

River School Curriculum

Revised 2025-26



Introduction

At Lealholm, our River School Curriculum is rooted in a deep connection to the natural world, inspired by the flowing landscape that surrounds our community. This curriculum is designed to nurture curiosity, creativity, and care for the environment through meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that take place in and around the River Esk.

Our intent is to provide every child with opportunities to:

- **Investigate** the natural world with wonder and purpose, developing scientific thinking and a sense of inquiry.
- **Explore** their surroundings with confidence, building resilience, independence, and a spirit of adventure.
- **Make** with their hands and minds, using natural materials to create, construct, and express ideas through outdoor learning.
- **Improve** the world around them, fostering a sense of stewardship and responsibility for the environment and their community.



Through this curriculum, we aim to cultivate learners who are not only knowledgeable but also compassionate, resourceful, and deeply connected to the places they live and learn in. Where there are relevant links, objectives have been identified in other areas of our COGL curriculum.

The River School is more than a curriculum—it is a philosophy that flows through every aspect of our teaching and learning.

Reception—Autumn Term

Investigating		
Have a duck race		
Find different animals that live in and around the river	Explore hibernation and migration, looking at contrasting environments/animals around the world in the autumn.	UTW Science EYFS
Exploring		
Go on a river adventure planned by Year 1 and 2		
Sketch items found on a scavenger hunt	Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants.	EAD Art EYFS
Making		
Create a river sculpture	I know that materials can be joined / mixed to create interesting effects.	EAD Art EYFS
Make the tallest stone tower	Share their creations, explaining the process they have used.	EAD Art EYFS
Improving		
Meet a local river user	I know the difference between good and bad actions.	PSED EYFS

KS1—Autumn Term

Investigating		
Compare frequency of living things in the river at different points in the year	Observe changes across the four seasons	Science – Cycle A & B – Seasonal Changes
Create a food chain of river life	Can construct a food chain that starts with a plant and has the arrows pointing in the correct	Science – Cycle B Autumn – Living Things and their Habitats
Exploring		
Plan a route for a river walk	Use a simple map to plan a route	Geography KS1 – Cycle A Autumn - Where I live: My School
Making		
Make a montage of photos of the river at different points in the year	Observe changes across the four seasons	Science – Cycle A & B – Seasonal Changes
Draw a diagram of the river showing the living things that can be found there	Observe animals and plants carefully, drawing and labelling diagrams	Science – Cycle B Autumn – Living Things and their Habitats
Plan and make a river picnic	Preparing fruit and vegetables	DT – Cycle A & B Autumn - Food
Improving		
Meet a local ranger/volunteer to talk about keeping rivers clean		

Year 3 and 4—Autumn Term

Investigating		
Investigate the rate of flow at different points in the river		
Exploring		
Make hot chocolates for guests on the Kelly Kettles		
Making		
Make a blackberry and apple pie		
Weave a simple shape (e.g. a star or reindeer) to sell at the Christmas Performance		
Improving		
Make thank you cards for a local ranger/volunteer		

Year 5 and 6—Autumn Term

Investigating		
Measure the speed of different shaped boats in the river to test their water resistance	Investigate the effects of water resistance in a range of contexts	Science – Cycle B Autumn – Forces and Magnets
Plan and carry out a river investigation		
Exploring		
Make blackberry jam on a Trangia stove		
Making		
Weave a product to sell at the Christmas fayre		
Improving		
Write to the government about issues affecting our local river		

Reception—Spring Term

Investigating		
Use river water to compare capacity of different containers.	Compare capacity	Maths - Reception – Spring Term Block 2 Step 4
Release butterflies next to the river	Explore the life cycle of frogs and butterflies	UTW – Science – EYFS – Spring term
Exploring		
Collect sticks by the river.	Explore length	Maths - Reception – Spring Term Block 4 Step 1
Making		
Make a river dam		
Make a skewer to cook a marshmallow using a veg peeler		
Improving		
Go on a litter pick	I know the difference between good and bad actions.	PSED EYFS

Year 1 and 2—Spring term

Investigating		
Measure the width of the river	Y1 – measure length using objects	Maths - Y1 - Spring Term Block 4 Step 2
	Y2 – measure in metres	Maths - Y2 – Spring Term Block 3 Step 2
Measure the depth of the river at different points	Measure length in centimetres	Maths - Y1 – Spring Term Block 4 Step 3
		Maths - Y2 – Spring Term Block 3 Step 1
Measure the temperature of the river	Temperature	Maths - Y2 – Spring Term Block 4 Step 9
Compare frequency of living things in or around the river at different points in the year	Observe changes across the four seasons	Science – KS1 – Cycle A & B – Seasonal Changes
Exploring		
Draw a diagram of the river showing the living things that can be found there	Observe animals and plants carefully, drawing and labelling diagrams	Science KS1 – Cycle B Autumn – Living Things and their Habitats
Learn how to start a fire in a Kelly Kettle basin with a flint and steel		
Making		
Make a montage of photos of the river at different points in the year	Observe changes across the four seasons	Science – KS1 - Seasonal Changes
	Use leading lines and rules of thirds	Computing – KS1 Cycle B – everyone can create: photography
Use a veg peeler and secateurs to cut sticks to make a model raft		
Improving		
Work out which areas of the village has the most litter and create a campaign	Recognise how people can affect the environment. (litter, air pollution etc from tourism)	Geography – Cycle A Spring – Where I live: My town

Year 3 and 4—Spring Term

Investigating		
Create a food chain of river life	Can create food chains based on research	Science – Cycle A Spring – Animals including humans
Investigate deposition by comparing the river bed at different parts of the river		
Exploring		
Visit South Gare (mouth of the River Tees) and compare with Whitby Harbour (mouth of the River Esk)	List some of the ways rivers are used and consider the impact of this on the environment	Geography – Cycle A Spring – Let's investigate rivers
Visit the source and stop at different parts of the River Esk	Compare the features of a river at different points along its course	Geography – Cycle A Spring – Let's investigate rivers
Learn how to light a Trangia stove		
Making		
Learn how to safely use a blade for whittling		
Whittle a stick into a marshmallow skewer using a knife		

Year 5 and 6—Spring Term

Investigating		
Plot air and water temperature on a line graph	Draw line graphs	Maths - Y6 – Spring Block 6 Step 1
Investigate how river creatures are adapted to live there	Can give examples of how plants and animals are suited to an environment	Science – Cycle A Spring – Evolution and inheritance
Investigate erosion and deposition by comparing the river bed at different parts of the river		
Exploring		
Visit South Gare (mouth of the River Tees) and compare with Whitby Harbour (mouth of the River Esk)	List some of the ways rivers are used and consider the impact of this on the environment	Geography – Cycle A Spring – Let's investigate rivers
Visit the source and stop at different parts of the River Esk	Compare the features of a river at different points along its course.	Geography – Cycle A Spring – Let's investigate rivers
Teach Year 3 and 4 how to light a Trangia stove		
Making		
Teach Year 3 and 4 how to safely use a blade		
Whittle their own Easter related product		

Reception—Summer Term

Investigating		
Learn about other world rivers including the Thames, the Ganges and the Mississippi	Teach children about places in the world that contrast with locations they know well.	Geography – EYFS Reception - Summer
Make a list of minibeasts found in and around the river.	Explore, observe and identify UK minibeasts.	UTW – Science – EYFS Summer term
Exploring		
Create a repeating pattern with river stones	Explore own pattern rules	Maths - Reception – Summer Block 5 Step 3
Recreate the river scene using loose parts	Represent maps with models	Maths - Reception – Summer Block 5 Step 9
Cook a marshmallow on a fire next to the river.		
Making		
Make a tin foil boat to hold marbles	Deepen understanding	Maths - Reception – Summer Term Block 6 Step 1
Improving		
Build minibeast houses out of river materials	Look after our local environment – build minibeast houses	UTW – Science – EYFS – Summer term

Year 1 and 2—Summer Term

Investigating		
Present data from a river mini-beast hunt	Make tally charts Draw pictograms	Maths - Y2 – Summer Block 3
Carry out a river bank tree survey	Can name trees and other plants that they see regularly	Science—Cycle B Summer—Plants
Exploring		
Make a hot chocolate using a Kelly kettle		
Making		
Make a montage of photos of the river at different points in the year	Observe changes across the four seasons Use leading lines and rules of thirds	Science – KS1 - Seasonal Changes Computing – KS1 Cycle B – everyone can create: photography
Weave sticks to make a simple fish		

Year 3 and 4—Summer Term

Investigating		
Plot the river water temperature on a line graph	Draw line graphs	Maths - Y4 – Summer Block 5 Step 4
Use classification keys to identify river life	Can use classification keys to identify unknown plants and animals	Science – Cycle A Summer – Living things and their habitats
Exploring		
Cook soup on a Trangia stove		
Make hot chocolates for parents next to the river		
Making		
Whittle a simple animal e.g. crocodile		
Build a shelter		
Improving		
Create a campaign video about litter in the village	Can present their learning about changes to the environment in different ways	Science LKS2 – Cycle A Summer – Living things and their habitats

Year 5 and 6

Investigating		
Create a book of river animals' life cycles	Can present their understanding of the life cycle of a range of animals in different ways	Science – Cycle A Summer – Living things and their habitats
Make classification keys of river life	Can create classification keys for plants and animals	Science – Cycle B Summer – Living things and their habitats
Exploring		
Cook a meal on a Trangia stove		
Teach Year 1 and 2 how to make hot chocolate on a Kelly Kettle		
Making		
Whittle more complex designs of own choosing		
Build a shelter with a hammock inside		
Improving		
Spread awareness about rivers in other communities with environmental issues		