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Greengates Primary Academy

Forest School Policy



RATIONALE

The philosophy of Forest School is to encourage and inspire children of any age through positive outdoor experiences. It is our aim to give children, parents/carers and practitioners a shared understanding of the ethos of a Forest School experience.

We deliver engaging, motivating and achievable activities in a safe, challenging learning environment in our school grounds. This powerful approach helps children to become more independent, self-motivated, courageous, and considerate and sets them up for lifelong learning. It particularly supports the development of self-esteem and self-confidence.

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 four seasons and environment changes. During the sessions the children have opportunities to develop;

- Self-esteem
- Confidence
- Participation and Active Involvement
- Language and communication
- Explanation and curiosity
- Appropriate risk taking
- Relationships
- Independence and self-care
- Concentration and Perseverance
- Creativity and Imagination
- Physical and practical skills

POLICY AIM

- To provide a clear and concise framework for Forest Schools at Greengates Primary Academy
- To encourage everyone to take responsibility for being vigilant and to be aware of possible risks whilst also feeling confident and comfortable within the woodland environment.

OUR FOREST SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

“We aim to provide regular opportunities for children to achieve and develop confidence, resilience and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in the outdoor environment.”

FOREST SCHOOL OBJECTIVES

- To develop children’s communication, self-esteem and confidence.
- To enable children to recognise, understand and manage risk.
- To help children to become more resilient.
- To provide opportunities to develop pupil and adult relationship.

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

- To develop and support the strategic vision of the Forest School.
- To allocate enough funds to allow Forest Schools development and delivery.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the Forest School.

THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNORS

- To support and challenge Forest School policy and procedures.

THE ROLE OF THE FOREST SCHOOL LEADER

- To produce and communicate the Forest School Policy.
- To produce and communicate a thorough Health and Safety document to include Risk Assessments and Health and Safety procedures.
- To produce a Forest School curriculum map highlighting sessions for all pupils.
- To write a scheme of work for Forest School sessions.
- To plan, deliver and evaluate Forest School sessions.
- To ensure the woodland, tools and equipment are safe, useable and prepared for Forest School sessions.
- To liaise with other Forest School practitioners.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS / SUPPORT STAFF / ADULT HELPERS

- To familiarise and adhere to the Forest School Health and Safety document and all relevant Forest School procedures.
- To liaise with the Forest School Leader to ensure appropriate use of the Forest School to support the curriculum.
- To fully understand and support the Forest School ethos by –
 - Encouraging all children to participate in sessions.
 - To manage children’s behaviour in a Forest School session.
 - To revisit Forest School sessions in the classroom and use to enhance learning opportunities.
 - To contribute to Forest School session evaluations where appropriate.
 - To contribute to Forest School class portfolios by providing photos, quotations and work.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS / CARERS

- To support and encourage their children to participate in Forest School sessions.
- To feedback any comments for the Forest School portfolios.

THE ROLE OF THE CHILDREN

- To participate fully in activities provided during the Forest School session.
- To adhere to safety procedures laid down by the Forest School practitioner.
- To take responsibility for personal well-being and comfort.

SPECIAL NEEDS

It is our intention to ensure equality and inclusion take place throughout our setting. Where necessary the Forest School Leader, in consultation with the SENCO and class teacher, will devise a specific programme for children with severe needs.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Forest School sessions will be delivered in line with the equal opportunities policy.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Part of the Forest School Ethos is not to remove all hazards or risks. The children need to learn how to manage dangers and risk taking. Part of the risk assessments carried out is to ensure the children are able to carry out activities with realistic control measures in place.

The Forest School leader will complete a general risk assessment of the Forest School site according to the season. A risk assessment will also be carried out for individual activities, for example – lighting a fire.

For details and Health and Safety risk assessments and procedures see Health and Safety document.

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

- Health and Safety
- Teaching and Learning
- Behaviour Management

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

At the end of each Forest School session the Forest School leader will evaluate the session. This will include a reflective account on the session, what the interests of the children were and if there were any changes needed. From this information the Forest School leader will be able to plan the following week’s activities from the children interests ensuring the Forest School ethos, taking into consideration any feedback from other practitioners and parents/carers. Three children from each year group will be observed in more detail, e.g. changes in self-esteem, independence, resilience, etc. This information will be used to assess the impact of sessions.