FOREST SCHOOL AT CEDAR PARK

SUBJECT INTRODUCTION

Forest School Philosophy and Ethos:

At Cedar Park, Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all participants, fostering resilience, confidence, independence and creativity. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Forest School is a child-centred learning process, providing learner inspired, hands-on experiences in the natural environment. It is a unique place where children are able to think critically, share ideas, develop teamwork and deepen their understanding about their immediate woodland enviornemt.

INTENT

At Cedar Park, our aim is to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences at Forest School. Children will 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. The children use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and become self-motivated.
Our aim is also to promote respect for wildlife.

TO IMPROVE, OUR PRIORITIES ARE:

- **To ensure that we create opportunities for all children at Cedar Park to experience Forest School as more staff are trained.**
- **To continue to develop our Forest School site through further planting of trees to help with our ecosystems, providing homes for wildlife and to help combat emissions from the air around us.**

IMPLEMENTATION

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. Appropriate clothing is worn, however, during high winds and thunderstorms it is considered unsafe to go into the woods.

The children's interests, along with the varied natural resources in our woodland, are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development. One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability.

The children are taught respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area in our locality.

STRENGTHS

The success of forest school allows the children to:

- **Grow in confidence because of the freedom, time and space they are given during their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence.**
- **Develop teamwork, strengthen their bonds and social skills through activities such as sharing tools and participating as a group.**
- **Increase their vocabulary. The sensory experiences provided by Forest School helps prompt language development.**
- **Improve their communication skills, which also has a positive effect on their self-esteem.**
- **Have high levels of interest, which leads to high levels of attention. Spending time in the woodland is exciting for a child. It tends to fascinate them which develops a strong will to participate and concentrate over long periods of time.**
- **Develop physical stamina and improve gross and fine motor skills as well as mental health.**
- **Inspires children to gain a love of the outdoors, which encourages them to want to visit local woodlands more frequently and participate in general outdoor activities as they grow and develop.**

CHILDREN WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING

At Cedar Park, sessions are designed to stimulate each child's imagination, creativity and desire to explore through activities involving natural materials such shelter-building and natural art. Each learner gets something different out of Forest School; it can improve confidence, behaviour, physical and social skills, emotional wellbeing, language and communication, concentration, knowledge and understanding of the world.

Forest School within EYFS

Forest School offers many benefits to young children and encourages development across all areas of the EYFS.
It promotes the Characteristics of Effective Learning by developing the positive behaviours children need to use, such as curiosity, energy and enthusiasm when approaching tasks and opportunities. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations outside of Forest School.

MINDFULNESS AND PUPIL VOICE

Mindfulness is a special time at the beginning of a Forest School session. It's where children and adults have a quiet moment to become in tune with the natural environment around them.

Pupil and adult voice opportunities are paramount. Thoughts are shared and discussed at the end of each session to reflect on learning and joyful moments.

ASSESSMENT

Following the Forest School principals, we continually assess children by observing their approach to adult-led and self-initiated tasks. This enables adults to build on starting points, identify learning styles, check for understanding, and to support next steps in learning so every child can achieve and be proud of their achievements.

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