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**Our core purpose is putting learners first**

**Forest School Policy and Provision**

***‘The Forest School curriculum is based on the principles of planting seeds in children’s minds and***

***watching them grow.’***

***‘The biggest risk is no risk at all.’***

These are the founding principles of our Forest School curriculum at Courthouse Green. Children spend their time in Forest School exploring, observing, communicating and taking risks. They use their imagination to explore through thrive activities, stories, music, games, arts and crafts. Speaking and listening are at the heart of all learning in Forest Schools; children are provided with regular opportunities to justify, debate, share ideas and reflect to improve their oracy skills.

**Statement of Intent**

Forest School is a developmental learning approach that centres on the learner being actively engaged with their outdoor environment offering learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children’s individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover many areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed.

It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child’s interest will be at the heart of any activity. This policy which will be adhered to alongside our:

Relational behaviour Policy

Safeguarding Policy

SEND Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Forest school is led by trained leaders allowing children to have hands on experience of natural resources, real tools and cooking on a fire. Forest school views all children as equal, unique and valuable; competent to explore & discover, able to experience appropriate risk and challenge developing strong, positive relationship with their peers and the natural world. Staff will model good practice throughout the session, carrying out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children’s learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times, supporting the Forest School leader to run the sessions. Ratios within the woodland area will be 1 adult to 8 children.

The following activities will be used at Forest School to ensure the children are given an exciting and full forest school experience. The activities are planned to aid the children in holistic development, to increase their self-esteem, confidence and communication skills.

* Using tools such as a bow saw, bit and brace and hand drill.
* Exploration activities such as treasure hunts, collections
* Natural art using sticks, leaves, mud, flowers and any natural materials
* Den and shelter building
* Tying knots
* Habitat creation
* Bug hunts

**Ecological impact**

Forest school will ensure that a minimum ecological impact on the site environment and the plants and animals which reside there. Measures have been taken to improve the ecological impact of the site and adults and children who use the site (bird houses and baths, hedgehog homes, bat boxes, bird bath, log piles and a bug hotel). An area of grass will be left to grow long and additional trees and climbing plants will be added to the garden. A water butt has been installed and a compost heap. Children will be told to put back anything they use and to care for the plants on site. They will also need to put bugs back where they were found and be aware of birds and keep away from any nest during the nesting season. Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used, promoting environmental awareness and care for our environment. The area will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. We will remove all litter and debris we take into the area. Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to

grow in other areas of the woodland. Branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid

injuries for people entering the woodland unsupervised (without the Forest School Leader), they will remain on all other

trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored in the log store and used as fire wood. During

the winter months, large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas

created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children

encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them. The forest school area is at the back of the field.

**Principles of Forest school**

* a long-term process of regular sessions; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
* takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
* uses a range of learner-centered processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
* aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
* offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
* is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

**Forest school rules**

1. Have fun!
2. This is our work area, the fence marks the boundary. Stay inside the boundary.
3. Take care with sticks.
4. We don’t eat anything or put anything in our mouths that is unsafe.
5. Fire circle: you are not allowed to walk into the fire circle unless you are invited to do so. You walk around the outside of the logs and step over the logs.
6. Tools are only allowed to be used in the tool area and when an adult is present.
7. When you hear the whistle then all children to return to the fire circle.

**Forest School Leader**

* Will plan a 6 week unit of learning for each child, providing exciting and holistic experiences which are adapted to incorporate children’s ideas.
* Regularly complete, assess and review risk assessments which are shared with other staff and children when necessary and prior to each session will ensure that the forest school area is a safe space for children to be. They will support the SSO in maintaining and developing the area to ensure that it is left safe and tidy after each session.
* Keep the tools in a good, working order and store them safely in the locked shed, supervising their use, cleaning and storing them safely afterwards including the safe use of the fire pit.
* Record observations of children and plan next steps to ensure children get the most from their experience from forest school whilst reviewing and evaluating sessions making recommendations for future sessions.
* Incorporate core values into each forest school session.

**Planning activities**

In order to create opportunities where children can develop their independence and confidence so that they learn to take safe risks, to collaborate with others, and to work with nature in a natural environment, we will ensure that lessons will broadly follow this structure:

* Start with a Thrive task;
* Allow children to complete a task independently and then either in a team or with a partner;
* Teach children a new skill;
* Learn some key facts about the environment in which they are using;
* Use natural objects from the environment to create something.

Sequences of lessons will be planned using a six week cycle. These will be planned weekly to respond to children’s interests, skills and ideas.

<https://www.forestschoolportfolio.com/unit-4-planning-a-forest-school-programme/4-1-plan-initial-6-forest-school-programme-sessions-showing-links-to-own-client-groups-learning-and-development-objectives-and-needs/>

<https://muddyfaces.co.uk/outdoor-hub/forest-school/activities>

<https://www.ydlywood.bham.sch.uk/forest-school/#:~:text=Forest%20School%20%7C%20Yardley%20Wood%20Community%20Primary%20School>

Year Group: 3 (this 6 week plan can then be rotated throughout the year)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Wk** | **Thrive Activity** | **Skill Development** | **Environmental Learning** | **Creation**  **(independent/collaboration)** |
| 1 | Power and Identity find 5 stones/ objects in the area and build the highest tower (learning to manage and name emotions) combine with a partner (able to sometimes lead and sometimes follow). | Learning to tie a knot | Where is the best place to put a den.  What natural resources you can use without causing damage to the environment.  Can we find any habitats in the forest school area created by animals? | Collaboration.  Work in partners to practice tying knots  Work in partners to locate best place to build a den  Practice tying two logs together to create a den frame. |
| 2 |  | Learning to tie a slip knot |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |

**Child Protection:**

Adults working within forest school need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves. It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader and accompanying adults to ensure the safety of children when on a forest school session. We are committed to creating an environment in which children are safe and free from harm. It is the role of the Forest School Leader to minimise the risk of abuse taking place:

* By educating children how to stay safe and speak out
* Taking appropriate action should any allegations arise and following the school’s child protection and safeguarding policy

**Food safety and Hygiene**

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and

cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities such as; toasting marshmallows/waffles and making s’mores. There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training,

when food is being handled and prepared.

**Use of Tools**

Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tool use guidance documents will be carried by the leader during each session and tool use ratios will be at the discretion of the Forest School Leader.

**Use of Fires**

A Forest School Leader must always be present when a fire is lit and it must never be left unattended. There must

always be water available to extinguish the fire. The fire box containing fire retardant gloves, first aid kit and fire blanket should be placed close to the fire circle along with a covered bucket of clean cold water. Fires will be built in a designated fire area and children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit:

* Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log.
* Step over and sit down on the log seat.
* Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
* Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).

**Behaviour**

The Forest School leader will follow the school’s Relational Behaviour Policy at all times. If an individual is being unsafe and putting the safety of others at risk, then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School leader.

**First aid and medical needs**

All first aid will be carried out by forest school leader who has a first aid for outdoors qualification. The accident will be recorded in the school accident book upon return to the school and parents will be informed of what happened and any treatment given. In emergency the office staff will be contacted immediately. Emergency services will also be contacted if needed. Second adult to ensure other children are safe and return them to school if necessary.

**Extreme weather conditions**

Forest school will be cancelled in the following weather conditions

* High wind
* Torrential rain
* Thunder/electrical storm
* Temperature below zero
* Extreme heat

**Monitoring of policy**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or before should any incidents arise or laws and policies change June 2025