

Forest School Policy

DUKE OF NORFOLK CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



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1. Forest School Curriculum Intent

1.1 Aims of this Policy

This document reflects the Duke of Norfolk Primary School's values and philosophy in relation to the teaching and learning of Forest School. It sets out a framework within which both teaching and non-teaching staff can operate and gives guidance on planning, teaching and assessment.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Curriculum Map and the Vocabulary Map for Forest School.

This policy reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#), and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#). In addition, this policy acknowledges the requirements for promoting the learning and development of children set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#).

1.2. A.S.K and Our Forest School Curriculum

SMSC Statement

At the Duke of Norfolk CE Primary School, we recognise that the personal development of pupils spiritually, morally, socially, and culturally, plays a significant part in their ability to learn and achieve. We therefore aim to provide an education that not only equips pupils with the required knowledge and skills in Forest School, we provide opportunities to explore and develop their own values and beliefs, spiritual awareness, high standards of personal behaviour, a positive, caring attitude towards other people, an understanding of their social and cultural traditions and an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. We use the acronym **A.S.K (Attitude, Knowledge and Spirit)**.

Forest School provides opportunities to promote the following:

Spiritual development: Through helping pupils to recognise their own imagination and creativity as well as that of others by finding solutions to various problems and challenges related to their studies in class.

Moral development: Through helping pupils to reflect how the actions of ourselves and others effects the world we live in. Enabling them to make informed choices when faced with decisions and actions that could affect our environment.

Social development: Through helping pupils to recognise the need to consider the views of others when discussing their creative ideas, and by working together on shared projects, enabling them to make the most of different strengths and interests within a team and to compromise for the benefit of the group.

Cultural development: Through exploring how different cultures have responded to the natural environment and the value they have put on it through history.

1.3. Intent of Our Forest School Curriculum

Forest School aims to **promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners** through challenging learners to think creatively about different situations and tasks. It also aims for pupils to become more attuned to what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable risk and have the confidence to make a decision accordingly. It enables children to develop their own independence while at the same time fostering cooperation, compromise, and leadership.

Our aims are also underpinned by the National Curriculum aims:

Our school's curriculum for Forest School draws its influence from the National Curriculum for other subjects, linking lots of the activities children are involved in with the subjects they undertake in the classroom.

Through involving children in forest school sessions we aim to develop an increase in:

Self-belief and confidence. Learners are encouraged to assess risks themselves and decide when to take risks. Exploration, risk-taking and child-led learning can all result in improved self-belief. Learners and practitioners are encouraged to reflect to understand their achievements and learn from their failures. The encouraged risk-taking, access to the natural world, learner-led experiences and learning through play can all result in increased confidence.

Improve problem-solving and communication skills – Learners learn how to assess problems and make their own decision about the best way to solve the problem. Learners become more independent problem solvers. Language skills are developed through encouraging sensory experiences, scaffolding from practitioners, the use of appropriate dialogue and collaborative work, which can all help to improve a learner's communication skills.

An increase in motivation and concentration – Young learners often find concentration difficult. However, Forest School activities are designed to be interesting and engaging. Learning through play and child-led learning results in higher levels of interest, which in turn improves a learner's attention and concentration. Learners are more likely to concentrate over a longer period of time.

The development of physical skills and motor skills – Many Forest School activities will help to improve a learner's fine and gross motor skills. Outdoor activities may also focus on a variety of other physical skills such as balancing, climbing and sensory skills.

Promote emotional intelligence – Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy and motivation. Good emotional intelligence enables children and young people to identify and manage their own and other people's emotions.

Focus on physical health – Forest School learners are usually more physically active than learners in a more traditional school setting. Parents of Forest School learners often report that their child's interest in woodland settings and the outside world transcends into their home life. This means children may also be more likely to be physically active at home.

Build resilience – Learners are taught how to cope with stressful or negative situations. Not only can nature and the outdoors reduce stress, but children are also taught how to overcome obstacles and reflect on their experiences.

1.4. Forest School Curriculum Organisation

The curriculum for Forest School is specifically designed for children to build on prior knowledge and skills. Due to the inter-related elements of Forest School, as well as our mixed age-classes, it is designed in an upward spiral, so children revisit, knowledge or skills much more regularly than in other subjects, but continue to increase the difficulty and complexity each time they meet it.

Curriculum mapping for Forest School is split into 7 themes/areas. These themes are:

- > Rules and procedures
- > Tool use

- > Knots
- > Problem solving and teamwork
- > Physical development/Healthy lifestyles
- > Global citizenship/Understanding of the world
- > Fire

2. Forest School Implementation

2.1. Planning

Planning for each block of Forest School sessions is done to relate experience in the forest to each class's topics and study within the classroom. It will take into account the time of year and the weather conditions and as such can have a dynamic nature as the weather and the wellbeing of the children whilst outside in the woods will be an important consideration, especially through the winter months.

2.3. Teaching and Learning

Forest School holds to six key principles that shape and govern the Forest School ethos. There are many forms of outdoor education and all have enormous value, however, Forest School is unique in its reach, delivery and effect. These six principles are:

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

It is only when we see the 6 principles working together do we truly see the value of Forest School. Underpinning our principles are some positive core beliefs. These can be summarised as; learners are all:

- > equal, unique and valuable
- > competent to explore & discover
- > entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- > entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development

- > entitled to experience regular success
- > entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- > entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

Forest School's learner-centred approach interweaves with the ever-changing moods and marvels, potential and challenges of the natural world through the seasons to fill every Forest School session and programme with discovery and difference. Making each session and every experience a valuable one.

2.4. Inclusion

Teachers set high expectations in Forest School for the inclusion of all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- > Able pupils
- > Pupils with low prior attainment
- > Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- > Pupils with SEND
- > Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities can engage with activities wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving. Where there are physical barriers, appropriate adaptations will be made to enable children to access the learning. Teachers will seek advice and support from the SENDCo when necessary.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Forest School lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part and achieve.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy and information report.

2.5. Roles and Responsibilities

2.5.1 The governing body

The governing body will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

The governing board will also ensure that:

- > A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets for Forest School
- > Maintained schools only: Enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the National Curriculum and other statutory requirements
- > The school is complying with its funding agreement and enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the requirements of the funding agreement
- > Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN) in Forest School
- > The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements
- > It fulfils its role in processes to disapply pupils from all or part of the National Curriculum, where appropriate, and in any subsequent appeals

2.5.2 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- > All required elements of Forest School, including those aspects which school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicates how the needs of individual pupils will be met
- > The amount of time provided for Forest School is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board
- > Where appropriate, the individual needs of some pupils are met by permanent or temporary disapplication from all or part of Forest School
- > They manage requests to withdraw children from Forest School, where appropriate
- > The school's procedures for assessment of Forest School meet all legal requirements
- > Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEN

2.5.3 Subject Lead for Forest School

The Forest School leader will:

- > Be the advocate for Forest School in school
- > Provide advice or guidance to staff, when necessary
- > Keep abreast of local and national developments in Forest School and disseminate relevant information to staff
- > Provide or source appropriate CPD to all staff, or targeted groups/individuals, as required
- > Set a timetable of monitoring and evaluation (see Monitoring) to monitor effectiveness of Forest School and use to inform action planning and subject development
- > Report findings of monitoring to SLT and Governors regularly
- > Feedback monitoring to staff in a timely and professional manner
- > Monitor to appropriate storage and responsible use of stock
- > Co-ordinate any display of Forest School work.
- > Ensure the subject leader file is kept current
- > Collect a portfolio of children's work, including photographs of, and examples of pupils' work

2.5.4 Teaching and Learning Staff

Teaching and learning staff will:

- > Ensure that the Forest School curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy
- > Engage actively with professional development and feedback in Forest School in order to improve teaching and learning

3. Impact

3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

The subject leader will create an annual timetable of monitoring and share it with SLT at the start of the academic year. This will include the planned methods of monitoring, the suggested dates, and the focus of monitoring, which may be informed by the School Improvement Plan, or the Forest School action plan.

3.2 Methods of Monitoring

Methods of monitoring Forest School may include:

- > Lesson observations (to be agreed as part of the formal Performance Management process) or informal learning walks
- > Interviews/questionnaires with children
- > Interviews/questionnaires with staff/parents
- > Monitoring will be done in conjunction with PE lead

3.3 Purpose of Monitoring

The purpose of monitoring is so that subject leaders, SLT and Governors can answer the following questions:

- > What is the impact of Forest School across the school?
- > Does the Forest School curriculum keep up-to-date with local and national changes?
- > Is the Forest School curriculum effectively organised and applied for our context?
- > Is the Forest School curriculum being implemented effectively and in line with this policy?
- > Where is there evidence of high-quality teaching and learning? What is enabling this?
- > Where is there evidence of inconsistent quality in teaching and learning? What is the barrier?
- > Do we have sufficient resources to implement Forest School effectively?
- > What is the current picture in Forest School? What enhances provision? What are the barriers?
- > What are the development priorities for Forest School?
- > What are the priorities for staff development?
- > Are resources being effectively and responsibly managed?

3.4 Recording and Reporting Monitoring

Subject leaders may report findings in their monitoring in the following ways:

- > Feedback meetings with SLT
- > Collated data from surveys/questionnaires
- > Newsletters to children/parents
- > Updated action plans with impact evidence

Governors monitor coverage of National Curriculum subjects and compliance with other statutory requirements through:

- > Meetings with subject link governor annually
- > Written report to governors – annually

3.5 Policy Review

This policy was written by Kellie Wilson (DHT) and Chris Ellison on 27th February 2023

It will be reviewed by the subject leader every three years or sooner if necessary.