**Cambois Primary**

****

**Forest School**

**INTRODUCTION TO FOREST SCHOOL**

Forest school originated in Scandinavia and has developed over to the UK where many forest school sites have opened up offering children of all abilities the opportunity to learn and flourish through the scheme. In 1993 a study trip took place visiting Denmark where they had an outdoor, forest school classroom. The study showed that the outdoor environment helped children to develop and showed that children having the outdoor experiences were ready to start school when the time came. At Cambois Primary School we run our own Forest school which is situated on site. During our sessions children have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment and begin to have a greater understanding of the outdoor space. Our Forest school runs throughout all seasons no matter the weather, the only time that it wouldn't go ahead would be in really high winds because it is very unsafe. Children will be learning a lot of skills through the sessions whether it be identifying insects, plants and trees, using tools, lighting fires, playing games or even just enjoying being out in the natural environment. Children benefit from the sessions outdoors as it has an impact on both mind and body, they have the freedom to move around and explore within a safe zone without the structure of the classroom.

The Forest School Association work on these principles, which we incorporate into our sessions;

**● “Forest school is a long process of regular sessions, rather than a one off or infrequent visits, the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review link each session.**

**● Forest school takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of the learner and the natural world.**

**● Forest school uses a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.**

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

**● Forest school offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.**

**● Forest school is run by qualified Forest school practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.”**

**www.forestschoolassociation.org**

These principles are put into practice within our setting each session that we have out in forest school. The class is based outside in the natural environment which is a work in process where we are building small sections up over time, with the help of our children. Each session we have various activities so that the children can choose whichever one they want to join based on their interests. If they are wanting to explore the environment and choose something different then this is fine. This allows children to develop their skills and gain confidence within the secure woodland environment. We have risk assessments in place for various different activities so that the task can be completed with reduced risks. Over time children are able to look at activities and assess the risks themselves which is definitely a good tool to have. Over time we want children to feel more confident in the outdoor environment as well as learn new skills which can be taken away and used throughout their life.

**WHY DO WE DO FOREST SCHOOL?**

We do forest schools because it has a lot of positive impacts on all participants. Throughout our sessions in forest school we want to encourage a cutting edge approach to learning and inspire our children with positive outdoor experiences. We build our sessions on the child’s interests so each session is child led, this means that children are interested in completing

tasks as they come up with plans on what they want to create or do. Forest school allows children to learn about the natural environment, learning how to manage risks and how to work together to solve problems. Being outside and having these experiences build up children’s self-confidence and self-esteem and they become self-motivated. Our vision for the children is to develop their personal and social skills through regular sessions and experiences. We want the children to be able to work through practical problems and challenges and learn how to manage failures, reflecting on their learning experiences. We want children to be more motivated by following their interests and exploring the natural environment. Through these experiences children will naturally develop language and communication skills but also develop their practical skills. There will be new opportunities where we will use tools to create and build various objects which allow for achievement and success. Children will explore the environment identifying different woodland species and learning about them through books and the internet.

**ECOLOGICAL IMPACT**

Before we have a session on site we discuss the rules of forest school which was created with the children to reduce the harm that may be caused to plant species and the wildlife that live on site. We will hopefully increase the wildlife on site by creating new habitats for them to live in so we can observe and learn from them, (bat boxes, hedgehog houses, bug hotels and further bird boxes.)

When children are doing a bug hunt around the site they will be encouraged to put the items back where they have moved them from. We will make sure that the site is clean of rubbish and that all materials taken outside for a task are brought back into school or placed in the shed. When we are moving around the site whether it be exploring, playing games or collecting materials we are to stick to the short grass paths and watch where we are walking. If the session was to build dens children must be aware of suitable areas to erect them to avoid disturbing wildlife and these must be taken down and not left up for long periods of time. If we are having a cooking session, fires are lit in the correct secure place where it is to be supervised to make sure it doesn’t get out of control and spread. We all make sure that all traces of food are picked up and placed in the bin as we don’t want to attract rats. Collecting materials around the site, children are encouraged to collect lying materials only. They are not to pick leaves off a living plant and this could damage the plant.

**STAFF INVOLVED IN FOREST SCHOOL**

During our forest school sessions there will be 2 members of staff on site, depending on the children’s needs there may be more. In an emergency one member of staff will take the child/person into the building to perform first aid and get further assistance if required. All staff have been subject to DBS checks. There will always be a trained first aider on site and a first aid bag will be taken out on each session so that minor injuries can be dealt with outside.

In each session I will brief the staff that are assisting on what the plan is and where I want them to support. I would like the supporting staff to interact with the children if the children wish them to. If the staff have any ideas throughout the session or hear the children saying they would like to do something then I would like them to report to me so that I can put these things in place.

Mrs Atkinson is the forest school lead/first aider, this role consists of being in charge of the session and giving jobs to the people that are supporting the group. Mrs Atkinson will also look at any risks within the forest school site and plan the activities that will take place.

Volunteers/support staff will support the lead and follow any instructions given to them with supporting the group but they must allow children to problem solve by themselves.

Children will learn independently and have fun through positive outdoor experiences.

**BEHAVIOUR**

The behaviour of the children out in forest school is to be the same as the expectations within school.

Cambois will promote positive behaviours through role modelling, positive reinforcement, verbal praise and the opportunity for children to independently complete tasks.

Children's behaviours will be observed over time and if we feel that the behaviours are causing harm/risk to others then they may be removed from the session.

To be able to meet the aims we need to provide a positive environment that is safe for all users to explore and develop. We need to show children what is acceptable behaviour to the environment as well as to others around us. Children need to understand how to respect the environment, the wildlife and their habitats on site. Adults are to use praise throughout the session as this develops confidence and motivation. Children must listen carefully to all instructions given by adults as this is to keep them safe. Children need to show respect to everything in Forest school whether it be to others around them, the environment, the equipment being used on site and to the wildlife.

**CLOTHING NEEDED FOR FOREST SCHOOL**

We go outside in all weathers so children must be prepared for this. We work on the principle “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing” CHILDREN MAY COME HOME MUDDY, THIS SHOWS THAT CHILDREN HAVE HAD FUN IN THEIR LEARNING. Clothing that will need to be in school for children to participate in forest school sessions are as follows;

● Waterproof trousers

● Waterproof coat

● Long sleeved top

● Full length trousers

● Wellies

● Warm socks and spare sets

● Gloves/hat

● Sun hat

● Sun cream

● Scarf

**USING AND STORING TOOLS**

When using tools we always use the appropriate PPE suitable for the task in hand. All tools are counted out and back in again and stored in a secure lock up. All equipment is checked on a regular basis to make sure it is in fully working order and removed if not in working order. Children are always shown how to use the equipment correctly (tool talk) before using it and they are always supervised. At the beginning of each session children are reminded of how we expect them to behave whilst on site especially when tools are out so everyone is kept safe. While on site we tell the children it is nil by mouth unless we are having a cooking session.

**RISKS IN FOREST SCHOOL**

To keep everyone safe, a site risk assessment is undertaken regularly and a daily risk assessment and check is made prior to each forest school session. In order to complete the risk assessments, we firstly look for potential hazards, we then decide who the hazard could harm, we then think about the worst possible outcome and finally we decide how we can reduce the risk but still allow the activity to take place. What we look for is: do the benefits outweigh the risks? Most of the time the answer is yes, the benefits they gain from a task is greater than the risk. The children have time, freedom and space to learn and grow whilst in the outdoor environment, they develop in all areas. Children work together to solve problems and explore so this builds up their social skills which also benefit the child's language and communication. By being outside in the open environment children have motivation which benefits their health and wellbeing. Each session children begin to gather the knowledge and understanding of the outdoor world and see things from a new perspective which can be used

for future reference. By using tools children develop their fine and gross motor skills, their coordination improves which leads to a boost in their confidence. The activities that take place on site that carry a hazard are;

● Tree climbing

● Using ropes and strings

● Carrying materials

● Digging

● Using tools

● Fire circle

● Walking on site

● Building dens

All hazards are looked into and risk assessments are put in place so the risk is reduced. This means that the activity can still go ahead but with controlled measures.

**BOUNDARIES**

Within the first session rules of forest school are made between the lead and the children which children must follow. These rules are revisited every session so that the children are reminded of their agreement to forest school. The Forest school site is very secure and children are to stay within the fenced area at all times.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND INCLUSION**

Cambois Primary school is a school where everyone is welcome. No child will be left out, we will consider every single child in our planning so they can take part in anything that is put forward. Everyone learns in different ways so having a series of learning styles that will suit all needs and will guarantee children to feel success which leads to further development.

**ACCIDENTS OR INJURIES ON SITE**

All accidents or injuries will be reported on our CPOMS site where all of the details will be recorded giving in depth details of;

● Who was injured

● Where

● When

● Time of incident

● What happened

● Who witnessed this

● What was the injury

● What first aid was given?

There will also be an accident form filled out for the children to bring home to parents and the parents will also be informed of any injury either on collection or by phone for a head injury.

**POLICIES**

All of the schools policies are appropriate for our Forest school sessions, these are as follows;

● Equality and diversity policy

● Health and Safety policy

● Play policy

● Safeguarding policy

● Behaviour policy

All of Forest school information is placed on our school website so it can be accessed by families and staff to read. All of the information will be updated as and when needed.

**CANCELLED SESSIONS**

Sessions will only be cancelled due to school closure, thunderstorms, extreme cold or windy conditions or when the forest school leader deems it to be unsafe. I will watch the weather forecasts on forest school mornings and make a decision about whether the session can take place. What weather may result in cancellation? If the MET office issues a yellow warning for winds and storms or if winds or gusts are above 6 on the Beaufort scale. Children will remain in their classrooms as normal if this occurs. Mrs Atkinson will inform the class teacher half an hour prior to the session beginning if not before, where she can lead the class indoors. Should the weather deteriorate during a session children will be returned to class.

