RCFS Forest School Curriculum Overview

The intent of the Forest School curriculum is to provide children with the opportunity to progress throughout the years in all areas whilst maintaining the six principles of forest school.

There are five levels to achieve whilst at RCFS. Children will be given opportunities to practise and build on their skills. These levels and the corresponding year groups they are introduced at are listed below:

Beginners: Nursery and Reception

Advanced Beginners: Year 1 and Year 2

Intermediate: Year 3 and Year 4

Proficient: Year 5

Expert: Year 6

Level Focus Overview:

Beginners - Nursery and Reception

- Tool Use → Safe use of secateurs, peelers, loppers, saws, froe
- Shelter → Nests, dens, mini-shelters, ridge-line tarps, storm shelter
- Fire → Fire circle safety, moving safely, sparks, simple cooking, extinguishing
- Nature → Seasons, dead vs. living wood, minibeasts, safe plant ID
- Rope → Overhand knot, half hitch, threading wood cookies, simple crafts

Advanced Beginners - Year 1 and Year 2

Focus: Building familiarity and early skills development.

- Tool Use → Knife safety routines, pointing & flattening sticks, basic whittling
- Shelter → Tarp shelters, natural lean-to, sitting/using shelters correctly
- Fire → Using natural tinder (birch bark, cotton wool), ember creation, bread on a stick
- Nature → Tree ID (Rowan, Sycamore), animal tracks, habitats, fungi
- Rope → Timber hitch, square lashings, reef knot, coiling rope, rope care

Intermediate - Year 3 and Year 4

- **Tool Use** → Knife grips, carving pegs, bark stripping for cordage, hoop whittling
- **Shelter** → Multi-person tarp shelter, debris hut, evaluating shelter site suitability
- **Fire** → Split wood kindling, feather sticks, maintaining a fire, ember cooking
- **Nature** → Oak & Birch identification, foraging rules, mapping habitats
- **Rope** → Shear lashings, clove hitch, tripod building, knot sequences

Proficient - Year 5

Practical fire skills, including friction lighting and outdoor cooking, are currently on hold in line with insurance guidance. These remain potential future elements of our developing curriculum.

- Tool Use → Carving utensils, making tent pegs, basic greenwood craft
- Shelter → Elevated tarp systems, waterproofing natural shelters, group shelters
- Fire → Fire lays (teepee, log cabin, star fire), cooking multi-ingredient meals, fire in wet weather
- Nature → Hazel & Willow ID, seasonal foraging, fungi spore printing, animal behaviour
- Rope → Diagonal lashings, camp gadgets (drying rack, wash stand), knot speed test

Expert - Year 6

- Tool Use → Bow saw projects, carving advanced items (mallet, spatula), safe axe use (if age-appropriate)
- Shelter → Long-term natural shelters, insulation layering, survival priority planning
- Fire → Friction fire lighting (bow drill/hand drill), charcoal making, advanced fire lays
- Nature → Ash & Yew ID, sustainable foraging, animal tracking in depth, seasonal ecology
- Rope → Advanced lashings for large structures, rope bridges, pioneering projects

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