

Intent

Forest School is a unique method of child initiated outdoor learning. At Milton Ernest Primary School our aim is inspire children through positive outdoor experiences. They will connect with nature and further develop mindfulness and spirituality. 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 will use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence and self-esteem and become self-motivated.

Implementation

Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest school learning environment provides opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others, to learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults and to develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.

Every child will receive a block of 6 Forest School lessons each year and each year group will experience a different season. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environment changes. Appropriate clothing will be worn and during high winds it will be considered unsafe to go into the forest.

The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development. Each year group will experience a range of activities and a progression of skills and tool use. These will include:

- Field Studies Activities – minibeast hunts, tree identification, life cycle games
- Sensory Activities – games to do with colour, smell, sound, touch
- Bushcraft – shelter building, knot use, fire lighting and cooking, whittling
- Woodland crafts – willow crafts, natural jewellery, weaving, traditional crafts

- Teambuilding and trust games – blindfold games, circle games, problem solving activities
- Wildlife conservation – nest box construction, coppicing, mini beast homes,
- Imaginative and creative activities – story telling, drama, role play, songs, natural art
- Physical play – tree climbing, balancing, log dragging, digging
- Construction – shelter building, stick men, minibeast shelters

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest School. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and careful reference to our Woodland Management Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment.

Impact

The success of forest school allows the children to grow in confidence and self-esteem as a result of the freedom, time and space they are given in their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence at each individual child's rate and assess risks for themselves.

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 has a positive effect on a child's self-esteem and is a crucial part of their development.

Children will become mindful and have skills that can be applied in all areas of their life.

High levels of interest lead to high levels of attention. Spending time in the woodland is exciting and spiritual for a child. It tends to fascinate them which develops a strong will to participate and concentrate over long periods of time. Subject knowledge in a range of curriculum areas will develop further through enrichment experiences.

The increase in outdoor activity has a positive physical impact. The time spent in the forest contributes towards their physical activity targets. The use of tools and the variety of activities also develops gross and fine motor skills, balance and co-ordination.

Children develop an interest in the great outdoors, a connection with nature and respect for the environment. Encouraging children to develop a relationship with the natural world will help in protecting the environment for generations to come.

Forest School isn't just beneficial to children it is also beneficial to teachers. Observing their class in a different setting allows them to gain a new perspective and understanding of their class.

When children really engage with Forest Schools they will take their experiences home to share with friends and family. This will often encourage families to visit their local woodlands more frequently.

Children will work together, aim high and set themselves challenges and shine brightly with all the things that Forest School has taught them.