



Forest School Policy & Communication Strategy

Introduction

The Laurels Primary School recognises the value of outdoor learning and the positive impact it can have on the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of children. Forest School is an integral part of our curriculum, offering children the opportunity to explore the natural world in a structured and supportive environment. The focus is on child-led learning through hands-on experiences, fostering curiosity, resilience, confidence, and a connection to nature.

This policy outlines the principles, aims, and structure of the Forest School provision at The Laurels Primary School.

Aims of Forest School

Forest School at The Laurels Primary School aims to:

- **Promote holistic development:** Encourage children to develop a range of skills, including emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development.
- **Foster a connection with nature:** Install a sense of respect and care for the environment.
- **Develop self-confidence and resilience:** Allow children to take risks in a safe and controlled environment, learning through trial and error.
- **Encourage independence and problem-solving:** Provide children with the space and freedom to make decisions and solve problems.
- **Support social development:** Enable children to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and manage conflict constructively.

Forest School Principles

Forest School is underpinned by several key principles:

- **Child-Centred Learning:** Forest School is child-led and takes into account the interests, needs, and abilities of each child. It encourages exploration and discovery in the natural world.
- **Outdoor Learning:** Children learn through first-hand experiences in the outdoor environment, gaining a sense of the world around them.
- **Regular Sessions:** Forest School is delivered regularly, with a consistent approach to ensure children build skills over time.
- **Risk-Taking:** Children are encouraged to engage with activities that include an element of risk, which is managed safely and appropriately. This helps children learn how to assess risk and develop resilience.
- **All-Weather Learning:** Sessions are held in all seasons and weather conditions, helping children understand and appreciate the changes in the natural world.
- **Qualified Forest School Leader:** Forest School sessions are led by a trained and qualified Forest School Leader who ensures that learning is safe, engaging, and tailored to the children's needs.

Structure of Forest School Sessions

- **Frequency:** Forest School sessions are held once a week for each group, with sessions typically lasting 1 ½ to 2 hours.
- **Location:** Forest School sessions take place in the forest school area, pond area or designated local forest.
- **Session Content:** Each session is planned to include a mix of structured activities (such as building shelters, den-making, fire safety, nature walks, using tools etc.) and unstructured exploration time. Activities are designed to promote teamwork, problem-solving, and independent thinking.
- **Skill Development:** Children are introduced to skills such as fire-lighting, tool use, knot-tying, navigation, plant identification, and basic survival skills in a safe and supportive manner.
- **Reflection and Discussion:** At the end of each session, children and the Forest School Leader reflect on what they have learned, achieved, and any challenges faced. This encourages critical thinking and supports the development of communication skills.

Health and Safety

The safety and well-being of children during Forest School sessions is paramount. The following measures are in place to ensure safe practice:

- **Risk Assessments:** Risk assessments are carried out for each Forest School session to identify potential hazards and establish safe practices.
- **Qualified Forest School Leader:** A trained Forest School Leader (Level 3 Forest School Practitioner) is always present to oversee the session.
- **First Aid:** At least one adult present during each session holds a current first aid certificate.
- **Appropriate Clothing:** Children are required to wear appropriate outdoor clothing, including waterproofs, sturdy footwear, and layered clothing. A spare set of clothing is recommended.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Clear emergency procedures are in place, including a designated first-aid kit, emergency contact numbers, and a method for communicating with school staff if necessary.

Inclusivity and Equal Opportunities

Forest School is designed to be inclusive of all children, regardless of ability or background. The activities are differentiated to meet the needs of individual children, and all children are encouraged to participate at their own pace. The approach fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion, providing opportunities for every child to develop in their own way.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the Forest School experience:

- **Pre-Session Information:** Parents are informed about what children will be doing during each session and are encouraged to ensure their child is appropriately dressed.
- **Regular Updates:** The school provides parents with regular updates on their child's progress and achievements during Forest School sessions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Forest School Leader monitors and evaluates the success of the Forest School programme to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the children. This includes:

- **Observations:** Continuous observations are made of children's engagement, development, and learning during each session.
- **Feedback:** Feedback is gathered from children, parents, and staff to assess the impact of Forest School.

- **Review:** The Forest School provision is reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to align with the school's overall curriculum and goals.

Conclusion

The Forest School programme at The Laurels Primary School offers children a unique opportunity to learn outside the classroom, develop life skills, and build a deeper connection with nature. By embracing the principles of child-led, outdoor learning, we aim to provide a rich, engaging, and supportive environment where every child can thrive.

Forest School Communication Strategy

To ensure effective communication among all parties involved in Forest School activities, creating a collaborative approach to support student learning and development.

A clear, open, and responsive communication strategy ensures that all stakeholders, Forest School leaders, teachers, parents, and SLT are aligned in their efforts to support students. Effective communication enhances the success of the Forest School program, keeps everyone informed, and builds a positive, collaborative relationship between school and home.

1. Key Stakeholders:

- **Forest School Leader:** The individual responsible for planning and delivering Forest School sessions, ensuring safety and aligning with educational goals.
- **Head Teacher:** Oversees the school's overall approach to education and supports the Forest School initiative as part of the curriculum.
- **Class Teacher:** Provides feedback on how students are applying skills learned outside.
- **Parents:** Key partners in supporting the child's learning, understanding the benefits of Forest School, and being informed about activities and expectations.
- **Premises Team:** Site security and maintenance

2. Goals of Communication:

- Ensure all parties are informed about the objectives and structure of the Forest School program.
- Create a feedback loop for continuous improvement in Forest School delivery.
- Ensure safety and wellbeing standards are consistently met.
- Share success stories and learning outcomes with the school community.
- Build strong, supportive relationships between home, school, and the Forest School team.

3. Communication Channels:

- **Regular Updates:**
 - **Forest School Leader to Class Teacher:**
 - Weekly meeting to review student progress, challenges, and upcoming activities.
 - Sharing any incidents, successes, or observations relevant to the class's development in Forest School.
 - Preparing reports or logs to ensure key milestones are documented and discussed.
 - **Forest School Leader to Parents:**
 - Email detailing upcoming sessions, themes, and any specific requirements (e.g., clothing, weather considerations).
 - Weekly updates in Friday Flyer including photographs (with parental consent) to visually communicate student engagement and learning.

- **Forest School Leader to Head Teacher:**

- Regular meetings to review student progress, challenges, and upcoming activities.
- To inform of incidents or successes relevant to the development of the forest school.

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