



Warton St Paul's

Church of England Primary Academy

A member of **CDARI**

Forest School Policy

Reviewed May 2023

Next review Sep 2024

Our Mission Statement

'Believe, Belong, Be the Best
that you can Be'

*"Whatever you do in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the
Lord." Colossians 3:17*

Outdoor Learning and Forest School at Warton St. Paul's

What is Forest School?

It is a **long-term process of regular sessions**, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review.

It takes place in a **woodland or natural environment** to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

It uses a range of learner-centred processes to **create a community for being, development and learning**.

It aims to promote the **holistic development of all those involved**, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

It offers learners the **opportunity to take supported risks** appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Intent – What does our Curriculum intend to do?

Outdoor Education

At Warton St. Paul's, we recognise the impact that outdoor learning opportunities have on embedding learning and engaging children with their environment and community. While it is not, on its own, one of the core subjects taught in Primary Schools, through outdoor learning, children develop their understanding of Science, Mathematics, Geography and Physical education as well as gaining confidence and self esteem. High quality outdoor education can also provide a real life context for Writing and History and provide opportunities for children to develop field skills and an understanding of how we fit into the world and the impact humans have, both negative and positive, on the environment. Children will be encouraged to understand how their actions can affect the world around them and explore the outdoor world.

Forest School

Forest School is a unique method of outdoor learning. At Warton St. Paul's, our aim is to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences. Children will have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others. The children use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and become self-motivated.

Through discrete and integrated learning and general daily practice, we aim to educate children about the environment and human impact upon it, both negative and positive.

Outdoor Education aims:

1. **To provide opportunities for children to learn, develop and have fun.**
2. **To provide a safe and stimulating environment where children feel comfortable to take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning.**
3. **To help children understand, appreciate and care for their environment.**
4. **To develop a safe, happy and welcoming environment which meets the needs of all learning styles.**
5. **To develop self-esteem and confidence through engaging in small, achievable tasks which can be completed with success.**
6. **To develop social and co-operative working skills.**
7. **To provide and develop practical life skills in an outdoor environment**

Implementation – How do we implement this?

We aim to give all children a collective insight into the ethos of Forest School. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest school learning environment provides opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others, to learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults and to develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.

Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environment changes. Appropriate clothing will be worn and during high winds it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods. The children's interests, along with the varied natural resources in our woodland, are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development.

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area around them.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest School. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused and ensure that all

activities enhance not only children's learning experience but also the Forest School site and school grounds too.

EYFS

As part of the regular learning within the EYFS, children in Reception will have daily access to Outdoor learning opportunities within their Continuous Provision as well as weekly Forest School Sessions which will allow them to develop skills and confidence in the outdoor area. This will lead to progress in many areas of the Early Years Curriculum including Understanding the World, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Forest School fits in a unique place within the school timetable. Being a child led, responsive programme, it does not follow a structured, progressive system in the same way that a traditional National Curriculum subject would. Indeed, it would be counterproductive to impose such a traditional structure on it; it is an experience more akin to a therapeutic intervention than a traditional subject.

The progress of a session, or series of sessions, will depend on the moods and enthusiasms of the children involved, chance events and encounters during the session, and the maturity and age of the children.

Each class will experience one cycle of Forest School sessions each year, with this taking place in a different season each time, which will have a natural impact on the type of experiences and activities they will experience.

Forest School Leaders will liaise with class teachers to identify ways that Forest School activities can help support and embed learning within the classroom on current topics.

Throughout their time at Warton St. Paul's, Children will gain a wide skill set from their time learning outdoors that will have a cumulative effect on their knowledge and understanding of the world- children who begin Outdoor Learning and Forest School in the EYFS will have 7 years of foundational knowledge by the end of year 6 and will take these skills and understanding into their future choices.

Enrichment Activities

Enrichment activities are provided throughout the school year for EYFS, KS1 and KS2 as both part of our curriculum and are also provided in after school clubs such as:

- Outdoor/Gardening/Eco Club
- STEM Club
- Forest Club

Impact – What progress do the children make?

Successful outdoor education allows children to:

1. Grow in confidence as a result of the freedom, time and space they are given in their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence at each individual child's rate.
2. Develop a sense of teamwork and a stronger bond with their teachers and peers - activities such as sharing tools and participating in play help teach the children to work together as a group, which strengthens their bonds and social skills.
3. Communicate – outdoor learning promotes language development through increased sensory experiences which in turn improves communication skills and has a positive effect on a child's self-esteem and is a crucial part of their development.
4. Increase concentration and attention - high levels of interest lead to high levels of attention. Spending time in the woodland is exciting for a child. It tends to fascinate them which develops a strong will to participate and concentrate over long periods of time.
5. Develop physical skills - the increase in outdoor activity has a positive physical impact. Not only does the development of physical stamina improve but also gross and fine motor skills.
6. Engage with the environment and wider world- children develop an interest in the great outdoors and respect for the environment. Encouraging children to develop a relationship with the natural world will help in protecting the environment for generations to come.
7. Show teachers a new side of their personality and ability - Forest School isn't just beneficial to children it is also beneficial to teachers. Observing their class in a different setting allows them to gain a new perspective and understanding of their class.
8. When children really engage with Forest Schools they will take their experiences home to share with friends and family. This will often encourage families to visit their local woodlands more frequently.
9. Taking children outside of the classroom removes the pressures of academia and allows them to play to their strengths. This is beneficial to children who struggle in the classroom because there is more of an opportunity for them to learn at their own pace. Learning outside the classroom also allows for a more meaningful context to learning that has begun or is continued in a traditional classroom setting: for example, if children have had the opportunity to light

and cook by a fire, their writing from the perspective of a Stone Age man will have more depth of knowledge and understanding.

Assessment

Evidence of pupils' Forest School and Outdoor learning experiences is captured and documented in many different ways.

- **We have a designated Forest School display board in school to showcase our learning over a half termly block.**
- **A floor book is used to capture our learning over time.**
- **We leave samples of our learning and creations made in our outdoor area as a way of inspiring other children in their Forest School learning.**

This policy will be reviewed according to the emerging needs of our school.

SignedDate (Chair of Governors)

SignedDate (Headteacher)