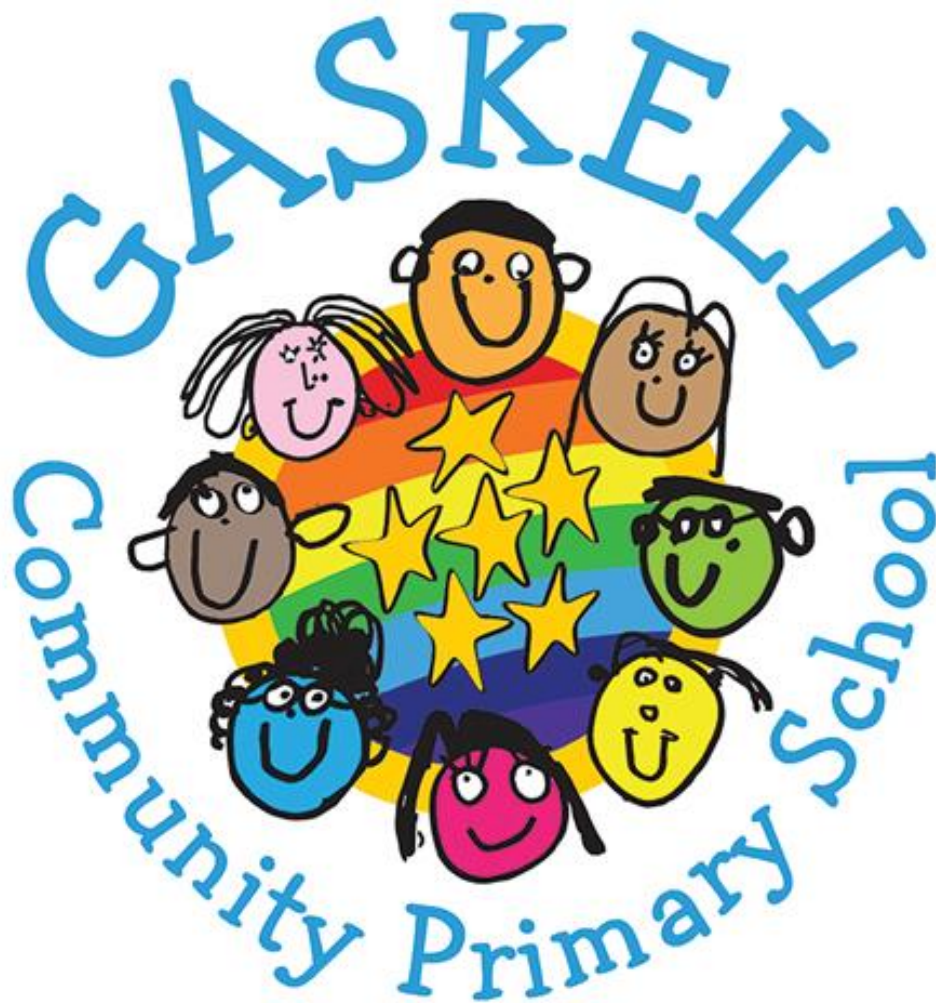




Forest School Policy

Approved by: Headteacher & SLT

Last reviewed: September 2023

Next review: July 2025

Our Forest School Policy aims to foster the children's love of learning outdoors. At Gaskell Primary School, we believe that all of the children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. We believe that the theory, ethos and practice of Forest School will have a positive impact on the children here at Gaskell Primary School.

Our Forest School programme strongly supports our school drivers:

- **Healthy Pioneers**
- **Avid Adventurers**
- **World Citizens**
- **Confident Communicators**
- **Creative Minds**

What do we mean by Forest School?

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

Forest School has a developmental ethos shared by thousands of trained practitioners around the world, who are constantly developing their learning styles and skills to support new and imaginative learners. Its roots reach back to the open-air culture, friluftsliv, or free air life, seen as a way of life in Scandinavia where Forest School began. It arrived in the UK in 1993 and has grown from strength to strength since then.

The process helps and facilitates more than knowledge-gathering, it helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to try stuff out and take risks. Forest School inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of how a learner fits within it. Our approach to risk means that learners constantly expand on their abilities by solving real-world issues, building self-belief and resilience. We believe that risk is more than just potential for physical harm, but a more holistic thing, there are risks in everything we do, and we grow by overcoming them. Forest School therefore, helps participants to become, healthy, resilient, creative and independent learners.

Forest School Association

Delivering Forest School

Quality Forest School is a delivery which holds to all six key principles:

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

Outcomes of Forest School

Our programme for Forest School aims to help our children to understand that they are:

- Equal, unique and valuable.
- Competent to explore and discover.
- Entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge.
- Entitled to choose and to initiate and drive their own learning and development.
- Entitled to experience regular success.
- Entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people.
- Entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world.

At Gaskell Primary School, we deliver six-week sessions for all of our Year 2 and Year 4 children throughout the year. We also run an afterschool club for the Year 5 children where some of the children are targeted for attendance.

Forest School sessions are delivered by Qualified Practitioners. They are supported by other members of staff who have a clear and supportive role in the session.

Health and Safety

All of the Forest School sessions are held on the school grounds and all of the participants are made aware of the risk and dangers involved. The fire-pits have safety areas and any tool use is closely monitored with 1:1 teacher / child ratio where required. The Forest School Leader is trained in Outdoor First Aid and participants understand the emergency procedures.