

# THE QUEENSWELL FEDERATION

## FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

Policy Written by: Amanda van der Merwe

Date Written: January 2021



### **What is 'Forest School'?**

'Forest school' is a learning approach that fosters independence, confidence, resilience and creativity. A deep appreciation for the natural world supports a child's sense of well-being and belonging. Children go outside to explore and discover in all weathers; investigate seasons and environmental changes.

The ethos of deep-levelled learning and progression is integral to the Forest School Approach which promotes a child's holistic development. The benefits of Forest School are extensive; including but not limited to the social, physical, intellectual, communication, emotional and spiritual development of an individual.

### **Rationale**

It is our intention, that through regular forest school opportunities, we will instil a love of the great outdoors for the children of The Queenswell Federation. We aim to raise awareness of environmental challenges we are currently facing; develop children who care about their planet and strive to make changes for the better for their future and the future of others. In collaboration with our Environmental Education curriculum, we will enable children to learn about the natural world and the impact that we as humans can have on it.

We are a school that promotes resilience and aim to support the development of all learners' resilience through an embedded approach across the curriculum. The opportunities to develop resilience through Forest School are great. By taking part in a range of activities that involve teamwork; collaboration; communication and language and managing calculated risks, children will feel a sense of achievement and well-being.

### **Equalities**

At The Queenswell Federation we believe it is the right of all pupils, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, physical ability or linguistic, cultural or home background to have access to high quality learning experiences in stimulating and supporting environment where prejudice and stereotyping are challenged.

We are strongly committed to positive action to remove and challenge discrimination in all aspects of the Federation and its work. The importance of staff awareness regarding the dangers of preconceived expectations based on stereotypes is essential and we bear this in mind when carrying out Forest School activities.

### **Aims**

'Forest School' aims to:

- integrate the use of our environment across the curriculum throughout the school.
- develop skills to lead our own learning through exploration and discovery of the natural environment.
- develop confidence and self-esteem through 'hands-on' learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment.
- Raise awareness of key issues around environmental challenges.
- Gain an understanding of how we can act to improve elements of our natural environment.

## **Objectives**

The Forest School Association ([www.forestschoollassociation.org](http://www.forestschoollassociation.org)) outlines 6 key principles and criteria for good practise. These are:

- **Principle 1:** Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.
- **Principle 2:** 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.
- **Principle 3:** Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners
- **Principle 4:** Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- **Principle 5:** Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
- **Principle 6:** Forest School uses a learner-centred process using planning, adapting, observing and reviewing. These are all integral elements of Forest School as it is a child-led learning environment

## **Implementation**

'Forest School' may be implemented in a range of ways, as follows:

- Planned Forest School sessions led by Forest School Leader for groups of up to 15 children.
- Planned Forest School sessions led by Forest School Leader for groups of between 4 and 8 targeted children as an 'intervention group'.
- Opportunities and experiences within the school setting (inside and outside) which are influenced and implemented from the Forest School approach.
- Lessons led by school staff that involve:
  - Learning IN the environment
  - Learning ABOUT the environment
  - Learning FOR the environment.
- The 'Forest School' area may be used as an extended part of the continuous provision across the EYFS and may be used in this way by members of school staff who have signed the declaration of adherence to the Forest School Handbook and risk assessments.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Teacher**

- To implement the Forest School curriculum in line with school policy
- To ensure lessons are evaluated and assessments completed and/or adjusted according to the needs of individual children.

### **Forest School Leader**

- To exemplify 'good practice' in the teaching of Forest Schools.
- To ensure lessons are evaluated and pupil progress is monitored, assessed and these assessments form the basis of the next steps in pupils' learning.
- To budget for materials to support the scheme of work and extra-curricular activities.
- To keep abreast of current educational research, publications and events in the field of Forest Schools.
- To complete an annual action plan for the development of Forest Schools across the school.
- To review and update the Forest Schools policy every four years.
- To maintain Forest Schools resources throughout the Federation.
- To keep parents up to date with Forest Schools

### **LMT**

- To oversee and support the work of the Forest School Subject Leader.

### **Assessment and Recording**

The Subject Leader will analyse and evaluate the impact of Forest School at the end of the school year and will feedback information to the Senior Leadership Team. This means that school will be aware of the strengths and areas to develop within the Forest School approach and is therefore able to plan for the raising of standards in the new school improvement plan. Feedback from children will be gathered via interviews and through the school parliament, which will be passed onto the senior leadership team by the co-ordinator.

### **Monitoring Evaluation and Review**

The monitoring, evaluation and review of our practice is regarded as integral to achieving a whole school ethos to the teaching and learning within the school. The LMT, together with Subject Leaders will evaluate the success of Forest School projects and initiatives and review the policy accordingly.

The following aspects will be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of this policy:

<p>Planning includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Activities based around the six principles of the Forest School Association</li><li>● Activities which can be adapted in terms of difficulty.</li><li>● Resources to be used.</li><li>● A glossary of vocabulary</li><li>● Opportunities for children to present their work.</li><li>● Opportunities for children to review, evaluate and improve their work.</li></ul>
<p>Teaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Good understanding of subject knowledge is demonstrated.</li><li>● Clear instructions and use of relevant teaching points.</li><li>● High expectations evident and success criteria made clear to children re – behaviour, participation, and development of skills.</li><li>● Good organisation of class and resources</li><li>● Enthusiasm and praise used throughout the lesson, promoting children’s self-esteem.</li><li>● Previous work is referred to and built on to extend knowledge.</li><li>● Opportunities for creativity and challenge evident in lesson.</li><li>● Opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to be extended.</li><li>● Appropriate use of teaching support assistants.</li><li>● The lesson is well paced.</li><li>● Opportunities for children to evaluate and reflect.</li></ul>
<p>A good standard of learning has been achieved when children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Have met or exceeded the learning objectives, demonstrating progress in the skills learnt.</li><li>● Can use resources effectively and appropriately.</li><li>● Express a wish to further their development in an area of Forest Schools.</li><li>● Are able to make links between previous skills and ideas.</li><li>● Are able to listen to others, evaluate and refine techniques and ideas.</li></ul>
<p>Outcomes – children demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● An active role in Forest Schools through participation and involvement</li><li>● Taking responsibility for decision making in Forest Schools; planning, exploring, editing, making, presenting, playing, analysing, monitoring, researching and evaluating.</li><li>● A confident attitude towards Forest Schools through experiencing success.</li><li>● Secure knowledge of the background and history of Forest Schools.</li></ul>