

St. Margaret's C.E.



St. Margaret's C of E. Primary School

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:

“A learning community sharing God’s faith, hope and love. A place to B.E.C.O.M.E.

This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. 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

1. To provide children with experiences that encourage an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
2. To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
3. To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
4. Develop children’s self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

Descriptions/Characteristics

1. The Forest School takes place within school time and in most weather conditions.
2. The teacher will ensure that all children are suitably clothed with waterproof coats, trousers and boots
3. The sessions will vary in duration
4. A variety of activities are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels
5. The children are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. They also learn how to light fires safely.
6. The children learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools.
7. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved in part through games that also encourage respect for the environment.

Resources

1. The Forest School resources will be found in the poly tunnel/gardening equipment shed.
2. The class teacher will ensure there is a first aid kit available and resourced to take up into the forest area (including inhaler)

The role of the Forest School Coordinator

1. The Forest school coordinator will coordinate the resources, liaise with the class teachers and coordinate the material that goes onto the school website, about the Forest school activities carried out by each class.

The role of the class teachers

1. The class teacher prioritises the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The class teacher will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
2. The class teacher will carry a first aid kit at all times, and replace if any equipment is used, ensuring the kit is fully resourced for the next class.
3. The class teacher is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
4. The class teacher leader will add any accidents to the accident book kept in the school office and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Environmental Impact

Forest School has environmental awareness at the heart of its ethos. Wherever possible, environmentally friendly products and recycled materials are used when appropriate. Good practice is modelled by adults showing children that the world in which we live in should be cared for.

Health and Safety

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

- A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the school office.
- A first aid kit is taken on all activities. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is carried with a mobile phone. The form contains emergency contact numbers and directions for emergency services.
- Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures attached.

Child Protection

Forest School sessions are led by class teachers.

- Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them

- All school staff have current CRB checks.
- Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being should be shared with the school's named Child Protection Person, so that the school's child protection policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the Head teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Equality and Inclusion

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

Behaviour

At Forest School we operate within the Behaviour Policy of the school. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established systems.

Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety (not crossing the circle, walking in the vicinity)

The agreement of the Head Teacher

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

When lighting a fire:

- A trained person 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 area agreed. 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.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

Emergency Procedures

The class teacher must ensure that the adults are familiar with current risk assessment and emergency procedures at the start of each session. Groups must stay within the agreed boundaries which will ensure they are within earshot of each other.

Emergency information is kept in the school office

In the case of a major injury:

- Keep calm. The children are more likely to remain calm if the adult appears to be in control. If necessary, remove the danger, or the person from the danger.
- The class teacher or teaching assistant will carry out necessary First Aid, whilst delegating someone to call for further assistance if necessary from school.
- The incident must be reported in the accident book and a copy given to the school office.

Minor Injuries

All minor injuries must be recorded in the accident book and procedures followed, as in accordance with the school policy, for minor injuries. First Aid (including plasters) must only be applied by a member of staff with a current First Aid certificate.

Forest School Guide for Assistants

Before joining our Forest School team please read the following guidance carefully. Thank you!

Before Leaving School

- Check all equipment against the session list.
- Ensure all clients are appropriately clothed (waterproofs and Wellingtons) and have visited the toilet.
- Be aware of numbers.

Arrival at the Site

- On arrival assist the class teacher with any necessary arrangements as requested to do so.

In the Woodland

- Encourage and support pupils during activities as requested or directed by the leaders.
- Allow pupil time and space to solve any problems and encourage independence by giving constructive suggestions rather than showing them how or taking over the task.
- Be vigilant for any potential dangers and inform leader immediately of any accidents, then assist as directed.
- Assist in clearing the site and transporting equipment back to the school.

On return to School

- Check that nothing has been left in the forest school
- Accompany clients back to the classroom.
- Assist with clothing.
- Assist in checking equipment back in as directed by the class teacher

All assistants must have read a copy of the Forest School Policy document and be very conversant with the ethos of Forest School.