

# The Secret Garden



## What is the Secret Garden?

At St. Aloysius, we are fortunate enough to have our very own Forest School named 'The Secret Garden'. All children, from Nursery through to Year 6, have the opportunity to participate in Forest School, a unique and enriching outdoor education experience. Forest School promotes holistic development, encouraging physical, emotional, and social growth by engaging children in hands-on learning within a natural environment. It fosters a deep connection to nature, enhances problem-solving skills, and builds resilience, confidence, and teamwork. Forest School supports mental wellbeing, creativity, and curiosity by allowing children to explore and interact with the outdoors, providing an important balance to classroom-based learning.

## Among the many benefits of Forest School are:

- *Improved confidence and self-esteem*
- *Physical skills*
- *Communication and personal skills*
- *Positive attitudes towards learning*
- *Developing a deep respect and love for nature*
- *The ability to recognise and manage risk*
- *Learning new skills*



## Inclusivity

Forest Schools provide play-based learning opportunities for all children in an outdoor environment. They tailor an educational curriculum to a participant's preferred learning style and are holistic in approach.

Children of all ages and all abilities find special things to do in The Secret Garden. They find that each of them can succeed at something, and they learn new ways of co-operating and communicating. Forest School experience is making a **big difference to the lives of children with low self-esteem and lack of confidence**. Children with particular needs and children who find indoor schooling hard to take can develop new ways of coping through working in the Secret Garden.



## Who is responsible for running The Secret Garden?

Mrs Crawford is our **qualified Forest School Leader**. She is responsible for the safe running of the Secret Garden and models best practice at all times. She also holds a current Forest School First Aid qualification. Mrs Crawford carries out ongoing risk assessments and will follow a pre-established Emergency Action Plan if necessary.



## Will the children be using tools and cooking around a campfire?



The safe use of tools and fire is an integral part of the Forest School experience. Children will always be closely supervised and will always be taught correct methods and how to keep safe.

## Will sessions go ahead in bad weather?



Secret Garden sessions take place in all weathers and seasons. Children will have new experiences over the course of the year. They will always be informed of what they need to bring in advance.



We are always excited to invite parents, carers and family members to join us in the Secret Garden. We hold seasonal gatherings (Bonfire Bonanza, Spring Spectacle, Summer Garden Party to name but a few) where the children get the opportunity to show their adults what they get up to in their outdoor learning sessions.

These sessions provide wonderful opportunities for grown-ups to engage in fun, interactive activities with their children whilst also learning more about our school environment.

