

The Friars Primary School

Cannon Street

Salford

M7 3EU

Early Years Foundation Stage Forest School Policy



Happiness – Achievement – Respect - Determination

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Introduction:

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework places a high value on the importance of outdoor provision for children's learning and development. At The Friars Primary School, we wish to immerse our children in nature, in order to help them become creative, resilient learners. In this policy, 'outdoor learning' and 'forest school' describes the child-led, play-based approach to learning in the outdoors, which encourages children to develop important skills such as imagination, communication and problem solving.

Rationale:

At The Friars Primary School we seek to immerse our children in a natural outdoor setting, which offers them an immense potential for learning. Forest School play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It provides children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically. In doing so it provides a rich context for the development of their language and encourages positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Aims:

We want to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the EYFS curriculum. We strive to ensure the environment acts as a provocation for children's learning, creating high levels of thrill, awe and wonder. The adults' role in the outdoor environment is to take their fun and exciting play and transform it into deep learning opportunities through encouragement, role modelling, suggestions and the use of props.

Our aim for Forest School sessions is to build on each child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. This will encourage children to use their own initiative to solve problems, co-operate with others and develop their confidence.

Our Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

- ✓ Develop social communication skills
- ✓ Develop a broad and rich vocabulary
- ✓ Develop self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem
- ✓ Form positive relationships with others
- ✓ Develop independence
- ✓ Learn to co-operate and work with their peers and adults

- ✓ Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety
- ✓ Learn specific skills which link to the curriculum
- ✓ Develop knowledge, appreciation and empathy towards the natural world and its living things

Impact of Forest School:

Children's resilience, independence, confidence and creativity are all fostered with the Forest School approach. We seek to develop the children's collaborative working skills, self-esteem and practical skills throughout our sessions and aim to make learning practical, fun and enjoyable so that children develop an enjoyable attitude towards school and learning. The impact of Forest School can be seen across all areas of the Early Years Framework. We expect our sessions to improve learning in the following ways:

- ✓ **Confidence:** children have the freedom, time and space to learn and demonstrate independence
- ✓ **Social Skills:** children will gain an increased awareness of the consequences of their actions, towards their peers, through team activities such as sharing tools and participating in play
- ✓ **Communication:** language development and children's 'talk' will be promoted by the different sensory experiences, open space and engagement with the natural environment
- ✓ **Motivation:** the natural environment tends to fascinate the children and develop a keenness to participate. It supports children to gain the ability to concentrate over longer periods of time, due to enticing and engaging children.
- ✓ **Physical Skills:** children will develop physical stamina, along with gross and fine motor skills
- ✓ **Knowledge and Understanding:** the children will develop an interest in their natural surrounding and gain respect for their environment and the wider world.

Observation and Assessment in the Outdoors:

Close observation is essential in order to assess children's ability and to ensure appropriate planning and continuity for the outdoor curriculum. Staff at The Friars Primary School seek to capture the children's excitement, interests and ideas and provide the correct measures

to continue to develop elements of awe and wonder, in order to continue all children's learning and development.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion:

The outdoor environment, forest school sessions, provision and planning must reflect the diversity and richness of the experiences and developing interests that the children have. We believe that every child must be provided with equal opportunities and are entitled to a learning environment that allows them to grow and develop as an individual. We aim to provide a secure outdoor environment, where all children are valued, included and are encouraged to continue to achieve their best.

Health and Safety Consideration:

The Health and Safety of the children and adults is paramount at all times during any Forest School session. All children are provided with warm, suitable clothing and footwear when participating in a Forest School session. Safe practice is reinforced through an introductory circle time at the beginning of every Forest School session and is continued to be promoted throughout. Forest School gives children the opportunity to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst being independent in their learning, they will develop early risk assessment strategies and will understand that their actions have consequences.

The Forest School leader will carry out a risk assessment at the start of every term. In addition, a daily check of the outdoor environment is carried out by a member of staff in the Early Years. This is to identify any hazards or risks and if necessary, appropriate measures are carried out to remove these. There is a Designated First Aider present during each session, who is in charge of first aid arrangements. A First Aid Kit, along with a Burn Kit is available for every session.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation:

One of the principle of our Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught respect and responsibility for the world around them. Children are encouraged to respect their environments, care for it and are made aware of conservation issues of the world around them. At The Friars Primary School, we aim to promote respect for wildlife and the woodland environment. We make reference to this at the start of each session and staff model and reinforce good practice. When appropriate, we will use reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources to develop and maintain our Forest School site.

The Role of the Forest School Leader:

The Forest School Leader is responsible for organising the planning and running of the Forest School sessions. The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments. The leader will ensure all documentation is relevant and up-to-date. The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.

Forest School Routines and Procedures:

- ✓ The Forest School Leader will carry out a risk assessment and daily check of the site prior to the session.
- ✓ Children will be given the appropriate and suitable clothing and footwear to wear. Waterproof suits, fleeces and wellies are kept in the storage shed. Staff work with all children to get children dressed and prepared for the session first.
- ✓ Children will ask to enter the fire circle. The Forest School Leader will go through the forest school rules with the children.
- ✓ Forest School Leader will introduce the starting activity or game to the children.
- ✓ Children will participate in a variety of activities and free play.
- ✓ The children will be taught a variety of woodland skills through practical, hands on activities. They will learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools.
- ✓ Children will be encouraged to develop their vocabulary and communication skills through prompts, questioning and modelling.
- ✓ Group will take part in snack time and reflection time of the session at the end. Children will use the wash-station to clean hands before snack time.

Forest School Rules:

Every member of staff at The Friars Primary School have the children's best interests at heart and work collaboratively to ensure they remain safe, secure and engaged throughout every Forest School session. Children will be informed of the Forest School rules at the beginning of every session. Our rules are:

- ✓ Looking eyes and listening ears
- ✓ Remain within the fence
- ✓ Danger sign means “don’t go”
- ✓ Mushrooms mean “don’t pick, don’t kick, don’t lick”
- ✓ Nettles – “don’t touch, stay away”
- ✓ Thistles – “don’t touch”
- ✓ In order to climb a tree, it must be thicker than you
- ✓ Use side-steps when needed
- ✓ Don’t litter and don’t touch any litter
- ✓ “If a stick is bigger than you, it takes two”
- ✓ You must get muddy hands

Fire at Forest School:

If a fire is lit at our Forest School, it is always carried out by our Forest School Lead. A fire will never be left unattended and safe practice is always adhered to. There will always be a water bucket, fire gloves, fire blanket and a Burn Care Kit next to the fire. Children are taught and reminded of the fire circle rules from their first session. These are;

- ✓ Stand behind the logs
- ✓ Ask permission to enter the fire circle
- ✓ Step over (or walk around) the logs and sit down
- ✓ Stand up, turn around and step over the logs to leave
- ✓ Keep the area around the fire circle free from debris
- ✓ **Never** cross the fire circle

The Use of Tools and Equipment:

Learning to safely use appropriate tools is an important part of a child's development. They enable a child to fashion instruments for both practical usefulness and pleasure. Tools help children learn how natural materials feel and change and when used safely, help to develop coordination, dexterity and ingenuity. Only the Forest School Leader will train children to use tools and will be overall responsible for the care and safety of all individuals when using tools. At The Friars Primary School, we will encourage the use of the following tools:

- ✓ Potato peelers
- ✓ Hand drills
- ✓ Loopers

The safety of all children is of paramount importance and we ensure that all tools are used safely by making sure:

- ✓ Tools are stored correctly in school and checked after each session
- ✓ Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of every tool-use session
- ✓ Leaders ensure that tool talks are given before any tools are used
- ✓ Children are supervised at all times whilst using tools of any description