

Clare Mount Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) and Forest School Programme of Study 2025/26

Intent

Clare Mount's Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) programme nurtures innovation and self-led learning within our secure, onsite outdoor area. Led by trained staff, with plans to train more to a Level 2 qualification, the programme is designed to enhance pupil experiences by adapting to individual needs and learning styles through structured, local exploration. The ethos of LOtC at Clare Mount is to provide pupils with the **freedom to discover** through our local environment. Our aim is to put pupils' individual needs and unique learning styles first, through a programme of structured activities.

For the first time, Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) is now timetabled across all of KS3 with the aim that every pupil accesses the subject. This builds on the existing Year 7 carousel and extends into KS4 through our Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Our intent is to counter the reduced freedoms and risk-averse nature of modern childhood by providing regular, hands-on experiences. These activities—such as shelter-building, fire-lighting, navigation, and campcraft—are designed to connect students with the natural world and develop practical skills and resilience throughout the school year.

Classes are taught outdoors in our forest area and on the school lawn alongside our designated LOtC classroom (G33), the school grounds and the adjoining school field. The aim is to help pupils build confidence, improve team work, cooperation and practical skills, whilst being outdoors. LOtC is flexible and adaptive and right for teaching to either key stage and all levels of ability.

To further enhance our curriculum, our next steps are focused on deepening the impact of LOtC. We are developing holistic assessment methods to monitor pupils' progress in confidence, resilience, and practical skills, using both observational records and pupil voice. We actively promote inclusion by ensuring all activities are adaptable, providing appropriate support and challenge so every pupil can achieve and thrive. Furthermore, we are promoting cross-curricular links, embedding skills through navigation, scientific understanding through habitat studies, mathematical concepts in design and measurement, and artistic expression using natural materials, thereby reinforcing classroom learning in a vibrant, real-world context.

KS3

At Clare Mount SSC, Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) is a cornerstone of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, delivered through a structured Forest School carousel for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. This progressive, three-year journey is built on a spiral model that deepens students' connection with nature each year. In Year 7, the focus is on 'Building Confidence and Community,' where pupils establish routines and build self-belief through play and social interaction. This foundation allows Year 8 pupils to transition to 'Developing Skills through Play,' as they are introduced to core practical skills like tool use and den building while exploring local habitats. By Year 9, students reach the 'Confident Independence' stage, applying their learned skills to independent, problem-solving challenges that foster creativity and teamwork. Underpinned throughout by the principles of fun, exploration, and play, this developmental carousel ensures every pupil builds resilience, cooperation, and a lasting environmental awareness in a supportive outdoor setting.

Forest School KS3 Overview

Year Group	Core Focus: Connection (Being in Nature)	Key Elements	Intended Outcomes
Year 7	Building Confidence and Community (Safe & Settled time for fun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Routines & boundaries• Nature connection• Group games & exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confidence outdoors• Feeling secure & included• Positive peer interactions
Year 8	Developing Skills through Play (Learning Skills through play in the Environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tool awareness• Den building & knots• Habitat discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic practical skills• Teamwork• Respect for the environment
Year 9	Confident Independence (Growing in Independence & Natural Play)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent tasks• Play-based problem solving• Nature-led challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applying skills• Ownership of learning• Creativity in nature

KS4

Learning at Clare Mount does not take place solely within the classroom. Our outdoor environment has massive potential for learning. We are fortunate to be situated in a rich urban and rural environment where young people's learning experiences can be enhanced by maximising the potential of the outdoors. Our intention is to deliver The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) programme for Bronze or Silver Awards during KS4. In KS4 pupils in Pathway 2 follow DofE as a part of the curriculum on offer. In Pathway 1 pupils have the choice of DofE as one of their options. The DofE is a life-changing adventure for young people aged 14-24. It helps young people develop skills for their future life and work. At Clare Mount all pupils will access the DofE, with the chance of gaining the full accreditation or sectional certificates for the areas they do complete. The four sections that are available for our pupils to access are:

- Volunteering: Helping others and the community.
- Physical: Improving health and fitness.
- Skills: Developing personal interests and talents.
- Expedition: Building teamwork and adventure in the outdoors.

At Clare Mount, learning extends beyond the classroom into our rich outdoor environment. A key part of this is our commitment to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), a life-changing programme that develops essential skills for life and work. Pupils in Key Stage 4 will all participate in the DofE as Direct Entry Silver Award participants. This provides sufficient time for everyone to achieve a full Silver Award by the end of KS4.

Pupils will follow one of two routes:

- Pathway 2: DofE is a core part of the curriculum.
- Pathway 1: DofE is available as an optional subject choice.

Pupils who complete the programme will earn the full Silver Award, while those who partially complete it will receive sectional certificates for their achievements.

Implementation

KS3

Pupils in KS3 will follow a half-term programme of study, intended to introduce the fundamental ethos of Forest School and learning outside the classroom at Clare Mount. This is a flexible programme that will be adapted to meet the needs of the group; progress through the intended programme of study is determined by how quickly familiar routines are established.

This provision is structured as a progressive, three-year journey. In Year 7 (Building Confidence and Community), pupils establish routines and build self-belief. This foundation allows Year 8 (Developing Skills through Play) pupils to explore core practical skills and local habitats. By Year 9 (Confident Independence), students apply their skills to independent, problem-solving challenges that foster creativity and teamwork.

Clare Mount Forest School Lesson - every lesson at Clare Mount will be structured to establish pupil knowledge and understanding of our forest school ethos (Freedom & Discovery)

- **Introduction** - in lineups/classroom. What are we learning today? BIG IDEA!
- **Journey out** - collect equipment from the stores and journey as a class to the forest. Discuss the weather, changes in the environment, new outdoor experiences.
- **Main activity** - deliver substantive (information) knowledge and teach relevant disciplinary knowledge (how to do the activity), allow for self/guided-discovery
- **Reflection** (evaluation/talk-time) - share achievements, evaluate what has been learnt and highlight misconceptions.
- **Journey back** - reinforce learning and celebrate highlights on the walk back to school.

Teaching staff: JWe, LG, PJ,

Sample KS3 POS: Year 7 Forest School

Overall Aim: To develop students' self-confidence, teamwork, and sense of responsibility through progressive outdoor experiences.

Half-Term	Focus	Key Learning Blocks	Culminating Experience
1. Foundations of Trust & Communication	Establishing safety and building group cohesion.	Safety & Boundaries Sensory Games Communication Play	Group reflection on trust and communication.
2. Tools & Team Challenges	Developing responsibility and problem-solving.	Tool Mastery (PASS method) Practical Crafting Team Shelter Building	Teams test their rafts and discuss collaboration.
3. Community & Campfire Culture	Applying skills to a shared, responsible goal.	Advanced Trust Games Fire & Food Preparation Collaborative Art	Final reflection on personal and group growth.
4. Environmental Explorers	Developing observation skills and environmental awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Mapping • Seasonal Changes Study • Mini-beast Habitats 	Create a class nature guidebook.
5. Creative Woodland Crafts	Enhancing creativity and fine motor skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Weaving • Clay & Natural Materials • Story Sticks 	Woodland art exhibition for parents.
6. Outdoor Leadership	Building confidence and leadership skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Teaching • Problem-Solving Challenges • Group Initiative Games 	Students plan and lead a final celebration activity.

Forest School Activities at Clare Mount:

1. Woodland Knowledge & Ecology

- Understanding the Structures of Woodlands
- Identifying a range of flora and fauna
- Nature/Wildlife Spotting Lessons
- Woodland Management Principles

2. Practical & Bushcraft Skills

- Using Hand Tools Safely (e.g., loppers, bow saws, knives)
- Knot Tying
- Shelter Building (using manmade materials like tarps)
- Shelter Building (using natural woodland materials)
- Campfire Management and Safety
- Cooking Over a Campfire

3. Creative & Construction Activities

- Land Art (creating art from natural materials)
- Making Things with Woodland Materials (e.g., name discs, mini rafts)

4. Physical Adventure & Team Building

- Team Building Games and Initiatives
- Physical Activities (e.g., climbing, balancing)
- Walking and Trekking
- Nature Trails and Treasure Hunts

Proposed forest school projects for 2025-26 at Clare Mount:

- Plant new hedgerow
- Improve fencing to obscure non natural environment
- Utilise and develop the lawn area to aid teaching i.e. grow an orchard
- Develop the existing site to improve people's experience
 - Walkways/Rewilding/Pond
- Climbing area using beams and ropes
- Complete sail shade construction to support all year round use of the site
- Build an outdoor fire pit within the existing fire pit area
- Visit local woodland - Station woods regularly to understand the habitat and its ecology
- Promote forest school to other departments to enhance LOTC

KS4

At Clare Mount, we believe in nurturing well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also develop essential life skills. That's why we follow the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for our Key Stage 4 pupils. This program offers a unique opportunity for students to build resilience, leadership, teamwork, and self-discipline—qualities that are invaluable both in school and in life. By engaging in a range of physical, voluntary, and skill-based activities, our students broaden their horizons, learn to overcome challenges, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award aligns with our commitment to fostering independence, personal growth, and social responsibility in our students, preparing them to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Navigation Training

Our navigation training equips pupils to become competent and safe navigators. It begins with fundamental map skills, including understanding OS maps, using grid references, interpreting contour lines, and measuring distances.

Pupils then learn a core strategy for navigation called the "**5 D's**": **Destination; Direction; Distance/Duration; Description; Dangers.**

They practice essential techniques like following paths or walls (handrails) and using landmarks (spot features) to track their progress.

The training advances to include calculating hiking times and planning routes using maps. This is supported by practical exercises and is integrated with other vital skills like Countryside Code and emergency procedures. Pupil progress is tracked through self-evaluations to ensure they build confidence and proficiency.

Campcraft Training for DofE Expeditions

Our campcraft training prepares pupils for self-sufficient camping on their DofE expeditions. Students learn essential skills including:

- **Tent craft:** How to pitch, strike and maintain tents correctly
- **Cooking:** Safe stove use and meal preparation
- **Camp Management:** Site selection, hygiene and following Leave No Trace principles
- **Equipment:** Efficient packing and rucksack organisation

Through practical sessions, pupils develop the confidence and competence to manage their camp independently while understanding their responsibility towards the environment.

Volunteering

Throughout Key Stage 4, pupils engage in structured volunteering to develop community responsibility and practical skills. Our partnerships provide diverse experiences at local venues, including:

- **Nanny Sharon's Alpaca Farm:** Supporting animal care and farm maintenance.
- **Birkenhead Park Allotment:** Learning horticultural skills and sustainable growing.
- **Prenton RUFC Community Hub and Garden:** Participating in community gardening and potentially the John Muir Award.
- **Wirral Park Rangers:** Assisting with conservation tasks and habitat management.

These placements offer meaningful opportunities for pupils to contribute to their local community while building teamwork and responsibility.

Skill

Selected groups will have the opportunity to undertake additional accredited courses to enhance their skills and personal development. These may include qualifications such as: **Sports Leaders Level 1; Forestry Skills Level 1; First Aid**. These courses are designed to build leadership, practical competence, and resilience, providing valuable experiences beyond the standard curriculum.

Physical

Pupils can complete the Physical section of their award by regularly participating in one of our school's extra-curricular clubs. These include a wide range of activities such as football, rugby, cricket, trampolining, futsal, and fitness sessions.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Curriculum Pathway 2025/2026

	Tuesday	Friday
	Year 10	Year 11
Activities	Navigation Sports Leaders Level 1 Rowing Nanny Sharon's Alpaca Farm	Sports Leaders / Level 1 FA First Aid Birkenhead Park Allotment Wirral Park Rangers Prenton Prenton RUFC Community Hub

September		
Date week beginning	Tuesday	Friday
	Year 10	Year 11
Week 1: 2/9/25	N/A	Presentation (JWe) / Expedition Feedback / Group Activities (maybe eDofE login)
Week 2: 9/9/25	Introduction Presentation (JWe) / Team Building (Class teachers)	eDofE login/ Group Activities
Week 3: 16/9/25	Team Building (Class teachers)	Group Activities: see new timetable
Week 4: 23/9/25	Team Building / eDofE (Class teachers)	Group Activities: see new timetable

October - July	
Monday	Friday
Year 10	Year 11
Start: 16/9/2025 Rotation 1: 24/11/2025 Rotation 2: 16/2/2026 Rotation 3: 4/5/2025	Start: 16/9/25 Rotation 1: 24/11/2025 Rotation 2: 2/3/2025

Expeditions in Years 10 & 11

All pupils have the opportunity to complete a qualifying expedition at Key Stage 4, a required component for the award. We ensure full accessibility and support for all participants, including those who may find the experience daunting.

Expeditions will take place in one of two settings: the traditional countryside around Chirk or an urban environment on the Wirral Peninsula.

Countryside Expedition (Chirk): Based at Quinta in Oswestry, this expedition challenges students to trek and navigate through the Chirk countryside. Key elements include:

- Multi-day trekking and team-based route planning
- Self-navigation and map reading
- Two nights camping
- Preparing their own meals

While students are encouraged to be self-reliant, they are closely supervised throughout. Staff conduct regular check-ins to monitor progress, well-being, and safety.

Urban Expedition (Wirral Peninsula): This expedition provides an alternative, focusing on navigation and teamwork within a dynamic urban and coastal landscape. Key elements include:

- Journeying through urban settings, parks, and along the Wirral coastline
- Mastering urban map-reading and public navigation skills
- Completing team-based exploration and journeying

Both expeditions are designed to build resilience, teamwork, and independence. Staff provide close supervision and regular check-ins to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

Impact

Learning Outside the Classroom, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Curriculum and Forest School offers a unique learning environment and different educational experience by providing opportunities outside of the traditional classroom environment.

- LOfC allows children to grow confidence by developing independence in their own time
- Range of activities promotes sharing, which builds relationships and strengthens existing bonds
- New sensory experiences promote language development, focus on improving communication skills and builds self-esteem
- Being outside in a natural environment improves fitness levels for children meeting the demands of the outdoors
- Engagement means academic pressures are removed whilst they learn at their pace
- Improved self-esteem
- Increased self-belief
- Increase cultural capital through DofE opportunities - volunteering, physical activity, learning new skills, expedition

There are also benefits to staff and their wellbeing. Seeing pupils in new environments allows new opinions and ideas to be formed.

Assessment - important to observe.

- Provides a baseline for skills
- Identifies next steps
- Informs future planning
- Professional development for forest school teachers
- Pupil feedback is essential (self-report questionnaires)

Summative Assessment: will be made to incorporate the following baseline guidance. This is used to inform staff of the impact that even a short-time experiencing LOtC can have on the participants. Allied to this summative process, a process of student observation is ongoing throughout pupils' experiences of LOtC. This method looks at individuals in greater detail. Including confidence with peers, confidence with staff, playing and exploring, Critical thinking, social, physical and spiritual development amongst other key criteria.

Pre and Post-LOtC questions for pupils

Questions	Q1. I keep trying when activities / lessons become difficult.		Q2. I am confident.		Q3. I like taking part in lessons / activities.	
	Pre-FS response	Post FS Response	Pre-FS response	Post FS Response	Pre-FS response	Post FS Response
Example	Never	Often	Sometimes	Often	Always	Always

Clare Mount Forest School Observation Criteria									
General mood		Confidence with peers			Confidence with staff			Engagement	
Score: 1 2 3 4 5		Score: 1 2 3 4 5			Score: 1 2 3 4 5			Score: 1 2 3 4 5	
Playing and Exploring		Score: 1 2 3 4 5	Active Learning	Score: 1 2 3 4 5		Creating and Thinking Critically		Score: 1 2 3 4 5	
Finding out and exploring			Being involved and concentrating			Having their own ideas			
Playing with what they know			Keeping trying			Making links			
Social		Physical		Intellectual		Community		Spirituality	
How well a person integrates within the group e.g. peers, leader		How well a person relates to things perceived through the senses (the physical world'		How a person thinks and understands ideas and information		How a person interacts within a social group who share common experiences		How a person recognises/senses the world around them	
Score: 1 2 3 4 5		Score: 1 2 3 4 5		Score: 1 2 3 4 5		Score: 1 2 3 4 5		Score: 1 2 3 4 5	
ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS									
<p>Leuvan scale 1 = Extremely Low - Activity is simple, repetitive and passive. 2 = Low - Frequently interrupted activity. 3 = Moderate - Mainly continuous activity. 4 = High - Continuous activity with intense moments. 5 = Extremely High - Continuous and intense activity great involvement.</p>									