



Forest School Policy

Curriculum Statement

Intent

Forest School is a unique method of outdoor learning. At Ouston Primary School our aim is to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences. Children will have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. The children use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and become self-motivated.

Implementation

We aim to give all children a collective insight into the ethos of Forest School. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest school learning environment provides opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others, to learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults and to develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.

Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environment changes. Appropriate clothing will be worn and during high winds it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods.

The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development.

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and careful reference to our Woodland Management Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest School. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused.

Impact

The success of forest school allows the children to:

Grow in confidence as a result of the freedom, time and space they are given in their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence at each individual child's rate.

Activities such as sharing tools and participating in play help teach the children to work together as a group, which strengthens their bonds and social skills.

The sensory experiences provided by Forest School helps prompt language development. Improving communication skills has a positive effect on a child's self-esteem and is a crucial part of their development.

High levels of interest lead to high levels of attention. Spending time in the woodland is exciting for a child. It tends to fascinate them which develops a strong will to participate and concentrate over long periods of time.

The increase in outdoor activity has a positive physical impact. Not only does the development of physical stamina improve but also gross and fine motor skills.

Children develop an interest in the great outdoors and respect for the environment. Encouraging children to develop a relationship with the natural world will help in protecting the environment for generations to come.

Forest School isn't just beneficial to children it is also beneficial to teachers. Observing their class in a different setting allows them to gain a new perspective and understanding of their class.

When children really engage with Forest Schools they will take their experiences home to share with friends and family. This will often encourage families to visit their local woodlands more frequently.

Taking children outside of the classroom removes the pressures of academia and allows them to play to their strengths. This is beneficial to children who struggle in the classroom because there is more of an opportunity for them to learn at their own pace.

Teaching and Learning

Forest School has no set of prescribed activities. Nearly any type of outdoor learning activity could be undertaken as part of our Forest School process. It is the ethos in how the activities are delivered that make it part of Forest School.

Within the Forest School:

- Children have a choice in what activities they undertake.
- The Forest School Leader will observe the children carefully in order to plan for the next steps.

- The Forest School Leader will introduce relevant skills, knowledge and resources based on what the children are interested in and need to develop.
- The Forest School Leader set up what the children are to achieve by breaking tasks into small achievable chunks.
- Tasks are open - no right or wrong way of doing things (exceptions to this are health and safety procedures).

The types of outdoor activities children undertake within a Forest School may include the following, and countless more.

Activities selected will depend on the learner's age, stage of development and interests:

- Field Studies Activities - minibeast hunts, tree identification, bird watching, life cycle games.
- Sensory Activities - games to do with colour, smell, sound, touch, blindfold games.
- Bushcraft - shelter building, knot use, fire lighting and cooking, cordage making, wild foods, whittling
- Woodland crafts - willow crafts, natural jewellery, weaving, natural dyes, traditional crafts
- Teambuilding and trust games - blindfold games, circle games, problem solving activities, team games
- Wildlife conservation - tree planting, nest box construction, coppicing, fence/path building
- Imaginative activities - story telling, drama, role play, songs
- Physical play - tree climbing, balancing, log dragging, digging
- Construction - shelter building, rope swings, tree houses, pulleys

Organisation, Planning and Resources

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to organise and plan all forest school sessions with the support of the class teacher. All resources are kept in our outdoor Forest School classroom and it is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure these are kept in a clean, secure working order.

Assessment

When conducting and planning Forest School it is important to take a step back and observe and assess the children. (Please see Appendix 1)

The observations of children achieve a number of functions,

- it gives you a baseline of their skills
- lets you identify where their next steps maybe
- it informs your planning for the next session
- it helps you learn as a Forest School Leader.

Equal Opportunities

At Forest School we actively promote the inclusion of all children and adults into Forest School sessions, and we endeavour to ensure that the opportunities for learning, development and participation are available to everyone, irrespective of race, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation or age.

Inclusion

We aim to and are committed to:

- providing a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued;
- including and value the contribution of all children and adults to our understanding of equality and diversity;
- make inclusion a thread which runs through all of the activities of Forest School

Role of the Subject Leader

The Forest School Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date ITC Outdoor First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions. The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times.

The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments. The leader will ensure that all

documentation is relevant and up to date. They are responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.

The Forest School leader will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Working with Parents/Carers

At Forest School we value the input of parents and carers. Before the start of all our Forest School sessions a letter is sent home to parents/carers informing them about how and when the sessions take place. A permission slip is then signed and returned to school.

We also run taster sessions for children who may be thinking of attending Ouston Primary School. This enables the children and parent/carers to get an insight into the fun activities our forest school provides.

Policy Review Date: May 2021

Appendix 1