

Wessington Primary School

Forest School Policy

Our forest school was set up in 2016 and is based on the school grounds; it is an on-going development, with children helping to establish it. There is a fence surrounding the whole area and one gate to gain access and a double gate in case of emergency leading onto the school field. It consists of an outside classroom, a tool shed, two shelters and a toilet. In the grounds it has an allotment, orchard, bird hide, wooden art dome, willow structures, outdoor kitchen, woods and lots of natural plants, trees and animal habitats.

Aims

We aim to give all learners a shared understanding of a forest/natural environment. With regular opportunities we aim to provide the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners. Through hands on learning experiences in a natural environment it will enable children to be self - motivated, courageous, considerate and thus setting them up for life - long learning.

At forest school we aim to:

- Fulfil every child's potential.
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment through child led initiatives.
- Promote self - esteem.
- Promote positive behaviour to ensure the safe running of forest school sessions by setting agreed rules and rituals between adults and children.
- Link experiences at forest school to home and education.
- To develop where appropriate the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and spiritual aspects of the learner through consistent observations and evaluation.
- For all participants to be viewed as unique, equal and valuable.
- Allow learners to explore and discover in their own learning style and at their own pace.
- Encourage learners to experience appropriate risk and challenge through group discussions and sharing ideas.
- Encourage learners to initiate and drive their own learning and development.
- Support learners to experience regular success by setting achievable tasks to reflect their abilities.

- Inspire learners to develop positive relationships with their peers through group discussions, reflections, social conversations and team work.
- Develop a strong, positive relationship with the natural world.

Activities

Activities will depend on the ability and experience of the learner.

Examples of forest school activities:

- Woodland management nature exploration.
- Building dens and other structures.
- Natural crafts.
- Using gardening tools.
- Using tools - under strict supervision of forest school leader
(Separate risk assessment for each tool used)

Equal opportunities

- No child discriminated on any grounds.
- Wherever possible adjustments to be made to accommodate children with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues - support/adapting activities. (All staff to be aware of medical issues)
- All participants should feel their experiences and contributions are worthwhile to raise self esteem and confidence.
- Forest school is a child led experience and wherever possible to follow their own interests.

Environmental considerations

Forest School will be used to support environmental awareness. Using recycled materials where possible. Practitioners need to be modelling good practice showing children how we care for the world we live in and our environment. Involving children in on site checks, risk assessing and decision making when appropriate.

Health and safety

- A risk assessment will be carried out daily before any session by the caretaker or forest school leader. All children will be involved in discussing the risk assessment and what risks and dangers are in the forest school grounds. All children to be made aware of red flag system.
- The forest school will support children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies.
- Walkie talkies to be used to contact office staff in case of emergencies. Practitioners are responsible to make sure these are fully charged at all times (charged in reception classroom).

- Ensure Staff - child correct ratio for each year group.
- A first aid kit is to be stored in outdoor classroom and practitioners are responsible to keep this stocked up. There should be at least one qualified first aider out at all times.
- Forest school is led by a forest school leader with an accredited level 3, forest school qualification, who will pass on any important information and keep staff up to date with new issues.
- All Staff are to be aware of fire policy and in case of a fire to exit double gates onto school field and to make way to Key stage 2 yard.

Child and vulnerable persons.

Forest school leader, practitioners and volunteers should regard the duty of care when working with young persons as extremely important.

To ensure all individuals are safe and protected we recommend the following:

- Everyone is fully briefed on health and safety and risk assessments of site and activities.
- All staff and visitors are to be DBS checked.
- Concerns about a child's well being are to be reported to a safe guarding lead person.
- All staff are responsible to ensure general safety during time in forest school.

Cancellation

There may be times when Forest School sessions have to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. This may be;

Staff illness – prevents staff/child ratios being met.

Severe weather conditions

Any situations that may cause harm to any person posing a health and safety risk.

Back up sessions will be in place that can be taking in school. We will try to run Forest School sessions whenever possible; however we reserve the right to cancel on the day informing all concerned as soon as possible.

Pauline Burnikell Autumn 2017