Overton St Helen's CE Primary School

Surrounded by God, we inspire hearts and minds through learning, faith and love.

Forest School Policy

Introduction

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. This fully supports our Mission Statement: developing the hearts and minds of our Children.

This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. The child is never put in a position where he/she will fail so success is attained. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

Purpose/Aims of Forest School

- To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment throughout the changing seasons of the year and in all weathers
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.
- To enable children to develop their own abilities and learn how to take risks in a controlled and familiar environment with the support of adults.
- To use the natural environment and all that it can teach the children as a valuable, flexible and free learning resource that supports all areas of the curriculum and extends this learning outside of the classroom and into the real world.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

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. 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 Teacher will monitor the site so that it does not become overused. Sessions may be suspended for the sake of the environment if the weather and condition of Forest School deteriorates.

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out for Forest School are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

Health and Safety

The Forest School curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A site risk assessment has been carried out and is amended regularly and a copy is held in the Forest School Coordinator's File in school.

All teachers who accompany Forest School have an up to date First Aid Certificate and is in charge of first aid arrangement. All staff have first aid training. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and a mobile phone is carried. The school will contact the parents.

Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

Equality and Inclusion

During Forest School all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

Behaviour

A Forest School we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Overton St Helen's. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the well being of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

- All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office.
- Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school.

- Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover general sessions, all teachers are expected to carry out dynamic risk assessments relevant to the session they are leading – they can then amend the Forest School Risk Assessment sheet if necessar

Safety Sweep and checklists

The Teacher will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before or as the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at Forest School

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest School. Their use will be carefully managed by the Teacher with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'.
- Good practice will be demonstrated by Teachers and TAs at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Teacher feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- All tools will be returned to the trolley at the end of each session. This is the Teacher's responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School

Children must be seated on logs in the circle, they may only approach the fire when individually requested and under age=appropriate supervision.

In addition to the other resources, we will take a large container full of water.

When lighting a fire:

- The teacher in charge will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the fire-pit area marked out within the centre of the log circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.

- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the Forest School Teacher

- The teacher has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The teacher will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The teacher will carry a First Aid Kit and mobile phone at all times.
- The teacher is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The teacher will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Forest School Rules

- Stay away from the pond. (KS1)
- Only go near the pond if specifically instructed (KS2)
- Keep your hands away from your mouth
- Leave things to grow
- Do not touch mushrooms or berries
- Do not damage living things – including trees
- Pick up any rubbish
- Keep within the set boundaries
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Routines and Procedures For Forest School

Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs and warm clothes – depending on weather. Spare waterproofs and wellies are kept in school.

During the session children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. They also learn how to light fires safely. The children learn the care and safe use of suitable tools. This is a tightly supervised activity on a 1:1 ratio of adult

to children. It is introduced gradually in small steps. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment.

Back at school children will remove wellies out doors on the doormat before entering the classroom. They will all wash their hands.

After the session Equipment will be stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and hung on rails. The Forest School trolley will be put away and any items used replaced.

Essential Equipment Needed at Forest School sessions

The Forest School trolley - containing the following essential items will always accompany the group:

- Mobile phone
- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- First Aid Kit
- Inhalers
- Carrier bags for rubbish and waste
- ground sheet and string to erect a shelter as needed.

Clothing Requirements For Forest School

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Waterproof trousers
- Spare socks
- Wellies

Toileting considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the School. Any children needing the toilet during the session will be accompanied by an adult back to school.