Forest School

INTENT

At King's Meadow School, we aim to follow the Forest School ethos which promotes a child-led inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

Forest School is defined by 6 core principles, which were agreed by the Forest School community in 2011.

- Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment,
- 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.
- Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent, and creative learners.
- Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
- Forest School uses a range of learner-centered processes to create a community for development and learning.
- Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Having Forest School at King's Meadow School helps and facilitates our children to develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgmental nurturing environment for learners to try new experiences and take risks. Forest School inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of where we fit in. Our approach to risk means that learners constantly expand their abilities by solving real-world issues, building self-belief and resilience. Forest School, therefore, helps children to become healthy, resilient, creative and independent learners.

IMPLEMENTATION

At King's Meadow School we aim to provide regular weekly Forest School opportunities to Nursery, Reception and Year one children to support them with their physical and emotional development offering them a safe environment to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest school learning environment will provide opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others and develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs. It aims to support their experiences with the natural world and build on developing a relationship with nature. Forest School encourages investigating and problem solving through practical activities.

The children will go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and the environment. They will wear appropriate clothing and careful consideration will be given if high winds are forecasted, making it too unsafe to enter the Woodland area.

A key principle of Forest School is to promote awareness, respect and responsibility for the world around them. The children are taught to respect the wildlife and the flora and fauna that grow in the wild area. This will be done through detailed planning, evaluation and careful consideration of our Woodland Management Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment. We aim to encourage sustainability and only collect natural material found on the ground. The children will be encouraged to look after the site and will always leave it tidy. Each adult and child will respect the rules of the Woodlands, 'no pick, no lick, be careful with the sticks'. After every session the children will be expected to wash their hands.

At Forest School we actively promote the inclusion of all children and adults into Forest School sessions, and we endeavor to ensure that the opportunities for learning, development and participation are available to everyone, irrespective of race, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation or age.

All members of staff attending Forest School sessions will be First Aid trained and will be advised of where the First Aid kit is kept.

A handwash station will be available at every session.

Responsibilities of a Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up-to-date ITC Outdoor First Aid certificate.

The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments. The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date. They are responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused.

IMPACT

The success of forest school allows the children to:

- Gain confidence as a result of the freedom, time and space they are given in natural surroundings. This allows them to demonstrate independence at their own pace.
- Activities such as sharing tools and participating in play help teach the children to work together as a group, which strengthens their bonds and social skills.
- The sensory experiences provided by Forest School helps prompt language development, improving communication skills.
- High levels of interest lead 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.
- Having regular outdoor activities has a positive physical impact, supporting the development of physical stamina, co-ordination and fine motor skills.
- Children develop an interest in the outdoors and respect for the environment and encourage them to build a relationship with the natural world which will help protect the environment.

- Gain a growth mindset when faced with a challenging activity such as tree climbing and balancing.
- Develop their problem-solving approach and become confident in sharing their ideas.

Forest School is also beneficial to teachers. Observing their class in a different setting allows them to gain a new perspective and understanding of their class.