

## Subject on a page: Forest School

At Ibstone CE Primary School, we encourage and inspire our pupils through positive outdoor experiences. Pupils have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. Pupils use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and become self-motivated.



### Intent - We aim to...

Enable pupils to be confident, courageous and resilient explorers

Provide all pupils with a set of life long practical skills

Develop pupils who have an inquisitive, caring attitude toward the natural world, that will create environmentally conscious citizens for the future

Teach pupils how to take risks and develop strategies in order to do so within the boundaries of safety

Increase pupil's self-esteem, self-confidence and positive self-image. Have a positive impact on SEMH for all



### Implementation — How we achieve this...

#### Information about our curriculum

Forest School is an innovative approach to education based on outdoor play. It aims to enrich pupils learning through motivation, risk taking and team work. Pupils experience an environment that is totally different from the classroom, with freedom to take risk and explore in a natural landscape with adult support. We encourage personal skills such as communication, as well as developing physical and emotional wellbeing. Pupils gain an understanding of the natural environment whilst developing the Forest School ethos, namely, development of self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

#### Forest School Principles

**Principle 1:** Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

**All pupils have a planned Forest School Session every week across the whole academic year.**

**Principle 2:** Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

**Our Forest School area is situated within the school grounds. There is space to play and explore. We have a number of species of tree, a variety of plants, birds, mammals and minibests passing through. We are also fortunate enough to be able to use the local woodland area.**

**Principle 3:** Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

**Our Forest School activities are varied to develop the whole child, particularly focussing on wellbeing. We explore physical movement though balance, climbing, swinging and exploring; creatively through art and design and social and emotional development in how we care for ourselves, each other and the world around us. Mindfulness and opportunities to develop spirituality are nurtured in each session.**

#### Forest School Principles continued...

**Principle 4:** Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

**At Ibstone, our Forest School rules are BRANCH. All pupils have freedom to explore within the boundaries, making judgements about how to conduct their activities. Activities are suggested to challenge the children, encouraging them to take calculated risks and increase their confidence.**

**Principle 5.** Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

**Mr Anson is a fully qualified Forest School Practitioner with many years of experience running nature based education. In his spare time he also volunteers for the local conservation society making a difference to the wider world.**

**Principle 6.** Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

**Pupils are encouraged to experience Forest School in their own way, adapting activities and resources to suit their ideas and discoveries. Pupils offer suggestions and reflect on their learning to inspire future sessions.**

# Implementation – continued

## BRANCH - Our Forest School Rules

**Boundaries** – discussing the boundaries for the session

**Respect** – respecting each other and nature

**Around the fire pit** – how to behave and the rules around the fire pit

**No pick, no lick** – a reminder not to pick plants, leaves etc and not to lick or eat them!

**Call** – if you hear the adult calling ‘1, 2, 3 Base Camp’ everyone should return to Base Camp immediately

**Heads, think before you do** – assessing risks

## Progression

The progression of Forest School skills is set out in the Progression Map for Forest School. However, the Forest School leader, assisted by other informed adults, will judge whether particular year groups, groups or individuals have developed sufficient experience to be ready to learn the next skills. Assessed readiness, based on an individual or group’s prior experience and physical/cognitive/emotional maturity, is the key measure required for progression to take place irrespective of age or year group, in line with the FSA guidance. ‘Readiness’ for safe next steps progression must be shown in particular in the areas of:

- Tools: e.g. from whittling with a vegetable peeler to pen knife or from shared use of a bow saw to sawing/making objects.
- Fire: e.g. from using a flint and steel to light tinder, to cooking over an open fire
- Climbing: e.g. from using found materials to climb over and under, to supervised tree climbing.

## Tools and Skills

Under the supervision of the Forest School leader, pupils will learn to use a range of tools safely, these include but are not limited to:

- Screwdrivers, hand drill, hammer, bush craft knife, bowsaw, bill hook, loppers, secateurs
- Pupils will also learn about a range of knots, when they are used and how to tie them, such as:
- half hitch, timber hitch, clove hitch and bow line

## Developing Cultural Capital

Pupils are given regular opportunity to develop a relationship between themselves and the natural world. Here they foster resilience, confidence, independence, creativity and problem solving through activities which offer pupils the opportunity to take managed risks appropriate to the environment and themselves. Our pupils often concentrate for prolonged periods and become fascinated by things they discover, leading to enhanced knowledge. They are able to access tools such as bowsaws, secateurs and sheath knives, and work safely and creatively. The Forest School leaders model skills and techniques and enhance with appropriate language and vocabulary. Exceptional levels of engagement and concentration are regularly observed; accompanied with persistence and perseverance. Through being empowered to use real tools, being given responsibility, gaining new skills and taking pride in their creations, their self-esteem and confidence soars.

## Appropriate Weather?

Our Forest School runs all year no matter what the weather. The only exception to this is if there are high winds and/or electrical storms. In the event of high winds/ storms - Forest School sessions will take place on the decking or in the hall.

All pupils are given a kit list for each season and there is a pre-loved Forest School kit shop for parents to access if needed. We believe there is no such thing as appropriate weather, it is about appropriate clothing, our pupils are encouraged to be responsible for their own kits and resources.

## Cross curricular

There are many cross curricular opportunities that can be explored in Forest School sessions, such as (but not limited to):

- English - developing reading and writing skills, storytelling
- Mathematics - measurement, counting, shape, space and measure
- Science - observation/enquiry, plants, living things & habitats, the water cycle, seasonal changes
- History - historical investigations/re-enactments, designing and making objects eg Stone age tools
- Geography - map making/orienteering
- DT – use of tools, making bird boxes, bug houses
- The Arts - drawing/art, singing/making music
- Spiritual development – using Ows, Wows and Nows – Windows, Mirrors and Doors
- Personal/emotional - Confidence, resilience, determination, ‘have a go’ attitude, collaboration, fairness, emotional self-regulation, respect towards others, self-esteem, peacefulness, having fun, relaxation, time with friends
- Physical - Stamina, strength, balance, agility, manual dexterity, lifting, running, jumping, climbing, crawling, negotiating obstacles etc.

## Impact

Pupils show an enjoyment & curiosity for their environment and the natural world

Pupils leave our school with the knowledge, skills and understanding about the natural world as well as with enhanced communication, empathy and confidence as a result of the activities they engage in

Outdoor activity has a positive physical impact. Pupils demonstrate improved physical stamina improve and development of gross and fine motor skills.

Pupils have an increased confidence due to the freedom, time and space they are given in their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence in their own time

Pupils are able to use a range of skills to understand and assess risks, they use prior learning to make safe choices

Pupils’ health and wellbeing is good as a result of outdoor learning opportunities throughout their primary education