



Forest School Intent

Forest School ethos: 'Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term programme that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.' (ForestSchoolassociation.org)

Forest School at Barrow CE Primary aims to provide learners with a holistic and nurturing experience. All sessions are led by the learner's needs - developing the 'whole learner' in line with the changing seasons. Each experience provides new opportunities that allow the learner to discover and explore in a natural setting.

The time and space given to the learner to explore and engage with the natural environment will support them to develop socially, emotional, physically, and spiritually whilst providing opportunities to develop new practical skills. Working alongside nature provides children with a love, respect, and deeper understanding of the natural environment as they explore the meaning of ecology, sustainability, forest management and conservation. This in turn, will arm them with a strong sense of self and well-being as they embark on their journey into adulthood.

Forest School Implementation

The Forest School ethos is to develop the 'whole learner or child,' to do this the Forest School approach focuses on holistically developing five main areas of an individual:

- empathy
- social skills
- self-awareness,
- ability to self- motivate
- ability to regulate emotions

Each session is led by needs of the learners which are observed by the Forest Leader. Subsequent lessons will be planned (taking a holistic or practical approach) based on these needs to best support the children to develop their skills accordingly. Learners are given time and space to achieve their objectives in a natural setting allowing them to accomplish and make progress in their own time which is unique to the individual.

As learners work with and amongst nature, part of the Forest School approach is to develop their understanding of nature itself. Where opportunities arise, the Forest School leader will develop the learner's understanding of the environment and will focus on topics such as ecology, sustainability, conservation and forest management to build on their understanding of the environment in which they are learning.

Practical skills also play a fundamental role in the Forest School approach, such as den building, tying knots, constructing shelters, making fires and tools use. These tasks allow the learner new and exciting opportunities to build their confidence and achieve. As these activities involve risk, it helps an individual to grow by teaching them how to manage the risk allowing the learner to self-regulate and consequently grow in confidence.

An important approach in Forest Schools is to encourage the learner to review and reflect on their experiences. This reflection engages the learner in metacognition - 'thinking about thinking.' By developing reflection strategies for children, we allow them to understand a process. Understanding the 'why' helps the learner to develop their knowledge and skills which acts as a platform for future development by gaining an awareness and understanding. Helping the learner to connect to their thought process allows the individual to develop their self-awareness, confidence and communication skills.

Overall, Forest School sessions aim to be fun, engaging and offer new experiences to the learner, enabling them to achieve and develop the 'whole self' under the five areas that help to holistically develop an individual.

The six principles (in brief) of Forest School are:

1. Long term, regular sessions
2. Woodland setting
3. Holistic development
4. Supported risk taking
5. Qualified practitioner led
6. Learner-centred

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of a 'pure' Forest School approach based on the above six principles, we are also keen to integrate and enhance the classroom curriculum into the outdoor environment. We therefore look to use Forest School methodology as part of a blended outdoor learning process, providing all learners with the opportunity to develop their learning and skills.

Forest Impact

Forest School sessions will make a positive impact on the learners 'whole self.' The Forest School leader should see individuals grow in confidence, self-regulate their emotions and be able to reflect and recognise their achievements. The learner should develop their empathy skills by responding appropriately to the needs of their group and people's emotions. Learners should also develop their social skills and confidence showing an ability to interact with their group within different situations.

The learners will also be able to use a variety of tools and tie knots to make a variety of products (age/learner appropriate). The learner should be able to use tools appropriately, accurately, and safely to produce a product. The learner will be able to tie and select knots that are appropriate for use within a given task.

The learner will develop their understanding of fire safety and carrying out fire safety procedures to eventually lighting a campfire themselves with supervision.

They will be given opportunities to develop their physical abilities through play and risk and develop their fine motor skills through various Forest School activities. The unpredictable nature of a natural setting will allow children to assess the risks and solve problems immediately for them to confidently play and explore in the Forest School area.

The 'learner' in the Forest Schools approach refers to **all** and with the belief that everyone is entitled to achieve and develop. The approach is designed for **all** ages and abilities. The sessions aim to provide equal opportunities for all within a safe and nurturing environment. The Forest School Sessions carried out at Barrow CE Primary aim to provide a unique learning experience and give learners new and exciting opportunities to achieve in a natural setting that differ from their mainstream education.