



Forest School



at

Parkhead Community Primary School



A high adult to child ratio allows children to undertake new experiences and challenges whilst taking appropriate risks.



Child-led approach to children's learning which is fun and unhurried.



Trained adults and facilitators and observers rather than leaders and directors.

*"The best classroom and richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky."
Margaret McMillan*

What is Forest School?

Forest School originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s as a way of learning about the natural world. It is an approach that aims to provide a range of hands-on experiences in the natural environment to promote confident and independent learners.

Forest School is successful for children of all ages who visit the same local woodlands on a regular basis. Sessions run throughout the year, going to the woods in all weathers. In this familiar outdoor setting, they learn about the natural environment and develop a relationship with the world around them. Through play, they learn how to handle risks and most importantly, develop resilience through using their own initiative to solve problems. This approach also greatly fosters independence and collaborative learning in a safe, secure and creative environment. Thus, the Forest School approach promotes the holistic development of all learners and provide opportunities to develop a range of skills that can be transferred to any setting.

Our Forest School Site

In our setting, we are fortunate enough to have a fire pit area, an outdoor classroom, mud kitchen and a vast forested area for exploration. During the sessions, children will be taking part in a wide range of activities such as exploring woodland wildlife and plants, creating sculpture with mud, twigs, leaves etc., tree climbing, exploring the mud kitchen and den building. They will develop skills such as knot tying and safe use of tools such as peelers, knives loppers and saws to make a range of items. The children will also have the opportunity to cook over a fire, incorporating knowledge of food hygiene. These skills are very carefully introduced over time with a high level of adult support. The sessions also allow lots of opportunities for the children to reflect upon their experiences, discussing what they have achieved and what they would like to do next.

The role of adults in Forest School

Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an equivalent Level 3 qualification.

Practitioners will have an up-to-date first aid qualification, incorporating outdoor and paediatric strands.

To promote learning and development, the Forest School leader will:

- Have a learner centred approach, responding to the needs and interests of the learners.
- Foster play-based learning for exploration and creativity.
- Provide experiences that meet the needs of all learning styles.
- Scaffold learning through the use of observations.
- Develop a nurturing environment in which all learners feel safe to take appropriate risks and view mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Incorporate reflective practice in order that children can identify their successes in the session and what they would like to improve upon in future sessions.

To promote positive behaviour, all adults in the Forest School setting will:

- Explain and model rules and routines in a positive and clear manner, to ensure children are familiar with these and why they are in place.
- Will use the intervention strategies set out by the Forest School practitioner leading the class.
- Be consistent with behaviour management techniques and expectations as set out by the Forest School leader.
- Use aspirational language and act as a positive role model.
- Foster independence in the setting, whilst supporting and modelling collaborative learning.

What will my child need?

Children in KS1 should wear their Forest School kit to school on the day of their session. Children in KS2 will change into their Forest School kit at the start of the afternoon session so they should bring their kit to school on the appropriate day. Children must be protected from extreme weathers—many layers of clothing are better than one thick item of clothing.

Please follow the kit list below.

Old clothes are the best as your child WILL get dirty.

Essential

1. Warm base layers in colder weather (vest or thermals, long sleeved top, jumper, jogging bottoms).
2. Coat/fleece and waterproof coat.
3. Thick long socks or two pairs of medium thickness.
4. Waterproof trousers.
5. Wellies or sturdy walking boots.
6. Hat and gloves. Sun hat in Summer.

If wearing a scarf it should be tucked in—an over the head neck warmer (snood) is better.

What school will provide

1. Protective gloves and goggles when using tools.
2. Sheltered area available in rainy or sunny conditions
3. Refreshments will also be provided.

Arms and legs must be covered at all times due to stings and scratches.



Let's get muddy!

Here are just five ways (of many) that mud can benefit your children.

1. Did you know that studies have shown dirt to be good for your brain? There are types of bacteria that are naturally found in soil which activate the neurons that produce serotonin - a key chemical in many bodily functions, as well as a natural anti-depressant. In other words, dirt can make you feel happy.

2. Dirt is also great for the immune-system, especially in children.. Research has shown that early exposure to the naturally occurring microbes in soil will help build stronger, more disease-resistant kids.

3. In our technologically generation, children just aren't getting enough time to play outside, and that has now been linked to attention disorders and obesity.

4. Children who play outside laugh more, which means they're happy!

5. Children who play outside grow in their character development: they become more adventurous, their ability to communicate improves, they are more self-motivated, and they are better able to understand and assess risk.

We must teach our children to smell the earth, to taste the rain, to touch the wind, to see things grow, to see the sun rise and night fall - to care.

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John Cleal

