

Subject: Forest School

Environment and timetable – where do forest school sessions take place and what coverage does this subject have on the timetable?

Here at Fairway Primary Academy, we are extremely fortunate to have a Forest School facility on site meaning that the whole school can benefit from this positive way of learning.

The Forest School model originates in Scandinavia and involves participants journeying by foot (if possible) to a local woodland environment to learn outdoors on a regular, sustained basis. It is a long-term child-led, educational process that promotes, observes and explicitly supports the social, emotional and physical development of children, young people and adults in an outdoor, preferably woodland, environment. Our forest school on site is an ever-developing woodland environment.

Years 1 to 6 will receive regular forest school sessions for a ½ term each year.

Benefits to children - a Summary of potential benefits of forest school.

- The forest school program evolves from the needs of the child and includes the child's interests.
- Children develop good self-esteem in a climate of small achievable steps.
- Provides a real context for language.
- Provides the practitioner with an alternative view of the child and further insights into a child's particular development.
- Beneficial to a child's all-round development, particularly in the areas of personal, social and emotional, language and communication and physical development.
- Underpins the principles laid down in the foundation stage guidelines.
- Provides opportunities for the children to take risks, risk assess, problem solve and use thinking skills.
- Complements learning in the classroom and can be transferred.
- Gives children practical life skills.

Lead: Mrs Coombes

Key principles – the key principles of our forest school at Fairway are as follows.

- The cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- Forest School takes place in a natural or woodland environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- Forest school is inclusive and an environment for all children to learn and develop.
- Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
- Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
- Forest school sessions and activities are risk assessed and dynamic risk assessments are made continuously throughout each session.

Planning and assessment – how are sessions planned for and what is the assessment process?

- Forest school planning outlines safety procedures for children entering site, basecamp activity, main activity and reflection/mindfulness activity at the end of each session.
- Main activities are provided but children have free choice in what they choose to engage in after the initial basecamp activity.
- Planning is flexible. A scheme of suggested learning is in place, however the forest school leader may differ from this to follow specific interests or learning from the children.
- The scheme of learning and planning has many cross – curricular links woven through, especially in the areas of science, art and design, design technology, PSHE and history.
- One session every half term is evaluated, this should occur towards the end of a class cycle of forest school sessions, to assess how immersed the children became, how they showed independence and how they worked with each other.
- One child case study is conducted each half term. Class teacher is asked to identify a child who would benefit from development in either language and communication, fine/gross motor skills or personal, social and emotional development – this development is then tracked across a ½ term at forest school sessions.
- Sessional risk assessments are completed before each session. These forms are stored in the forest school handbook. Another risk assessment is completed with the children upon entering site each session, termed as 'a safety sweep.'
- An overarching risk vs challenge document is located in the forest school handbook – along with detailed risk vs challenge risk assessments for high risk activities such as fire or tools.
- The Forest school leader follows all policies in the forest school handbook. Some policies pay specific regard to safe use of tools, fire and other practises on site.