



MUNTHAM HOUSE SCHOOL

**FOREST SCHOOL
POLICY**

Forest School Policy

Intent

Muntham House School aims to use the natural outdoor woodland area to offer the children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries, become creative, develop social skills and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and developing their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover many areas of learning, including emotional aspects where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow, and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round, making the most of the changing seasons. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of each and every activity.

Aims

- To engage pupils as learners at many levels through linking themes and topics with practical experiences
- To enable all pupils to be independent by providing them with the skills necessary to communicate and work effectively
- To encourage and develop creative thinking, independence, risk-taking, self-esteem, social skills and self-confidence in their practical abilities
- To develop a love of nature and appreciation of the outdoors and the benefits this brings
- To link what pupils learn in the classroom (within other subjects) to practical outdoor learning, cross-curricular

Objectives

- For pupils to develop a sense of responsibility for their actions, while in the forest school setting
- To develop gross motor skills, through repetition, by the use of various tools and activities
- To present pupils with a broad range of challenges, both mentally and physically
- To help pupils to engage, immerse, appreciate, and love being in the natural environment
- To enable pupils to communicate effectively using team or pair work
- To help pupils develop an understanding of how the natural world works, how humans have affected it and how we can help it
- To build confidence within each student by offering managed risks that will, at times, push them out of their comfort zone
- To help pupils understand how the natural environment can help with reducing stress and anxiety in their daily lives by allowing pupils time to pause and reflect in an environment without walls
- To develop resilience within each student through repetition of tasks, slowly building on knowledge and experience
- To help pupils understand the physical health benefits of being outdoors

Implementation

Forest School is an additional subject taught here at Muntham House School.

Each session will be delivered by a level 3 qualified Forest School Leader. Whether the sessions are held in the upper or lower forest school area. Years 7 and 8 will be taught in the upper forest school area, while the children in Primary will be taught in the lower forest school area.

Forest school is a 'student-led subject', meaning the pupils are able to have large inputs to the content of lessons; however, due to the nature of the pupils at Muntham, there needs to remain a structure to each lesson, which the Forest school Leader is responsible for. If pupils show a particular interest in an area of outdoor learning, then the Forest School Leader will facilitate this learning.

Forest school sessions for the pupils in Primary will be focused on appreciating the outdoors while exploring nature and the natural world. Each session will begin with an activity that will enable the pupils to enhance their knowledge and skill set. The activities will be linked to the theme of the week; these will be selected from special days and events taking place around the world, such as 'National Badger Day' or 'Pride Month'. Following this, they will have the opportunity to choose how they would like to make use of the Forest School site, leading their own learning for the remainder of the session. The site has a range of areas and activities which are always available to the pupils, including:

- Tyre swing
- Birch Forest
- Hammocks
- Rope walk
- Mud kitchen
- Tree house
- Natural weaving
- Bug hunting
- Natural construction toys
- Digging
- Small world Den building
- Walkie-talkies
- Role-play
- Balance planks
- Knot-tying

In addition to this, the pupils will be welcome to ask to engage with an activity of their choice that they may have thought of themselves, or participated in during a previous session. Such activities may include fire-lighting or sawing. Lots of resources will be available on the site, which can be easily facilitated by the Forest School lead. Each session will finish with a chance to reflect in the campfire area, highlighting the learning successes that have taken place and thoughts and ideas for future sessions. The long-term aim is for the pupils to understand how the natural environment can have a positive impact on both their mental and

physical health, as well as provide them with knowledge and skills that will be of benefit to them throughout their lives.

Year 7 and 8 forest school sessions will build on the experiences pupils have had during previous years. At this stage, the pupils will start to have much more independence in their learning and will be able to take control of what it is they want to learn. Whilst important factors such as motor skills, social skills, communication, resilience, independence and self-esteem will continue to be worked on and developed, pupils will also be challenged throughout their forest school lessons.

The forest school leader will keep regular contact with teachers from other subjects and, wherever possible, complement, in forest school, what the pupils are learning in other subjects. This is to maintain cross-curricular links.

Curriculum Planning

The SoW for forest school is designed in such a way that each lesson is set out so that it can be taught. This allows for activities that take more than one lesson to be completed, to roll over to the next. This has been applied to those activities that are known to take more than one lesson. However, the nature of such a subject means some activities may roll over to the following week that weren't expected to do so. To allow for this, not every lesson the pupils participate in has been planned. The reason for this is to not only allow for lessons to roll over but to allow pupils the freedom to participate in lessons they want to do. The forest school teacher will simply facilitate the student's self-directed study. The long-term planning is ultimately designed for maximum flexibility.

A SoW for Primary and years 7 and 8 has been written in such a way that the following year complements the previous. The pupils' knowledge and experience will be built upon and extended year on year.

For Primary, the SoW is based upon an overview of skills that we would like the pupils to master by the end of each academic year. These skills fall into a range of categories, including:

- Whittling
- Wood cutting
- Making holes
- Fires
- Knots
- Shelters
- Geographical skills & navigation
- Exploration and play
- Cooking
- Nature

In each of the areas, the skills develop in terms of complexity each year. However, the pupils will always begin by revisiting the basic techniques that they have learned before progressing further. By the end of their time in Primary, the pupils will have an excellent repertoire of knowledge and skills to bring with them as they move up to the main school.

Impact

The progress of pupils is monitored through progress data. This is updated regularly and provides the Forest School Lead with the progress of pupils, which then influences the planning of future lessons.

Although there is no formal summative assessment for forest school, pupils do undergo formative assessment. This is conducted each lesson through discussions, debates and questions to gauge the student's understanding and also helps towards the progress data. Formative assessment can also provide the Forest School Lead with information for future planning, and where pupils may be struggling or behind.

In Primary, the many, many WOW moments that are observed during the sessions will be recorded by the Forest School lead. These may be seen during the activities at the beginning of the sessions or during the independent learning which takes place during the majority of the sessions – both are of equal value. The Forest School lead will observe the pupils in terms of the knowledge and skills they demonstrate, in relation to the overview of skills and determine when it is the correct time to progress further. Therefore, the pupils may develop at their own pace, regardless of which class they are in.

Pupils complete self-scoring evaluations designed by the National Outdoor Learning Award (NOLA) every term that explore six themes: Safe, Learn, Respect, Self, Others and Environment. This is designed for pupils to seek demonstrations and engage in reflections on emotional intelligence, positive peer interactions, and safe behaviour.

The Forest School Lead identifies the training needs for the purpose of continual professional development (CPD) and makes every effort to conduct training when and where possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Lead will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual students' needs
- Ensuring that once on site, rules are followed and continue to risk assess during the session
- Ensuring the necessary equipment is taken into the woodland
- Administration of first aid and checking the first aid kit
- Supervision of fire use
- Supervision of the use of tools, cleaning and storing
- Organising emergency procedures
- Ensure the site is left as it was found after every session.

All staff involved with Forest School will model good practice throughout the sessions, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend student's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support pupils to manage their own risk, remind pupils of rules

and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times and support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

First Aid Procedure

- The Forest School Lead will hold a current Outdoor First Aid certificate
- A first aid kit will be taken to all sessions and will be checked regularly. A fire blanket and burns kit will also be taken to all forest school sessions, as well as a fire bucket and an ample supply of water
- Whilst dealing with a first aid incident, the leader will ensure the safety of all other pupils within the group by advising other adults present of the situation and asking them to monitor the other pupils
- Emergency help will be sought if required
- All staff will be aware of the medical conditions of the children and the location of inhalers, EPI-Pens, etc.
- There are two defibrillators on site – one by the sports hall and one by the student entrance to the main building. The code for these is C159X.
- A school radio and mobile phone are carried into the woodland by the Forest School Lead at all times if further assistance is required from the medical staff or the emergency services are required.

Behaviour

The Forest School lead will follow the school's Behaviour Policy. If the behaviour of an individual or a group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others' safety at risk, then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School lead. This will be very much a last resort, as Forest School is a place that welcomes everybody and should be viewed as somewhere to help pupils develop their wellbeing.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

Annually (or when the need arises), the effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed by the Forest School Lead, the Head of Education and the nominated governor. Necessary recommendations for improvement will be made to the Governors.