



Penwortham Primary School Forest School ethos and rules.

Our Forest School Ethos

The Forest School ethos is built around a respect for children and young people, encouraging them to use their own curiosity and insight to enhance their own learning. It does this by encouraging play whilst giving them the right to access the outdoors, giving them the opportunity to access risk in the natural world, whilst experience a range of emotions and the challenges of social interactions. This in turn allows them to build their own resilience, enhancing their continued and creative engagement with the peers whilst building on their own potential.

Forest School steps away from the normal process of planned activities which can limit a child and instead ventures collaboratively into the realms of the unplanned, unexpected and unlimited. Children are encouraged to direct their own learning although this often requires some direction from the Forest School leader occasionally this will be adult lead but more often than not will be initiated by the leader by a small statement or story, child led or even child initiated.

Being outdoors (in a woodland environment) is central to supporting this dynamic approach to learning from the passing of time, the seasonal changes and even the contemplation of ancient living beings such as trees. The very nature of the outdoor environment provides the learners with an infinite source of learning that heightens all of our senses including smells, textures, sounds, tastes as well as a range of visual stimuli. The children are exposed to a vast range of cultural, spiritual, historical and mythological significance that speak to our deep relationship with trees and woodland that has been essential through the ages. This is something that has been lost in our technological age that removes us from nature.

Adapted from FSTC (2024)

Our Forest School aims

Aligning with our school values of Aspire, Belong, Care and Explore; our aims within the Forest School are to:

Our Forest School Rules

At the beginning of each block of Forest School sessions we introduce/reintroduce the Forest School rules for a introduction/reminder for pupils.

- The Forest School call
Pupils will learn the call, they know that when the Forest School Leader makes the call they must STOP what they are doing, put down any sticks or equipment and return to our fire circle within a minute. This rule ensures we can gather all the children together safely whether it is for a new task, an emergency or the end of our session.

- The Stick Rule

A stick is anything shorter than their arm and can be used for their games and imagination. Any that are longer than their arm must not be carried alone, they must be dragged or have a child at each end and these must be used with the guidance of an adult (for example in den making). Once the session has ended they must be returned to the correct area.

Children often want to leave the site with sticks once the session has ended. Unfortunately, if every child did this we would have no wood left, so children are reminded of how the Wood's ecosystem works and that the Wood needs natural material to feed fungi, flora, and fauna to ensure a healthy woodland system.

So as we leave the site we have a 'stick amnesty' where children are asked to hand in any sticks they may still have on them. If the session has been focused on producing an item from our natural resources then they can take this home.

- The Fire Circle

Always walk around the fire circle unless invited to do so by a leader (even when not in use). When the fire is in use the children will maintain a 2meter distance from the edge of the fire, when invited towards the fire they will adopt the 'Respect Position' kneeling on one knee to ensure the child doesn't fall towards the fire and they can move away quickly if required.

- No Running rule

No running with sticks. No running through the fire circle.

- Be kind and have fun

This is the most important of our Forest School rules. This fully incorporates our school values of Aspire, Belong, Care and Explore. When the children are happy, they become more creative and open to new ideas.