

Forest School Rationale

At The Ryde as part of our Creative Curriculum, Forest School sessions are delivered to all year groups to complement and enhance class based learning, which also includes a wide variety of other Learning Outside the Classroom opportunities e.g. workshops, visits and parent activities.

Forest School provides a range of memorable holistic learning experiences to inspire and stimulate the curiosity of our pupils and encourage their development into lifelong learners and responsible citizens of the world who engage positively with the natural environment.

The Forest School Association states on its website that -

"Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

Forest School has a developmental ethos shared by thousands of trained practitioners around the world, who are constantly developing their learning styles and skills to support new and imaginative learners. Its roots reach back to the open-air culture, friluftsliv, or free air life, seen as a way of life in Scandinavia where Forest School began. It arrived in the UK in 1993 and has grown from strength to strength since then"

The benefits and impact on pupils learning and the importance of risk- taking activities which are a part of Forest School sessions have been the focus of academic research since Forest school was introduced into the United Kingdom. Further information about research and Forest School can be found at <https://forestschoollassociation.org/>.

Intent

At The Ryde the Forest School sessions seek to creatively use the richly diverse school grounds and also to make use of local woodlands e.g. The Dell, to provide all pupils with access to learning in a wooded environment which promotes their holistic development, supports their wellbeing and embeds through play in nature, a range of skills, understanding and knowledge.

The provision of Forest School across all year groups over the academic year also supports our pupils in developing the attributes of The Ryde's five key words: -

Respect - for each other, resources and the environment in which they play

Creative -through the use of the wide variety of found /natural objects as well as equipment and tools the children have resources to stimulate their creativity through play outdoors both individually and with their peers. This can be seen in the games they develop and play during sessions as well as using tools for construction of unique designed objects or using natural materials like clay to make representations of familiar or imagined characters.

Safe - learning behaviours to keep themselves and others safe and to begin to self- assess risks they take in their play in the outdoor environment and to develop and use age appropriate control measures to keep themselves and others safe

Resilience - through learning new skills in Forest School e.g. tools use, knot tying or in the routines of getting ready in appropriate clothing the children learn resilience, realising how practice and re visiting activities enable them over time to acquire techniques and skills and making mistakes is part of the learning process.

Ambitious - pupils show excitement towards and anticipate their class sessions as they progress through the school. They are able to revisit previous activities, yet also suggest new different activities they want to try are willing to take on new challenges e.g. Junior Forester Award in Year 5 to develop new skills and become aware of how to apply their skills and knowledge in new contexts.

The Forest School leaders will facilitate positive outdoor experiences using a learner led approach which responds to the needs and interests of the individual pupils to enable the children to: -

- Learn to be responsible and interact positively with the outdoor environment
- Develop social and communication skills, their independence and imagination
- Develop skills in exploring their environment, risk taking and problem solving
- Develop their sense of curiosity and to use their imagination
- Develop their ability to be proactive in learning and use their initiative
- Develop interpersonal and cooperative team work skills

Implementation

Over each Academic year all pupils take part in Forest School sessions, in addition to the whole school Outdoor and Adventure Week during the summer term.

Nursery and Reception Class will have one weekly morning Forest School session all year round, in all weathers apart from high winds and heavy snow.

All other KS1 and KS2 classes will have a once weekly session of Forest School over a complete term- see table below at different times of the academic year as they progress through the school as follows: -

Autumn Term	Year 1	Year 4	After Dark Forest School Club Year 3 (4 weeks in November)
Spring Term	Year 3	Year 5	
Summer Term	Year 2	Year 6	

Parent activities

EYFS parents will be invited to join in a session each term and all other classes parents will be invited to join in a session during the term their child is having Forest School.

Teaching staff and Teaching Assistants who do not regularly support classes during the Forest School sessions are encouraged to join their class for a session at least once during the term. This provides an opportunity to observe the children in the Forest School environment and for the children to share some of their favourite activities with them.

Forest School Leaders who are Level 3 qualified will plan and facilitate the Forest School sessions, promoting a child led learning approach alongside a progression in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding linked to the outdoor environment as the children progress through the school.

The learning outside may involve: -

- Games and activities to develop social interaction, communication skills and team work
- Using real tools to build and construct with wood confidently and safely
- Taking part in campfire cooking and den building
- Identifying a range of habitats, within the school grounds and recognise flora and fauna that live there
- Learning about how to respect and take responsibility for the world around them

Impact

Forest School sessions have been a developing area of the provision for pupils at The Ryde over the past nine years. It has had an impact on staff, children, parents and the community of, and around The Ryde School in a variety of ways, examples of these are listed below.

- Photos are taken each week of the activities each class engages in during Forest School. The photos are used to create Class Forest School books which help with the recall of positive experiences outdoors, skills learnt and developed, and provide opportunities for further communication and sharing about learning.
- In EYFS further exploration of these skills and knowledge times back in class can be integrated into during 'Explore and learn 'in addition to the Forest School sessions
- Feedback on Forest School sessions is gained from all the children taking part, it is both part of our regular Pupil Voice, to gain suggestions and ideas for developing

Forest School and there is a specific Forest School pupil voice at the end of their term doing Forest School.

- Children are enthusiastic about Forest School and show anticipation for when they can have their term of sessions.
- Families applying for places in Reception Class indicate they chose The Ryde because of the year round Forest School sessions we offer in EYFS and that Forest School continues in older year groups.
- Informal feedback from parent's reveal that their children enjoy and talk about what they did at Forest School in the home environment.
- Parent Activity sessions and Take - home sheets about habitats, flora and fauna identified during Forest School sessions encourage the children to share their learning with other family members.
- Teachers and support staff have opportunity to observe pupils in different environment and can identify areas showing development and confidence that it not seen in a classroom setting.
- Support staff helping at Forest School sessions receive ongoing professional development from the Forest School leader, developing skills in outdoor activities and extending their knowledge of the outdoor environment as they participate with the children during Forest School sessions.
- Support staff can use their observations from Forest School to feedback to the teacher about specific children and also support pupils when back in class using knowledge learnt about that child and how they might learn better back in class.

Forest School also contributes to the various Award schemes we have taken part in

- In 2017 and 2021 we achieved a Gold Learning Outside the Classroom Award, with Forest School being part of the Learning outside the Classroom we offer our pupils
- In 2019 we achieved our Platinum Woodland Trust Award.
- In 2022 we achieved our 5th Green Flag Eco award - Forest school contributed in particular as we developed the school grounds to promote biodiversity e.g. plant trees, build new minibeast hotels.

- In Spring 2022, Year 5 pupils undertook the Royal Foresters Society Queen's Jubilee Junior Foresters Award as part of their Forest School sessions, this culminated with presentation by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire to the pupils of specially minted coins for their successful completion of the Award.
- Visits from local outdoor professionals e.g. Park Rangers, trainee Forest School leaders on practical placements.
- In 2022 we became a Hub School for Learning Outside the Classroom - supporting other schools/ teachers / interested individual in developing their provision of / engagement in learning beyond the classroom.