

Intent:

When students are a part of the Nurture group, the main aims are to make them feel comfortable, content and safe and have a sense of belonging within a group. As part of being in this Nurture group (and part of the KS3 group during Covid-19), we aim to give students a nurturing environment in more places than simply just the classroom. A nurture practitioner attends the forest school provision with the students. It is shown that children benefit in a number of different ways through the forest school experience; “children and young people are stimulated by the outdoors and typically experience, over time, an increase in their self-belief, confidence, learning capacity, enthusiasm, communication and problem-solving skills and emotional well-being.” (Forest School Training, 2021). Through the use of vocabulary, we can help students to communicate which helps improve their life experiences and encourages more inquisitive learners. Although forest school has a plan, opportunistic learning is always followed as it allows students to explore and take charge of their learning.

The six principles of nurture are followed even when students attend the forest school provision.

In the Nurture group we focus on the six principles of nurture:

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally – Children are not held under regular expectations; they are mostly assessed via their developmental progress using the Boxall profiles and the assessment criteria developed specifically for the group. Children who attend the forest school come with a range of different skills and competencies which we work on during our time there.
2. The classroom offers a safe base – The forest school sites offer a secondary nurture base for the students. Students are, on the whole, comfortable within the forest school and aren't asked to do anything they aren't comfortable with. However, we do always encourage the children who attend to explore new skills.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing – In the forest school provision, we are able to talk to student in a different and more relaxed way compared to in the classroom. We always express the importance of being outside in nature and the importance of well-being. Small achievements are noticed and praised in a way that is positive for the individual and we reinforce positive behaviour massively.
4. Language is a vital means of communication – In the forest school provision, as stated above, we are able to talk to children in a more relaxed way and we are able to get to know students in a different way and build up positive working relationships during this time which then extends to the classroom.
5. All behaviour is communication – Whilst at the forest school, we are able to discuss behaviour with children and talk to them about their behaviour and generally get positive results. As we are part of a small group, we often get change to talk one to one with the student where there is no one they need to 'show off' to. Students also quite often open up whilst at forest school and give staff an insight into what might be causing them to display certain behaviours.
6. The importance of transition in children's lives – Whilst at the farm, we can discuss transition with the students as they most often transition to a special school or another placement with an EHCP.

The students have end of Key Stage 3 points which they are aiming to meet and are assessed on a range of different areas including relationships with staff and peers, SMSC

development (Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Development), collaboration and independence.

In Forest School, students are always encouraged to try new activities and are rewarded with Growth Mind-set points like in school. Students are encouraged to be adventurous and explore and a 'have a go' attitude is developed through each activity. They are reminded that they are in a safe place and are given praise throughout the sessions.

Implementation

In order to fully implement the six principles of nurture and to implement the behaviours and actions that are desirable by our students, staff who work with student at the forest school provision work closely with the students to understand their development and their needs so that key areas can be focused on and targets can be worked towards.

As well as this, staff model functional and acceptable communication and relationships with one another and with other students. We also emphasise the importance of making mistakes then rectifying those mistakes without meltdowns. We encourage problem solving and discussion with team mates and the rest of the class if it cannot be fixed alone. By doing this, we show students in the nurture group how to succeed even when things do not always go according to plan.

Whilst at the forest school provision, students learn many new skills such as cutting wood, building fires, putting up tents or coverings and learn how to do this with determination and perseverance.

Problem solving is a key area of nurture and teaches students that not everything is going to go to plan and that we need to build resilience. One way in which resilience is implemented is by encouraging students to do things that they are not comfortable or confident in. By learning these skills in the small forest schools group they are able to more comfortably make mistakes and build up their resilience which will hopefully, in turn be a part of life in school too. Students are encouraged to work together, be resilient and not give up at the first sign of something not working immediately. Another way we do this in Nurture is by using opportunistic learning and using stimuli that has taken the students' interest. This can help students to forget about their concerns with reading or writing and embrace the stimuli. By using this method, the student research, discuss, debate and problem solve in order to achieve an end point.

As a school we have been implementing Rosenshine's 10 Principles of Instruction and these are fed through to the Forest School learning. Each week in Forest School, we chat about what we learnt and carried out the previous week(s) and recap what we did. We then go onto looking at what we will be doing in this session and new activities are shown to the students. Students are guided through this and encouraged to ask as many questions as necessary. The Forest School lead always gives students examples to follow and often makes the first example with the students rather than having a task already completed. Students are assisted throughout if they require it. At these points, staff will scaffold or guide the learning/activity and give the support that is needed. Students are always asked for their understanding and often asked if they think what they are doing is correct (even if it is) so that they are questioning themselves and their understanding.

Impact

The impact of the forest school intent and implementation is being measured by an assessment criterion which has been designed in order to track the student's social, emotional and mental health development.

Students are assessed on a weekly basis so that progress can be measured accurately and if a student is showing that they need support in certain areas, then support can be given immediately to help address particular areas.

Student's progress is tracked on Doodle and students are given a Novice, Developing or Secure in each area that they are being assessed on.

At the end of each half term, students are also asked to complete a self-assessment sheet and look at how they have been assessed by myself and write whether they agree or disagree with what stage they have been assessed at and give any comments about their progress.

This is all linked into the work which students do in class as part of the Nurture group.

The hope for forest school is that it helps to develop well rounded individuals who learn to think outside the box and who are resilient both inside and outside the classroom. Forest school hopes to help students become more confident, better problem solvers, more able to communicate effectively and have a higher self-esteem. These are aspects which are also assessed formally.

Progress which is made in the Pendle KS3 group is measured as part of the Outdoor Education assessment.

References:

Forest School Training, 2021 <https://www.forestschoolltraining.co.uk/forest-school/the-benefits/>