Forest School at Leighton Academy

Forest School

• Journey beginning with a targeted Year 1 and 2 high-need provision to a wider Years 3–6 woodland offer.

Intent

• Child-led learning, choice, holistic development, inclusion and supported risk-taking.

Implementation

• Qualified staff, planned sessions, risk assessment, observation, reflection and progressive practical skills.

Impact

• Confidence, independence, communication, community, engagement, emotional regulation, resilience and connection with nature.

Sustainability

• Rotational site use helps protect the woodland and manage impact.
• Woodland materials are reused for practical learning where appropriate.
• Habitat protection is supported through the three-year management plan.
• Future work includes wildflower meadow development, habitat creation and monitored access.

Evidence & Reflection

• Level 3 Forest School Leader portfolio completed 06/06/2026.
• Evidence includes the Forest School Handbook and Learning & Reflection write-up, supported by planning, observations, evaluation and practical evidence.
• Portfolio includes a six-session programme, learner observations / case studies, recommendations, session evaluations and summative evaluation.
• Planning evidence includes an ecological impact assessment, programme rationale and three-year woodland management plan.

Impact on Children

• Children have developed confidence, independence, communication, engagement and emotional regulation.
• The woodland provides opportunities for physical development, creativity, problem-solving and social interaction.
• Repeated experiences support resilience and connection with nature.

Intent & Approach

• Child-led learning, play and choice are central to the Forest School ethos.
• Provision supports holistic learning and development, inclusion, behaviour and reflective practice.
• Planning is adapted in response to observations and pupil interests.
• Activities and challenge are matched to age, need, confidence and readiness.

Safe Practice

• Comprehensive risk assessments / risk-benefit analysis are part of the Forest School Handbook.
• Daily site checks, dynamic risk assessment, clear boundaries and appropriate adult supervision support safe participation.
• Supported risk-taking is balanced with clear boundaries and appropriate challenge.
• PPE, tool care and storage, safe tool use and campfire safety are included within practical skills development.

Practical Skills

• Practical skills include hand tools, knots, woodland crafts and temporary shelters.
• Campfire skills, cooking and safe extinguishing are part of the planned progression when conditions allow.
• Progressive tool use is planned, including bow saws and bit-and-braces.
• Greenwood supply supports practical woodland work through local community links.

Access & Participation

• A whole-school timetable enables classes to access the woodland each half term.
• The provision has expanded from targeted high-need groups to wider year-group participation.
• Learner-led practice and individual adaptations have been refined through delivery.
• Repeated woodland experiences build opportunities for progression in skills, confidence and independence.

Learner Journey

• Initial provision: Year 1 high-need pupils, in groups of 6, through a six-session programme with detailed pupil case studies.
• Early expansion: Year 1 and Year 2, refining routines, safety, learner-led practice and individual adaptations.
• Wider access: Years 3, 4 and 5, in groups of 10, supporting wider participation and progression.
• End-of-year enrichment: Year 6 woodland sessions after SATs and writing moderation, including progressive practical skills where appropriate.

Community & Funding

• £500 PTA funding supported the initial Forest School setup: tools, tool bags, knives, lock boxes and safety gloves.
• Whole-school PTA fundraising is supporting the next phase, including a shed and future resource purchases. Current bid in place for a new structure.
• A local tree surgeon / parent relationship provides logs, chippings and greenwood.
• A trolley has been sourced through local community support and donated

Next Steps

• Make woodland infrastructure safe; continue interim canopy arrangements where needed.
• Install the new shed and expand resources; continue the three-year management plan for hazel, trees, bramble / nettles, meadow, habitats and monitored access.
• Staff group- seasonal clear up.
• Introduce campfire learning when safe, building towards fire safety, practice fires and cooking.
• Develop progressive tool use; expand year-group access and pupil ownership of woodland care and the 'leave no trace' ethos.

Woodland Development

• Woodland maintenance and professional clearance / cut-back have improved access while retaining habitat value.
• Hazel coppicing has begun for weaving, den building and future tool work.
• An area has been cleared and a campfire area is being established, subject to ongoing risk assessment.
• A shelter / roofing structure has been developed; interim arrangements are used while it is made safe.

Training & Qualifications

• 2 members of staff have completed Level 3 Forest School Leader training and qualification.
• First aid / paediatric and outdoor first aid training completed.
• Practical Forest School assessment areas have been assessed and passed.
• Delivery observed by a Forest School Leader from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, with feedback on practice and the setting.