



**THE FOREST
NURSERY AND
JUNIOR SCHOOL**

WELCOME

Merchiston is proud to introduce The Forest Nursery and Forest Junior School. The Forest's ground-breaking approach to education empowers children to become confident, curious, and resilient learners with broad imaginations. Our outstanding curriculum nurtures cognitive and emotional growth while fostering creativity within rigorous academic learning, ensuring a well-rounded and enriching educational experience.



OUR BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS

The 100-acre Merchiston campus is the ideal location for The Forest:

- Diverse species of trees including: Cherry, Oak, Eucalyptus, Sycamore, Pine, Horse Chestnut, Maple, Lime
- Diverse wildlife including: Deer, Badgers, Foxes, Owls, Bats, Nesting Birds, Beehives and Bees, Butterflies, Moths and a vibrant insect population
- Pond and access to the Water of Leith



KEY FACTS

- Opening September 2024
- Co-educational
- Nursery - fully forest-based
- Junior School - blended curriculum including EYFS, CfE and outdoor education
- Located in Merchiston's 100-acre campus
- High staff/child ratio (1:4 in nursery)
- Small class sizes (maximum 20) (rolling through to P7 in 2025)
- Specialist subject teachers in music, languages, science and PE



ETHOS OF THE FOREST

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Outdoor education transforms the academic learning by bringing classroom lessons to life. It fosters critical thinking, enhances problem-solving skills, and promotes physical well-being. Our cutting edge curriculum integrates traditional learning with real-world experiences, inspiring your children to explore, discover, and thrive in a natural environment, thus creating a well-rounded, engaged, and resilient learner.

Our innovative education encompasses inquiry-based learning, equipping your children with real skills and knowledge. This approach encourages curiosity, nurtures creativity, and ensures that our children are prepared to meet the challenges of the future with confidence and competence.



HOLISTIC LEARNING

Holistic learning is essential in today's educational curriculum, focusing on the development of the whole child. By addressing emotional, social, physical, and intellectual growth, we aim to build resilient and happy children. This approach ensures that our pupils not only excel academically but also develop the emotional intelligence and adaptability needed to thrive in an ever-changing world. By nurturing a balanced and supportive learning environment, we prepare our students to face life's challenges with confidence and joy.



EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- Encouraging tactile exploration through free play with natural materials.
- Child-led discovery. Exploring our environment to foster curiosity.
- Games! Building coordination and muscle memory through physical play.
- Gardening: A 'farm to fork' ethos growing vegetables and planting bulbs to learn food.
- Providing homes for minibeasts and understanding ecosystems.
- Using natural materials to create artistic expressions.



- Cooking and preparing food: Learning culinary skills and healthy eating habits.
- Teaching practical skills with real tools with an emphasis on safety.
- Developing observation skills and a connection to nature.
- Listening to stories and participating in songs. Enhancing literacy and creativity.
- Relaxation and social time: Allowing moments to chat, bond and play with friends.
- Promoting teamwork and imaginative play through den building, lighting fires, performing on stage to name a few.



THE NURSERY

THE FOREST NURSERY DAY

Welcome from your child's Key Worker

Handover of any important messages and confirmation of pick up.

Self-registration

Each child will self-register at the 'registration station'.

Daily familiarisation

Prepare themselves for the day ahead by chatting with friends and playing.

Gather circle

Children share their news, plans and ideas for the day ahead whilst enjoying a snack.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

Forest Exploration

Child-led adventures where staff support and inspire creativity, curiosity, and scientific observation.

Journeys

Exciting staff-guided expeditions to uncover hidden gems of our amazing campus, integrating early map reading and making and environmental science.

Base activities

Imaginative play, storytelling, reading, tool use, art creation, and hands-on math and literacy exercises for those who stay at base.





A TYPICAL DAY IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOL P1-P3

WELCOME

Welcome from your child's teacher

Opportunity to hand over any important messages from previous days/overnight and in relation to pick up.

Deposit bags/coats on their pegs

Each child will then self-register at the 'registration station'.

Class-based with supervised outdoor access

Activities that are planned for inside are directly mirrored outdoors.



MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM

Mathematics across the Junior School will be taught using concrete materials such as Numicon and money, enhancing conceptual understanding and practical application. Our comprehensive approach includes the Big Maths scheme, which systematically develops pupils' numerical fluency and problem-solving skills. Some of the key concepts covered are:

Place value: Building a strong foundation in understanding the value of digits.

Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division: Mastering fundamental operations through interactive and engaging methods.

Problem-solving: Applying mathematical reasoning to real-life scenarios.

Real-life activities: Connecting mathematics to everyday contexts, making learning relevant and meaningful.

Through this robust curriculum, we aim to develop confident and competent mathematicians equipped with essential skills for future learning.

LITERACY CURRICULUM

Phonics will be taught through the distinct synthetic phonics program, working alongside a variety of exciting, current reading schemes to teach your child to read but to also enjoy reading.. While structured and adult-led, our approach remains practical and hands-on.

Our excellent primary literacy curriculum also naturally includes:

Handwriting: Developing fine motor skills and clear, legible writing.

Grammar: Building a solid understanding of language structure.

Imaginative writing: Encouraging creativity and storytelling.

Poetry: Exploring rhythm, rhyme, and expressive language.

Factual writing: Teaching how to convey information clearly and accurately.

Personal writing: Fostering self-expression and reflective thinking.

Through this comprehensive program, we aim to cultivate strong, versatile literacy skills in our students.



A TYPICAL AFTERNOON

As well as learning in the classroom, our social science, historical and geographical curriculum will be taught through a series of topics and enquiry-based learning. Children will also be encouraged to develop their own specific interests through mini-topics relevant to them.

Maths and Literacy will naturally be reinforced throughout the day.

Science, Music, Languages and PE will all be taught by specialist subject teachers throughout the week.



ENQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

The Forest is an incredible setting for enquiry-led learning, where education comes alive. Here, adults listen to children, nurture their curiosity, and find the sparks that inspire their learning. We ask our pupils big questions, where real learning takes place.

Instead of a standard topic on ‘Climate Change’ or ‘Dinosaurs,’ we might ask, “Could we rewild the Forest with dinosaurs?”

This opens up enormous possibilities for pupil-led enquiry and connections to environmental issues. What did they eat? How do we know? How big were they? Could any fit in our classroom? Were any smaller than us or taller than a Scots pine? What causes creatures to become extinct? We might identify tree types and plants for herbivores and wonder what carnivores might eat. Would rewilding the Forest with dinosaurs be a good idea? How about other UK animals? Which of Edinburgh’s biodiversity targets could we help with to protect our wildlife from climate change?

FANTASTIC FRIDAYS

The whole Junior School will spend Fridays outdoor developing their problem solving and team-building skills.

They will also have time and space to reflect on lessons learned during the week and consolidate their understanding through practical hands-on experiments and activities.



WELLBEING

At The Forest, we are passionate about fostering the holistic well-being of our young learners through a unique and nurturing approach to education.

We pride ourselves on recognising that each child is unique so we tailor our methods to support their growth and their physical, emotional, and intellectual development.

Our commitment to the outdoors is an integral part of our educational philosophy. We believe that nature offers an unparalleled classroom, and we encourage our students to explore and connect with the natural world. Through outdoor hands-on experiences, our children learn important life skills, develop a sense of responsibility, and gain a deeper appreciation for the environment.

We place a strong emphasis on social and emotional development, helping children build strong relationships, develop empathy, and grow into well-rounded individuals. Our approach is designed to create a supportive and enriching environment that allows each student to thrive and reach their full potential, all while having fun and enjoying their educational journey.





PRACTICAL INFORMATION

CAPACITY

- 40 places available in Forest Nursery:
 - 16 Ante-Pre places (aged 3–4)
 - 24 Pre-School places (aged 4–5).
- 20 places available in P1.
- 20 places available in P2.
- 20 places available in P3.
- All our coeducational classes will roll through to P7.
- Nursery places can be morning, afternoon or full day, with a minimum requirement for five sessions taken across the week.



WE PROVIDE

Food

Hot lunches, freshly prepared on campus, are included in the fee. Children will also be given morning and afternoon snacks.

Nursery clothing

- Thermal waterproof jacket and trousers.
- Fleece-lined wellies.
- Waterproof backpack.

Junior clothing

- Waterproof jacket and trousers.
- Wellies.



WRAPAROUND CARE

Wraparound care will be available at an additional cost. The typical day is 8.15am – 3pm and provision will be offered before and after, from 7.45am until 6pm.

Morning wraparound care

- 7.45am – 8.15am £5 includes continental breakfast and hot drink

Afternoon wraparound care

- 3pm – 4pm £6
- 4pm – 5pm £6
- 5pm – 6pm £9 including hot dinner



TERM DATES AND HOLIDAYS

The term dates of The Forest mirror those of Merchiston Junior and Senior Schools. There are three terms per year.

Holiday clubs will be available to pupils during some half-term breaks, Easter and summer at an additional cost. These will be age-appropriate and varied. These will be provided by external contractors initially as we develop our full holiday provision.





OUR FOREST NURSERY







HOW TO APPLY

- 1 Arrange an individual tour with Davina Bowers, Head Teacher.
- 2 Register your children by contacting members of the Forest team by emailing theforest@merchiston.co.uk
- 3 Entry assessments for Primary 1–3 will take place in January each year, however children joining the school throughout the year will be offered an individual assessment time.
- 4 A formal offer letter will be sent to you to confirm your place.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow our social media for all details.

Instagram [@the.forest.at.merchiston](#)

Facebook [theforestatmerchiston](#)



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE FOREST NURSERY AND JUNIOR SCHOOL

To register your son or daughter, please
email theforest@merchiston.co.uk
or call us on +44 (0)131 312 2201.





Where learning happens naturally