



William Law CE Primary School's Subject Stories

Forest School



Intent

“An inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hand-on learning within a woodland or natural environment with trees and plants.”

(Forest Schools Association)

At William Law, our school vision is for all members of our school is to be committed to “learning, living and loving together”. As part of this vision, we have decided to expand and enhance the breadth of our curriculum by incorporating a designated Forest School curriculum that will become part of Year Two and Three’s weekly routine in order to strive for children to “skip to school”. It is our aim that this new LOtC (Learning Outside the Classroom) will uphold the high standards and expectations that our school sets for its pupils and serve as a cornerstone to increasing their life skills and experiences throughout their primary school education.

During Forest School at William Law we aim for all children to

- Learn and make choices and initiate their own learning
- Provide a safe and non-threatening environment in which children can take risks
- Help children understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment
- Develop practical life skills in an outdoor environment
- Promote self-esteem, confidence and a positive attitude to learning through small achievable tasks
- Develop social interactions and team working skills
- Enable participants to be independent, self-motivated and considerate
- Build self-esteem, confidence, independence and self-control

Forest School is based on the principle that children of all ages can benefit greatly from the learning opportunities inherently present in a woodland environment. Forest Schools provides opportunities in an outdoor setting for children to develop a variety of skills: particularly PSHE skills such as independence, self-discovery, communication, self-esteem and confidence building. Children learn to take risks, use their initiatives and co-operate. Beyond this, we believe teachers can use the outdoor environment as a vehicle for art activities, key science concepts, developing physical skills and a whole lot more! In a typical session there may be an adult-led activity, but the ethos of Forest Schools also allows time for children to follow their own learning pathways and interests and adults then support them in their learning.

The National Curriculum for Forest School aims to ensure that all pupils:

- ❖ Forest School is for all children and young people.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Forest School is organized and run by qualified Forest School Leaders.
- ❖ Forest School maximises the learning potential of local woodland through frequent and regular experiences throughout the year, not a one off visit.
- ❖ Forest School helps children to understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment.



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Implementation

Forest school is a globally recognised teaching system that aims to meet the intent of this curriculum through holistic learning. It is through this method that we strive to provide our pupils with the widest range of skills and opportunities available to us. Due to its child led nature and focus on social development, Forest School engages children in a manner that is hard to imitate in the classroom. This creates new opportunities for learning and development that might not be accessed during regular day-to-day schooling. As we know, every child is different, as are their learning habits, something that here at William Law we recognise, encourage and utilise.

At William Law, we are blessed with a beautiful outdoors learning environment. As a school, we also use Ferry Meadows Forest School site as we aim to also expand our outdoor learning into the wider community and environment to give the children a wider range of experience and allow them to become more familiar with the world surrounding them.

Each class in Year 2 and 3 will experience two 5 week cycles of Forest School sessions each year. With this taking place in different seasons each time, it allows the children to experience the natural world in different seasons and weathers.

Impact

- ✓ Children have been able to become more confident as well as more resilient learners. They have shown they can be more caring and supportive to their peers due to the heavy focus on understanding and generating empathy. This has allowed children to develop their ability to regulate their social, mental, emotional and spiritual health, meaning they can work more collaboratively in their learning and tasks set. Ultimately, this will develop their ability to transfer these skills when necessary to improve themselves in classroom and life in the wider world.
- ✓ Children have grown more confident in their abilities in the outdoor environment. They have begun to understand, assess and manage their own risks and safety. This has allowed children to become more independent and shown them that life comes with not only risk but also rewards. Through using their perseverance skills, the children now understand that at times they may not get their desired result at first, therefore they need to try again in different ways. Forest School has encouraged them to use their problem solving and reflection skills to allow them to see mistakes aren't failures, they're part of learning.
- ✓ Forest School sessions have aimed to make children's learning more relevant to their lives in the community and wider world. We have encouraged the children to be responsible for and respect the local community and environment giving them a sense of belonging and ownership of the place in which they live. In different sessions, we have explored the use of the local area, integrating subjects so that meaningful activities can be planned and delivered effectively and regularly.

If you were to walk into a Forest School lesson at William Law, you would see:

- All learners engaged in a variety of activities
- Learners being challenged in range of activities
- Opportunities for all children to apply a range of their learning powers in each session
- Collaborative learning
- Inclusive learning

Pupil Voice:

Year 2: *"I love being outdoors with my friends because I get lots of time to work as a team and use my problem solving skills at times, for example when we are making dens. I also like making our own fires because it makes me feel grown up."*

Year 2: *"Being outdoors allows me to grow my imagination much more."*

Year 3: *"I enjoy using different natural resources like wood and willow to make different objects with tools. I find it interesting learning how to use different tools in different ways as well as using them safely."*



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An example of skill progression within our Forest School curriculum

Objective	Forest School	
	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Play and exploring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to rules and boundaries of Forest School • Promotion of free exploration • Promotion of independent learning opportunities/skills • Travel safely over the terrain in Forest School • Carry sticks safely • Work in a team to co-operate and communicate clearly • Play woodland versions of games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-enforce rules and boundaries of Forest School • Move logs safely with support first • Take part in outdoor challenges on own and in a team • Make up your own woodland games and teach it to someone
Use of tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the use of tools; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ cutting of string, knives for whittling, bow saw to cut discs, loppers and secateurs <p>Tools will only be used when the children are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of developing skills when using tools
Use of fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety procedures – fire safety and fire triangle • Observe and talk about fire lighting procedures • Be safe around a fire • Experience using fire strikers to spark a flame • Light a piece of cotton wool • Roast food on a fire with support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of safety procedures – fire safety and fire triangle • Prepare and light a fire with supervision • Keep fires going by adding fuel • Experience cooking different food items on a fire using the flames and embers
Shelter building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of basic shelter building with support • Mini-den building for small animals • Supported construction of tripod structures • Erect a lean to shelter, with support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent use of tripod structures (animal den building) • Create a tarpaulin shelter in a woodland • Work successfully as a group, having considered and evaluated each members' contributions • Compare and evaluate the shelters in relation to their sturdiness, durability, weatherproofing and whether it is fit for purpose



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Outstanding examples of learning outcomes



Year 3 – The children are working independently using a bow saw to saw off pieces of green wood to turn into a wooden person.



Year 2 – The children worked together to build and light their own fires. Once their fire was lit, they enjoyed toasting marshmallows.



Year 2 – The children worked collaboratively to make their own dens. They had a criteria to ensure they all could fit inside and that it had to shelter them from the rain.

Successes in 2018-2019

- ☺ **William Law becoming a recognised 'Forest School':** This year Lily Jenkins successfully completed her Level 3 Forest School practitioner qualification. This allowed William Law to be officially recognised as a Forest School within the Forest School Association. This qualification has allowed Forest School to be led successfully within the school.
- ☺ **Budget:** Forest School was given a substantial budget this year. This budget has allowed us to be able to buy all the tools and equipment needed to run sessions smoothly. As well as this, the budget has allowed us to launch Forest School free of charge for all children in Year 2.
- ☺ **Embedding Forest School into Year 3:** Forest School was successfully introduced to William Law this year into Year 2. The feedback from both the children and parents has been received excellently and the engaged has been overwhelming. As this has been such a success, it has been approved by the governors to embed Forest School into Year 3 in the next academic year. This will allow for children to build and progress the skills they have learnt in Year 2.

Priorities for 2019-2020

- ☺ **Forest School Assistant Leader to gain her Level 3 Forest School Practitioner qualification:** Currently we have one member of staff that hold the Forest School Level 3 practitioner qualification, which means that if they are off for any reasons, the forest school sessions cannot continue under our insurance. Enabling another member of staff to hold the same qualification, will allow for this problem to be eliminated.
- ☺ **Developing the William Law site:** As we currently go off site to Ferry Meadows fortnightly with the children, this has a massive constraint on the budget given. Throughout this year, we aim to bid for grants in order to allow us to develop our Forest School site within William Law. Our priority is to have a structure built within William's Orchard, to allow us to have some shelter if the weather is bad, as currently the children have no cover for down pours of rain.
- ☺ **Ensure progression of skills:** As Forest School has expanded into Year 3 this year, it is important that the planned progression of skills are carried out smoothly. This will ensure that the children will develop and expand on skills previously taught in Year 2.

Successes in 2018-2019

- ☺ **Assistant Leader has gained Level 3 Forest School Qualification:** This has allowed all sessions to continue to take place when the leader has been absent.
- ☺ **William Law site has been re-organised and shrubbery has been cut away in order to make space for structures to be built.**



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☺ **Children have successfully embedded and shown confidence in progression of skills:** This year there has been a noticeable difference of confidence within the children when completing different activities. In Year 3, the children have been able to complete more challenge tasks, due to their previous knowledge of skills from Year 2.

Priorities for 2020-2021

☺ **To bid for grants for funding to building structures for William Law:** In 2019-20, we have been unsuccessful in gaining a grant to allow us to build a structure for cover during our sessions. This year, we aim to work alongside the school's business manager to apply for different grants.

☺ **To provide CPD to the relevant class teachers who will attend Forest School sessions:** Both of the forest school leaders believe that providing training prior to Forest School sessions for staff, will allow them to become more confident in understanding how to use the tools safely for both themselves and the children. Providing CPD will allow staff to fully understand and explore the risk assessments for each activity.