

Forest School in 'The Wild'

Forest School provides a long term, outdoor programme that is holistic and learner led. It aims to develop confidence, independence and self-esteem in children through healthy engagement with risk, problem-solving and self-discovery. It differs from other outdoor learning, in its reach, delivery and effect using a child centred approach whilst providing clear structure and defined start and finish for discussion and reflection. Sessions are clearly planned with a flexible approach to respond to where the children take the process.

The benefits of Forest School are linked to the long-term, regular sessions which can incorporate different seasons, and echo the holistic development aims in the six guiding principles. Research demonstrates that children can benefit in a multitude of ways ranging from confidence to social, emotional, intellectual, physical and language development (Murray & O'Brien, 2005).

Case studies have shown children can:

- Develop self-regulation skills.
- Cope with and learn from failure.
- Build resilience (the skill of coping with risk and failure).
- Gain a sense of achievement.
- Increase motivation and concentration.
- Improve problem solving.
- Expand their vocabulary and communication skills.
- Feel empowered and have new perspectives.
- Build positive relationships with adults and peers.
- Have overall improved wellbeing and mental health.



As defined by the FSA (www.forestschoollassociation.org) Quality Forest School is delivered by maintaining six key principles that shape and govern the Forest School ethos. These are:

- Forest School is a **long-term process of regular sessions**, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session. (Sessions are usually a minimum of 2 hours)
- Forest School **takes place in a woodland or natural environment** to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- Forest School **uses a range of learner-centred processes** to create a community for being, development and learning.
- Forest School aims to **promote the holistic development of all involved**, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- Forest School offers learners the **opportunity to take supported risks** appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- Forest School is run by **qualified Forest School practitioners**, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

It is only when we see the 6 principles working together do we truly see the value of Forest School. Underpinning our principles are some positive core beliefs. These can be summarised as, learners are all:

- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- entitled to experience regular success
- entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world





Forest School Pedagogy for HVA

The programme at HVA sets out to deliver engaging year-round Forest School interweaving the ever-changing seasons and weather with a programme which encourages discovery and connection to the natural world and their wild space.

Rather than providing a task-based tick box approach we are supporting children's interests within an overall framework and adapting sessions to suit their needs. Opportunities are introduced which aim to build their confidence whether through successfully using a saw or managing to wobble across a plank as well as support their wellbeing, problem solving skills and ability to measure risk amongst other things. Ideally a child comes away with confidence, a connection and responsibility to the natural world and a skill set for life including building, safe tool use, fire skills and whittling.

The language that the leaders use is crucial in setting the tone and providing a non-judgemental approach, posing questions of enquiry and inviting the child to think further rather than constant praise. Rather than, 'that is amazing, well done' we would say, 'that works really well. How have you done it? How far does it go, can it go further'. Reflection at the end and circle time at the beginning are crucial elements for creating a 'village' where co-operation is key and sharing and listening to one another.

The Programme

Underpinning the development of the programme are:

- Site specifics
- Developmental age and stage of the children
- Season
- Repetition within sessions and in the overall programme to establish routines and community ethos
- Observations following every session to inform the next session and review year on year.
- Awareness of curriculum
- Progression of skills through providing a range of activities to support physical, mental and emotional development

Site Specifics:

Every Forest School site is different due to terrain, tree cover and age of trees, flora and fauna and seasonal changes. At HVA 'The Wild' site continues to be developed with the children which helps to embed a sense of connection to a place. The children have learnt amongst other things to plant and harvest willow, create pathways with woodchip when wet, spot the red cardinal beetles, toads, nesting blue tit etc and which plants to forage in Spring and Autumn. These aspects are incorporated into the planning.

Age and Stage of Development:

Currently each year group has a term (or just under) of Forest School. With this approach, the idea is to develop a progressive programme from *Orientating* children in Reception (and Pre-school) to *Taking off* in Year 6. Tool use will be developed from safely using peelers to working with knives, creative skills such as willow work from crowns to spiral bird feeders, from potions to real paint making and balms, dens from basic lean to's to waterproofed teepee shelters. Each class will differ in direction of interest and abilities so the activities will be adapted to provide manageable tasks for the group and individuals.

The Seasons:

Planning is strongly linked to the seasons. In colder months, there is likely to be greater emphasis on physical challenge and less on fine motor crafts. Fires and food are more prominent in the cold months and foraged food in the Spring and Summer. Working in the colder wetter months builds resilience and children learn how to keep wet and make choices with mud play. One seasonal activity can support many areas of development. For example, apple pressing in Autumn when apples are on the trees supports almost all the beneficial elements outlined earlier; it involves, risk assessing and tool use cutting the apples with knives and safely using large wooden poles to crush the apples in a bucket, physical strength to crush and turn the apple press, an understanding of instructions and process, team working, sharing resources, link to the wider world and healthy eating.

Stories, poem and song enhance the activity and discussions around apples, the different tastes as we use different apples, comparing this to shop bought juice, recycling and what to do with the left overs. The class usually ask to repeat the activity the following week until the process is almost entirely carried out by the children and the sense of achievement and new skills are met along with communication about it at circle time. When this class come back in Year 2 at the start of term 2, if apples are still in season

we will ask if they want to do it again. Some classes may not. Hence the collaborative and child led aspect is met from the outset and the children connect to their previous sessions.

Repetition:

Repetition of songs, stories and activities, is important so that children can learn from trying different approaches and to embed the learning. Opening and closing songs, Forest School rules and safety and group reflection are reiterated from Pre-school through to Year 6.

Observations:

A crucial part of the Forest School pedagogy are the observations which are done after each session to inform the next session and provide a basis for learning and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. 'The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too. Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future. (FSA)

The programme structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning, but this may be at a different pace or in a different direction from class to class where the observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development. For example, whilst making a snake by hollowing elder a child saw it as a bracelet and started to peel the outer skin. 'Look at this, its green and yellow.' He sniffed it, 'and it smells amazing'. Others tried, 'yuk'. I want to make a bracelet too. Child one then offered a way of doing it and felt pleased that he could help and give instruction. On reflection we looked at developing the craft side using other woods such as willow, comparing its texture and smell to elder and inviting different ways to make snakes.

You also need to be ready for the spontaneous learning which feeds into observations, for example, 'I am making perfume' Year 4 boy, 'using wild garlic and turmeric' Is there anything that smells good on the site we can use. 'Yes this, its Rosemary.' The following week I brought different herbs in to use and we planted others in the herb bed.

Sessions can really help where there is a difficult class dynamic, for example a class that struggles with sharing, we try to work co-operatively and try to see a way through. Its not always successful but over 6 weeks and 6 years things can change as children trust the environment and transformation and connection to nature and its magic develop.

Curriculum links Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to the curriculum and home. It is worth noting that activities are holistic in their nature using whole body, mind and senses and are usually cross curricular in outcome.

For example, in Term 4 the students are studying the Mayans which can easily be linked to activities which progress their fine and gross motor skills such as temple building and using soap carving to practice hieroglyphics, discussions around the gods and agricultural, story-telling, planting, eating corn and foraged foods. This links to history, English, art and design and healthy eating.

In Year 3 the Magic Paintbrush story can be brought to life with children being invited to make their own paintbrushes by bashing sticks and making paint using charcoal and turmeric and crushing limestone. Whilst digging in the mud pit many lose themselves and become archaeologists or enact mining to mirror their learning of the Victorians embarking on role play, discussions and discoveries.

Progression from Preschool to Year 6:

From Reception to Year 6 there is a natural progression through the activities, for example, fire lighting is introduced in Year 2 and in Year 3 they may want repeat the activity or develop it further introducing different types of tinder so that by year 6 they are able to confidently prepare the firewood piles and light and maintain the fire. Similarly with cooking and identifying flora and fauna. Games build on their balance and co-operation year on year but for some children the focus may be simply on verbalising thoughts.

In conjunction with the child led approach the process is more important than the outcome and the initial trajectory may be redirected by the children's actions. For example, a short nest building exercise in Term 4, designed to link to the season, bird spotting and utilise their creative gross motor skills whilst encouraging collaboration between small groups of children continued for the whole session. During that time we discussed which grasses to use, agreed to take only what we needed, engaged fine and gross motors skills building with small and large material, risk assessed picking in areas where brambles grew, talked about bird species on the site, shared bird knowledge, discussed and helped groups to agree on which bird their group would be and then finally played a game. The following week we played the game again and the discussion on birds progressed, some played the game and others built the nest, made bird food, spotted birds. Other children moved to more tool based activities in line with the original planning enabled by the dynamic approach of Forest school to their learning where progression may not always be in a straight line.



Programme Overview

	Reception TERM 6	Year 1 TERM 1	Year 2 TERM2	Year 3 TERM 3	Year 4 TERM 4	Year 5 TERM 5	Year 6 TERM 6
Aims	ORIENTATION: To introduce idea of Forest School. Familiarise children with site through scavenger hunts, gnome finding, sensory trails. Outline FS rules.	EMBEDDING: Building directly on previous term. Focus on Summer turning to Autumn. Fire rules and intro to the fire. Using food from the site. Key skills through using apples; pressing, crafts, eating.	BROADENING: Keeping warm through physical games. Autumn into Winter. Intro to large teepee den building and the Y stick. Obstacle courses and Christmas crafts.	DEVELOPING: Building resilience to the wet and cold. Ice games and celebration of the cold and dark through candle making and stories. Group dens. Mud play.	CONSOLIDATING: Independent building and linking the development of the site to Mayans agriculture practices, rituals around the Spring Equinox and games and food.	MASTERING: May day celebrations/ fine motor. Focus on using and eating foraged foods. Introducing more complex tools and woodwork project such as mallet/ peg rack. Fires lights and managed by the group.	TAKING OFF: Cooking by trial and error, managing the fire, fine motor projects with willow and wood. Revisit sensory trails/barefoot trails. Own obstacle course challenges.
Connect to the season	Celebrate the summer solstice with mandala crowns, colours and magic. Gnome hunt to encourage use of the whole site and linking colours to nature	Songs, apple pressing, making and eating jam. Planting garlic and bulbs. To cook using foraged foods. Gnome hunt continued linking to seasonal colour rhyme	Songs and poems; Winter Home Build, Leaf colours. Deciduous vs evergreen.	Painting/playing with ice. Celebrating Imbolc with candle dipping.	Celebration of the Equinox and reference to Easter.	Observing weather through sit spots. May day celebrations; Green man, crowns, foraged food, songs and story	Focus on the weather and nature through sit spot meditations at the end of each session.
Proprioception and physical development and spatial awareness. Team building and co-operation	Introduce idea of crawling, hopping, rolling like a bug, worm, spider etc... Through games; Grandmothers footsteps, bee game (like fishes game). Making and flying a butterfly. Bee rhyme, game and making.	Den building with A frame in place to build onto. Seed and conker flinging	Gross Motor skills and encouraging personal bests. Creative development of own challenges using obstacles. Stick jumping. Den building using Y sticks for supports	Team building games including river crossing/ Chinese hops/obstacles. Setting challenges to encourage team work and pier teaching. Stick tower challenge, water pulley set up, obstacles as part of warm up. Building shelters and covering with wood and mud (wattle and Daub + tarp shelters.	Free standing shelters linking to Mayan temple construction. Balance challenges to link with the Equinox, slackline Stick challenges	Building a house with seating and cover, testing it for strength, sawing wood, tying it together. Demo of variety of dens: tepee,a-frame, tarp covers and testing waterproofing. Hand Co-ordination rhymes	Obstacle courses and team games such as eggvolution and Predator and prey which promote physical challenge and negotiating.

Aims	Reception TERM 6	Year 1 TERM 1	Year 2 TERM2	Year 3 TERM 3	Year 4 TERM 4	Year 5 TERM 5	Year 6 TERM 6
To engage their imagination and creative play	Through stories; Greedy bee and activities; bee and butterfly making, mini den building, potion making, gnome hunts. Making magic and wind wands.	Grandmothers footsteps, Sleeping Bear, creeping squirrel game, skipping, rolling, using animal games to explore movement. potion making & dying with berries, mud play	Using Foraged plants for food and dyes: apples, oak apples, mushrooms. Squishing mushrooms and cooking oak apples for ink. Exploring other veg for colours and using to make leaf imprints. Apple pressing	Apple cinnamon, crumble. Using rose hips and hawthorn berries for ketchup and syrup. Squishing mushrooms and cooking oak apples for ink. Exploring other veg for colours and using to make leaf imprints. Apple pressing	Willow weaving, Mayan temple design and build, Elder poking for snake making on the Equinox, creating hieroglyphics, landart mandala	Bird kite making, house building and mallet making and balm creating.	Tissue Lanterns and wet felt work. To undertake a project individually or in groups to improve the site. Provide suggestions and materials for land art and sculpture or a building project to work on and complete over the 3 weeks Flag making and natural dyes
To engage their senses	Through introducing one question at start or finish; smells for potions, touch of log in circle, warmth of sun, sound of birds/cars etc. Rain rhyme. Sensory barefoot walk.	Holding seeds and understanding seed dispersal. ID and link to leaf and fruit.	Tastes of the Autumn. Seasonal temperature changes	Sensing the cold, feeling ice, keeping warm, feeling the wind, poem: Whether the weather be cold	Trying wild garlic and first tasted of spring. Sits spots. Wild animal game with sight and sound. Acknowledging warmth of the sun.	Sit spots for engaging all senses. Eagle Eye and Predator and Prey	Blindfold box and barefoot walk. Sit spots
To develop their understanding of flora and fauna and connection to their site and the wider natural world	Plant a seed, Watering plants. Picking and eating strawberries when ripe.			Digging flower beds, planting bulbs and winter veg, transporting wood chip and soil. Involvement in pruning and planting willow. Strawberry picking	Through foraging for early edible leaves on site, sampling garlic and using natural dyes.	Watering game to encourage maintaining the site. Foraging for elder, willow, hawthorn, natural medical supplies	Watering game to encourage maintaining the site.

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Introduce basic tool safety	Using hammers for hapezome. Making wind sticks using small drill	Peeling small hazel stick with vegetable peelers. Drilling conkers with a hand drill to make conker throwers. Loppers for chopping wood to size.	Stick peeling for bread and apple cooking. Using a bow saw to cut wood disks. Drilling acorns and conkers. Carving pumpkins. Hammers for crushing conkers and making soap. Hammer and nails or drills for hedgehog making. Secateurs used with supervision.	Stick peeling using Y peeler. Bow saw for sawing wood for fire. Hammers for breaking into dragon's eggs. Hammer and nail challenge. Less whittling and drilling due to need to keep warm.	Using a peeler, saw, secateurs, loppers, saw for disk making to undertake the various tasks outlined in the plan Poking elder with tent pegs. Using an axe to splice wood. Board hammering for weaving	Mainly independent use of bow saw, loppers, peelers, hand drills and brace drill. Hammer and nails available for specific projects. Knife used to splice wood for mallet making (bar b q tongs, tiny world chair)	As with year 5 tools are available for use in specific projects such as chair, archway, wood sculptures. Knives used in small groups if individuals competent with peelers and demonstrate fine motor control.
Fire safety and skills including developing understanding of fire lighting and cooking	Moving safely around the fire circle. Practicing each week before the finale fire.	Eliciting fire rules, reviewing before having fire and introducing respect position for cooking on the fire. Introducing the Kelly kettle	Reiterating fire rules and linking to great fire of London. Bread cooking on a stick. Apple cinnamon, crumble. Using rose hips and hawthorn berries for ketchup and syrup.	Cooking rather than lighting due to cold fingers. Learning about the woods to burn. Wood poem.	Elicit fire rules at outset. Introduce fire lighting methods and safe practice to light own fires. Spring leaf snacks, wild garlic, fresh beech and hazel leaf, hot choc made from cocoa nibs, for stick prep. Preparing food for cooking on the fire. Following a recipe and measures.	Reminding the children about safety around the fire and allow them to light fire and cook own food. Eating foraged leaves. Cooking popcorn independently	Reminding the children about safety around the fire and allow them to light fire and cook own food for themselves or the class.
To support their listening and verbal communication skills	Introducing simple songs and use repetition in stories Butterfly butterfly fly up high. Busy bee. Hello and goodbye song. Nursery rhymes	Through verbal feedback, stories and circle time discussion.	Through story stick at circle time, call and return songs. Water challenge, spider tag.	Call and response songs, Circle discussion, Tinder song, (chica chica?) Wise old owl song	Discussions and reflection in circle times focused on Mayan culture. Working together to build temples and peer teaching such as fire lighting. Sharing resources.	Discussions in the circle at start and finish. Stories.	Discussions in the circle at start and finish. Focus on biodiversity and taking what they have learnt into the wider world.
Building resilience	Helping them to achieve small manageable tasks themselves such as wool wrapping on bee. Staying out in all weathers.	Through being out in all weathers.	Keeping yourself warm and managing in the cold and wet.	And encouraging the completion of tasks 'I can' or I can't...YET attitude and trying again when things don't go to plan.	Working together to build temples and persevering with fire lighting. Managing the mudSharing resources.	Being out in all weathers and persevering with tasks that they find challenging	Encouraging and supporting individuals to complete tasks and deal with projects not working as initially planned.

Aims	Reception TERM 6	Year 1 TERM 1	Year 2 TERM2	Year 3 TERM 3	Year 4 TERM 4	Year 5 TERM 5	Year 6 TERM 6
Stories and Poems	Greedy Bee, Busy bee song, Butterfly butterfly.	Bears Home, Apple star story. Whisky Frisky, Summer is Ending, Who has seen the wind. Rain action rhyme.	World Fruit Tree Harvey Shlumfenbergers Christmas present	'In the Forest' Forest School Song - Bing video Who has seen the wind, Trees in the Forest There was a Tree, The Anxious Leaf, Tinder and Wise Old Owl song. Magic Paintbrush	RainPlayer, bug rhyme, Equinox tale.	Legend of Curupiri, Magpie and the nest, GreenMan poem	Possibly: Legend of Curupiri Legend of the Knitbones Earth in your hands (felt balls) Tricky nature riddles...
Site development activities which promote connection to their site, nature and an understanding of the wider natural world as well as task based physical activities	Planting pumpkins seeds. Digging, adding to the bug hotel, watering the plants	Planting, pruning, , bug hotel.Bulb planting	Transporting soil, digging flower beds, planting bulbs and shrubs.	Puring and replanting willow, wood chip mulching. Leaving areas to rest during the rain.	Being involved in willow planting, tree mulching, bean, radish, sweetcorn and sunflower planting relating to Mayan agriculture. Improving the bug habitat.	Moving woodchip and planting broad beans and seeds of their choice. Building a more permanent structure in the mud pit. Pulling up grasses, weeding Mulching round trees	Planting and watering. Invitation to make something useful/beautiful to leave for the school.
CLF curriculum areas	English: Circle time story stick, texture, shape. Art and design: Hapezome Biology: Understanding pollination	Maths: Colours & Shapes with leaves Making and using natural dyes. Conker games English and Music : Learning seasonal songs. Biology: intro to photosynthesis	History-Great Fire of London/ Baking Bread Victorian times- using slate/chalk/ink and nib pens The Mines Science- parts of plants/ can we eat plants/ types of trees/ seed dispersal Designers- building contraptions - levers/ axel/ crank Maths- counting in 2's/3's/5's/10/s	The Magic Paint Brush; English Design: paintbrush making Art; drawing wishes	The Mayans Building and Maths; Mayan Temples English and early language: Hieroglyphics Geography and Biology: planting and Agriculture	Geography: Observing the weather at the start of sessions. Biology: planting, Plant ID	Reflection of Forest School over time.