Develop physical abilities and help participants to stay active and healthy.
- Heighten self-awareness and improve emotional and social skills.
- Promote co-operative and group working.
- Encourage children to take care of themselves and others.

- Foster care, appreciation and respect for wildlife and wild places.
- Broaden knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

Safety at Forest School

There is always a high adult to participant ratio at Forest School. All activities are thoroughly risk assessed before the start of each session and Leaders continue to monitor the safety of the group as activities progress. There is always a trained first aider present at each session and a written emergency plan to follow.

Who will be running the Forest School sessions?

Sessions will be overseen by Forest School leader Katie McInnes. She will be assisted by Lucinda Wulfse and other St Mary's school staff. We are always keen for parent volunteers at forest school – we would really appreciate your help so if you can spare any time on a Thursday morning or afternoon then please let us know via the office.

What your child needs to wear for Forest School

The Forest School sessions will take place entirely outside whatever the weather. We will provide a shelter from the elements, but it is still important that your child wears clothes that are waterproof and warm and that are OK to get wet and muddy. Your child should wear:

- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Wellington boots (or sturdy walking boots)
- Comfortable long trousers
- Comfortable, warm long sleeved top or fleece
- Long sleeved T-shirt.
- Thick socks if the weather's cold - thermal if possible or two pairs of thinner ones

In case of warm weather in September, your children will need a sunhat and long-sleeved tops and bottoms (pyjamas are great as they are thin) to protect them from sunburn, stings and scrapes.

As the weather becomes colder, layering is always the best way to stay warm. Please see below for a guide that helps you with this.

This year, we have some spare wellington boots in smaller sizes to give away (appropriate for Reception aged children). If you need any, please let us know as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about any of this, please get in touch with the office.

We look forward to welcoming your children to Forest School!

Kind regards

Mrs McInnes
Forest School Leader