

FOREST SCHOOL JOURNEY TO DATE

Forest School Summary • Leighton Academy • 2026-2027

TRAINED LEADERS

2 × Level 3 qualified Forest School Leaders

LEARNER JOURNEY

KS1 high-need → Years 3-6 enrichment

SAFE PRACTICE

First aid • outdoor first aid • risk assessment

DEVELOPMENT

Site • resources • curriculum access • community

1 | CPD, TRAINING & ASSURANCE

- Two members of staff have completed Level 3 Forest School Leader training and qualification.
- Both staff have first aid / paediatric first aid training, including outdoor first aid training.
- Practical Forest School assessment areas have been assessed and passed.
- Forest School delivery has been observed by a Forest School Leader from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, with feedback on both practice and the setting.

Portfolio scope The qualification required both a Forest School Handbook and a Learning & Reflection write-up, supported by planning, observation, evaluation and practical evidence.

- Forest School Handbook: policies, procedures, comprehensive risk assessments / risk-benefit analysis, communication strategy and programme documentation.
- Learning & Reflection: Forest School principles and ethos; holistic learning and development; play and choice; learning theories; behaviour and inclusion; reflective practice.
- Planning & Preparation: ecological impact assessment, three-year woodland management plan, programme rationale and session planning.
- Programme Delivery: six-session Introduction to Forest School programme, learner observations, recommendations, session evaluations and summative evaluation.
- Practical Skills: PPE; tool care and storage; hand tools; knots; woodland crafts; temporary shelters; campfire skills; cooking and safe extinguishing.

2 | WHO HAS ACCESSED THE WOODLAND

GROUP / STAGE	WHAT THIS ENABLED
Initial provision Year 1 high-need pupils • groups of 6	Six-session programme with detailed pupil case studies. Child-led learning, adaptive practice and ongoing observations / dynamic risk assessment were central.
Early expansion Year 1 & Year 2	Initial sessions enabled the team to refine routines, safety, learner-led practice and individual adaptations.
Wider access Years 3, 4 & 5 • groups of 10	Provision expanded beyond the initial high-need groups, supporting wider participation and progression in woodland learning.
End-of-year enrichment Year 6	One-off woodland enrichment sessions after SATs and writing moderation, including progressive practical skills where appropriate.

Impact seen

- Children have developed confidence, independence, communication, engagement and emotional regulation through repeated woodland experiences.
- Child-led play and choice have become an increasingly embedded feature of practice, with planning adapted in response to observations and pupil interests.
- The woodland provides opportunities for physical development, creativity, problem-solving, social interaction, resilience and connection with nature.
- The provision balances supported risk-taking with clear boundaries, daily site checks, dynamic risk assessment and appropriate adult supervision.
- Sustainability is embedded through rotational site use, reuse of woodland materials, habitat protection and a three-year management plan.

3 | WHAT WE HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE WOODLAND & ACROSS SCHOOL

- Woodland maintenance and professional clearance / cut-back undertaken to improve safe access while retaining habitat value.
- Hazel coppicing rotation has begun; harvested material can support weaving, den building and future tool work.
- Area cleared and campfire area being established; use was delayed by extreme summer heat and remains subject to ongoing risk assessment.
- Shelter / roofing structure developed, with subsequent safety concerns identified after the summer; interim access arrangements are being used while the structure is made safe.

- £500 PTA funding used for initial Forest School setup: tools, tool bags, knives, lock boxes, safety gloves and related resources.
- Whole-school PTA fundraising has supported the next phase, including a shed for organised storage and future resource purchases.
- Local tree surgeon / parent relationship established, providing logs, chippings and greenwood for practical work and paths.
- A trolley has been sourced through local community support and donated for Forest School use.
- Forest School display created in school; certificates introduced to celebrate pupils' completion and achievements.
- Staff meeting delivered covering session structure, games / activity ideas, tools and health & safety.
- Whole-school timetable created so classes can access the woodland as a class each half term.

4 | NEXT STEPS / FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Make the woodland infrastructure safe and usable: address the existing shelter structure and continue interim use of the playground canopy where required.
- Install the new shed and organise / expand the resource base.
- Continue the three-year woodland management plan: hazel coppicing, tree work, bramble / nettle management, wildflower meadow, habitat creation and monitored access.
- Introduce campfire learning when the site and weather are confirmed safe through ongoing / dynamic risk assessment, building towards fire safety, practice fires and cooking.
- Introduce and develop progressive tool use, including bow saws and bit-and-braces, with appropriate supervision, risk assessment and greenwood supply.
- Continue to expand access across year groups while matching activity, tools and level of challenge to age, need, confidence and readiness.
- Increase pupil ownership of set-up, pack-away, woodland care and the 'leave no trace' ethos.

Key message: Forest School has moved from establishing a safe, well-planned foundation with a targeted high-need group to developing a sustainable, whole-school woodland offer. The next phase is about consolidation, safe infrastructure, progressive skills and widening pupil ownership.

5 | EVIDENCE

- Level 3 Forest School Leader portfolio completed 06/06/2026.
- Portfolio evidence includes six-session delivery, learner observations / case studies, session evaluations, practical skills evidence, ecological impact assessment and three-year management plan.
- Assessed Forest School delivery: Leighton Academy; assessor feedback highlighted strong safety routines, clear boundaries, free choice, increasing independence and appropriate managed risk.
- Management plan evidence covers hazel coppicing, tree works, bramble management, woodstore, shelter / roof, fire circle, nettle management, wildflower meadow and future habitat projects.

Evidence source: Level 3 Forest School Leaders Portfolio • Staffordshire Wildlife Trust course • completed 06/06/2026