



Founded 1904
Registered Charity No 528912

FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

This policy is in accordance with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 28 Every child has the right to an education.

Article 29 Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to their full.

Forest School is a Scandinavian concept where the outdoors is used as an area for learning. Many of the activities evolve from the children's interests and ideas, and the natural materials found in the outdoors rather than paper, pencils and worksheets.

Forest School offers an outdoor classroom where the rules are minimal and easy to understand. There is no right or wrong, learning is life-long and there is risk-taking within a controlled environment. Children learn and understand how to avoid accidents. Children are encouraged to move away from adult interaction and to become more responsible for each other and themselves.

Forest School is about using the outdoors to promote confidence, self-esteem and independence. At Selly Oak Nursery School we are passionate about developing the whole child, not just their academic ability. The benefits of Forest School to the children are many. Confidence, behaviour, concentration, independence, social, emotional and physical skills are all developed with positive effects on all areas of the child's life and learning.

Also, Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environment changes. The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our garden are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development, all in the guise of play.

We recognise that in order to learn you have to engage and participate. For many children that engagement comes easily. However, some children find this really difficult and these children often lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Evidence shows that **"the main**

outcome of Forest School is the nurturing, support and development of self-esteem of participants, so that they have a sense of self-worth and value themselves”.

Many of our children live safe, comfortable and organised lives. Whilst this can be considered commendable it provides little opportunity for our children to test themselves, to explore the unknown and to find out what they are truly capable of. We believe Forest School activities have a major part to play in addressing this.

Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. Our outdoor environment is very important to us as a school. It is an invaluable resource that we use on a daily basis for play and learning.

Principles of Forest School

Through Forest School our children have opportunities to:

- Build independence and self-esteem
- Take managed risks in a different environment
- Combine freedom with responsibility
- Experience the changing seasons and all weathers
- Discover their abilities without fear of failure and criticism

Nursery Forest School Site

Our Forest School is located at the side of our nursery school, leading off from the playground. The site now includes:

- Base camp with log circle and fire pit.
- Pond
- Mini-beast area
- Den building area
- Bird Feeders and Water containers
- Bird Hide
- Digging area
- Grassed area
- Textured path
- Wormery
- Compost Bin
- Tools and equipment in a secure outdoor bunkers

Health & Safety

The health and safety of the children and the adults is paramount at all times throughout any activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders and routines.

Tools & Equipment: These are stored in a bunker. Children learn how to use the tools safely and correctly as part of their Forest School curriculum.

Risk Assessments are completed daily by the supporting TA and a small group of children at the start of each session. This enables the children to understand safe procedures.

In the event of a major fire all children and adults would be immediately evacuated from the Forest School area.

Fire Activities

- A fire risk assessment must be completed before children enter forest school
- A fire blanket will be kept inside the trolley to be used in the event of a small fire.
- A bucket of water should be easily accessible in case of burns to the children and adults.
- A bucket of sand to be taken down help to extinguish the fire.
- Clear any debris from around the fire pit
- Set clear rules and boundaries
- All children should kneel behind the logs before a fire is lit (one knee on the floor, one knee bent up in case the children need to move away from the fire quickly)
- Leave spaces so children can move around the base camp if the smoke is in their eyes or making them cough.
- If children are working next to the fire ensure there is a clear entrance and exit point and this is a 1:1 activity with the teacher.

Clothing

Children wear waterproof trousers and coat to protect their clothing as far as possible, along with wellington boots.

In hot weather, sun cream/screen and a sun hat will be required.

Guidelines for working with children

- Set clear and safe boundaries
- Plan for a variety of learning styles, intelligences and schemas
- Encourage the children to take responsibility for their own learning
- Support the children in their activities - rather than doing them for the children
- Encourage children to think things through, even if they come to the wrong conclusions
- Trust children to take supported risks
- Encourage the children to walk without holding hands
- Promote equal opportunities
- Enjoy Forest School

Planning for Forest School Activity Sessions

Children in nursery will have a planned Forest School experience every week with their family group. There may also be other opportunities to visit Forest School in smaller groups. The sessions may consist of teacher led and/or child-initiated activities.

Teacher-led activities provide a focus for learning and are usually skill based. These are planned but can be readily adapted or changed, and usually start each session. They are related to the Foundation Stage Curriculum. It is important that this part of the session meets the needs of the group and reflects the climatic and seasonal conditions of the day - flexibility and alternative plans are the key to success!

Child-initiated activities arise out of the interests and ideas of the children. They may be a response to the conditions of the day or an ongoing idea they wish to explore etc.

Conservation

In Forest School the children are taught about respect and responsibility for the environment. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the garden around them. The children also learn about the impact of conservation and environmental issues. Alongside this, their empathy and care for wildlife is developed. They are encouraged to deposit waste in the compost bin, thus providing goodness for our planting area.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES FOR STAFF AND CHILDREN

To use the Forest School the ratio is 1:7 for best practice. However this will depend on staffing. If an extra adult is not available the group teacher will discuss the risk with the Deputy Head Teacher. For timetabled sessions, a nominated Teaching Assistant will be the adult support. If using as a whole teaching area for story-time or role-play, a family group can be taken with one member of staff.

Before taking the children to Forest School ensure:

- ✓ A Risk Assessment and safety sweep is carried out of the area
- ✓ First Aid kit is available and fully stocked
- ✓ Anti bacterial spray/wipes.

The procedure for engaging a group in Forest School is as follows:

1. The group will start together in the cloakroom to put on wellingtons and waterproofs. Ensure children and adults are warm enough.
2. Talk to/remind the children of procedure on entering Forest School.
3. Walk the group to base camp. All children to be seated on logs when they enter.

4. Count the children & adults.
5. Talk about Forest School rules, emphasising the Back to Base procedure
6. Ensure children are aware of the rules regarding the Fire Pit.
7. Commence learning session.
8. Call the children back to base camp by usual strategy, giving plenty of time for reviewing the activities and results of the session with the children.
9. Ensure hands are clean prior to snack and drinks.
10. Thank the children for being safe and for their contribution.
11. Count the children and the adults and take back to the cloakroom.
12. Remove wellingtons if muddy at the outdoor classroom door. Return to the cloakroom with children, encourage them to hang up waterproofs, and ask children to wash their hands. Children carry the wellington boots and replace them on the racks independently.

After a session in Forest School ensure:

- ✓ Clothing and Wellingtons are hosed down, allowed to dry and then returned to the pegs in the bathroom.
- ✓ First Aid kit is replenished if it has been used.
- ✓ Fire pit cleared when cool ready for next group.

Our Rules in Forest School

1. Talk quietly.
2. Listen carefully.
3. Sit down on the log seats as soon as you enter Forest School.
4. Don't climb on the logs.
5. Keep feet still around the bark chippings.
6. No throwing or swinging things around.
7. Be careful with sticks - carry them behind you, dragging on the floor.
8. Look after all living things. Never pick growing things. Speak to an adult first.
9. Show things you find to the grown ups. They are always interested.
10. Wash or wipe your hands before eating. Don't put hands in your mouth.
11. Put things back so that the forest stays tidy and the animals safe. Leave all sticks outside.
12. Be kind to each other, share and take turns.
13. Walk around the fire pit, outside the log circle.

Agreed by Selly Oak Nursery School Governors on

Signed

Review date

