

Learning to be Healthy

The importance of eating sensibly, staying physically active and getting enough rest:

- ☒ Forest School encourages active exploration of the environment – walking, climbing, balancing, digging, lifting and rolling materials etc. – thereby developing gross motor skills, strength and coordination.
- ☒ Healthy eating and good hygiene can be introduced through campfire cooking or natural foods.
- ☒ The outdoor environment has greater quantities of oxygen than the indoor environment essential for healthy brain development and learning

How to make positive choices and take sensible actions:

- ☒ Forest School encourages children to take responsibility for themselves and those around them. This is done by sharing the risk assessment process with the children and negotiating boundaries with the group.
- ☒ The repetitive nature of Forest School allows learners to build a sense of respect and care for the space.

How to protect their emotional, social and mental wellbeing:

- ☒ The outdoor natural environment is a space conducive to wellbeing and lowering of stress levels.
- ☒ The presentation of tasks in small achievable chunks increases chances of success and therefore increasing self esteem.
- ☒ The environment encourages group work where learners can develop their social skills.
- ☒ Provides space and time where learners can find an identity and work out issues in a non-threatening environment.

Learning to Achieve Economic Wellbeing

The qualities and skills needed for adult working life:

- ☒ Forest school develops confidence, self-esteem, motivation, problem-solving, independence, personal and emotional skills.
- ☒ Children will learn new skills, using real equipment for real purposes.

Learning to Stay Safe

How to identify and minimise risk:

- ☒ Risk assessment processes are shared with pupils and negotiated boundaries agreed.
- ☒ Adults model agreed behaviours and procedures at all times.

How to make informed and safe choices:

- ☒ Pupils supported to make appropriate choices at all stages.

- ☒ Choices discussed whenever appropriate.

How to voice their opinions and resist unhelpful peer pressure:

- ☒ Various circle time opportunities can be explored, to encourage group to value everyone's opinions.

How does 'Forest Schools' meet the Every Child Matters Agenda?

Learning to make a Positive Contribution

To form positive relationships and avoid bullying and discriminatory behaviour:

- ☒ Forest School is an environment where all are valued and recognised as individuals.
- ☒ Adults support learners to work positively in groups to achieve a common goal.
- ☒ The repetitive nature allows the group to build bonds and a sense of community.

How they can contribute to their own school and the wider community:

- ☒ The repeated use of a space builds a deep connection with the learners and encourages a sense of respect and care.
- ☒ Part of Forest School is to care for the site – which may be based in school or the wider community.

How to work effectively with others:

- ☒ Children are encouraged to support each other and work positively in groups.

Learning to Enjoy and Achieve

How to work imaginatively and creatively to develop new ideas, insights and ways of doing things:

- ☒ Learners are carefully supported to follow their own lines of enquiry and interest.
- ☒ Careful observations enable adults to plan next steps for individuals and extend their learning.
- ☒ Adults facilitate rather than direct – thereby allowing children to discover and explore at their own pace.
- ☒ Problem-solving and independence is encouraged and supported.

How to assess their skill, achievements and potential in order to set personal goals and achieve their best:

- ☒ Adults support learners by breaking down tasks into achievable chunks – careful open questioning allows learners to reflect on their projects and plan developments.
- ☒ Forest School provides the potential to develop numerous practical (e.g. tool use) and theoretical (e.g. species identification) skills.

The joy gained from successful learning:

- ☒ Individual achievements are recognised, valued and celebrated.

OVERLAYING ETHOS – Linking to all 5 aspects

- Whole school approach.
- Adult role as a facilitator and role model.
- Long term repetitive programme – allows time to revisit and consolidate.
- Inclusion – all learners can access at their own level and through their own style.

SELF AWARENESS

- Children are learning through multi-sensory first hand experiences.
- Learners given ownership and responsibility for themselves and the site.
- Learners are involved with assessing potential risks and given responsibility for their own risk management.
- All individuals are able to access learning at their own level and pace through their own style.
- Builds confidence and self esteem through small achievable tasks.

SOCIAL SKILLS

- Repeated experience creates a sense of belonging to a community.
- Supported to make appropriate choices in a safe environment.
- Opportunities to choose who to work with – based more on interests rather than ability, towards a common goal.
- Opportunities to problem solve, negotiate, test and evaluate.
- Language skills developed through talk for thinking and new, specific vocabulary.

How does Forest School support the development of the 5 aspects* of social and emotional learning?

MANAGING FEELINGS

- The environment provides learners with time and space to work alone or alongside others as they choose.
- Discussions about feelings can take place in a relaxed and non-threatening environment.
- Some learners encouraged to develop coping strategies for managing some emotions.

MOTIVATION

- Child led learning gives learners freedom to choose and direct own learning, based on interests and skills.
- Activities intrinsically motivated by learner – adults carefully support when necessary.
- Children's questions are encouraged and explored for as long as the learner needs to.
- Outdoor environment presents countless opportunities for learning in many different areas along many different themes.

EMPATHY

- Discussions about how everyone is feeling are encouraged.
- Learners develop risk management skills for the safety of themselves and others. A code of conduct is negotiated within the group.
- Repeated contact with site give a deep sense of place, love and care for the environment.
- Allowing children to learn in their own style at their own level and pace allows all learners to understand and value that everyone is different.

COMMUNICATION

- Opportunities for developing language for thought – in sharing ideas, planning activities, problem solving and evaluating.
- Opportunities for developing language for communication – a real life need for cooperation, negotiation, leadership etc.
- Develops vocabulary - children quickly learn the specific names for species, tools, tasks etc.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

- Repetitive experience creates a sense of community within the group.
- The environment provides learners with time and space to work alone or alongside others as they choose.
- Opportunities to choose who to work with – based more on interests rather than ability, towards a common goal.
- Often there is a real need to work with others to achieve a task.
- Children often take different group roles in the outdoors to those that they take in the classroom.

APPLICATION OF NUMBER

- Opportunities to apply number in a real life context for a real life purpose:
 - Measure – e.g. stick handling, firewood collection, construction
 - Shape – e.g. species identification
 - Space – e.g. blindfold games, map work
 - Number – e.g. counting (legs on bugs, no. in group)
 - Calculations – e.g. through careful questioning

How does Forest School support the development of the 6 Key Skills of the Primary National Curriculum?

IT

- Opportunities to use IT in a real context as a method of recording activities e.g. Cameras, video.
- Could use IT to communicate to others what Forest School is e.g. Presentations, films.

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Children are learning through multi-sensory first hand experiences.
- Presents a real life context for overcoming problems with a real need to succeed.
- Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves; their questions are not answered by adults but they are supported to find out the answers for themselves.

IMPROVING OWN LEARNING

- Child led learning gives learners freedom to choose and direct own learning, based on interests and skills.
- Builds confidence and self esteem through small achievable tasks – which transfers to all areas of life.
- Activities intrinsically motivated by learner – adults carefully support when necessary.
- Adults support children's understanding through use of open questions and valuing children's contributions.
- Children's questions are encouraged and children are supported in discovering an answer for themselves.

A Unique Child

- A child centred approach to learning.
- Planned around individual's interests, schemas and stage of development.
- Supports children to take appropriate risks safely and how to keep safe.
- Physical health benefits of being active outside.
- Mental and emotional health benefits – various research across the world indicates that contact with a natural environment induces wellbeing.

Enabling Environments

- The natural world is an ever-changing, stimulating environment. Through repeated visits, children will grow in confidence and familiarity with it and will notice changes.
- Session planning is adaptable and based on observations of individual's interests and skills.
- Builds confidence and self esteem as children are supported to achieve through small challenging but achievable tasks.
- Potential to network with other settings, schools, children's centres, landowners, community groups through a cluster support system.

How does 'Forest School' support the Early Years Foundation Stage Principles?

Positive Relationships

- Encourages social skills such as co-operation and negotiation as children work together to solve problems.
- The adults' role is to model, facilitate and observe children's learning.
- Can create strong links between setting and home as parents are encouraged to participate as helpers.
- Can influence parenting style (of parent helpers) as parents become facilitators and model skills rather than directors.

Learning and Development

- Allows for high quality play in an outdoor context.
 - Huge opportunities for kinaesthetic learning.
 - Allows repetition of activities so children can consolidate skills.
 - Allows time and space for learners to develop at their own pace.
 - Encourages creative thinking and problem solving skills.
- Supports all 6 areas of learning (please see 'How Forest Schools supports the 6 areas of Learning' document).

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)

- Activities engage children's interests and children will concentrate and persist for extended periods of time.
- Children gain confidence by trying new activities and gaining new skills, including 'high risk' activities such as using real tools and cooking on a fire.
- Opportunities for teamwork and development of social skills through working together to create an item/solve a problem.
- Develops an understanding of risks and the rules and boundaries in place for safety.
- Learning to dress/undress into wet weather gear.
- Develops understanding of personal hygiene.
- Children are encouraged to select and use resources independently.

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy (PSRN)

- Opportunities for counting and calculating various materials/resources and in games.
- Opportunities for problem solving, such as measuring items e.g. sticks and firewood collection.
- Encourages descriptive and positional language.
- Particular activities could be introduced to link to PSRN

Physical Development (PD)

- Develops gross motor skills – running, climbing, lifting, rolling, using ropes/levers/pulleys.
- Develops fine motor skills – threading, tool use, craft activities, knot tying.
- Develops an awareness of personal space – e.g. stick waving.
- Supports managing hygiene – e.g. hand washing.
- Uses a variety of real equipment and tools for a real purpose.
- Develops understanding of safety measures.

How does 'Forest Schools' meet the Early Years Foundation Stage 6 Areas of Learning?

Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL)

- Develops conversational skills in a practical context.
- Develops talk about interests/activities.
- Encourages social talk such as negotiation and planning.
- Develops specific vocabulary to the natural world e.g. names of animals/tools etc.
- Learn new songs/stories.
- Potential for role play/story telling/re telling of known stories.
- Use of language to think through problems/activities.
- Using books to research minibeasts/trees etc.
- Potential for mark making/writing using sticks etc.
- Particular activities could be introduced to link to CLL.

Creative Development (CD)

- Children are free to create using different mediums and tools.
- Opportunities to explore colours and textures in nature.
- Opportunities to learn new songs/rhymes/chants.
- Opportunities to make musical instruments e.g. whistles, kazoos, shakers, xylophones.
- Potential for imaginative role play.
- Particular activities could be introduced to link to CD.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World (KUW)

- Encourages exploration using all senses.
- Encourages questioning and investigation.
- Opportunities to find out and identify features of living things.
- Encourages observations of similarities, differences, patterns and change.
- Opportunities for construction using real tools and equipment.
- Potential for use of ICT e.g. digital cameras, Dictaphone, video camera etc.
- Develops understanding of seasons and weather.
- Encourages children to plan activities through repetitive nature of sessions.
- Encourages observation, discussion and questioning about natural environment.