

Forest School and Outdoor Learning at Surrey Hills All Saints

Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent

Learning outdoors encourages children to develop their natural curiosity and understanding of the world around them, building love and respect for nature and its works.

The holistic approach of Forest School and outdoor learning immerses children within a unique educational experience that is inclusive of all. Opportunities to evaluate risk, problem solve, succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in our woodland environment are paramount within the curriculum that we provide.

Implementation

At Surrey Hills All Saints we provide weekly Forest School sessions for EYFS and KS1. Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in all weathers. Children work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world. We have our own Nature Garden in the school grounds with a range of different habitats as well as two ponds and areas for growing fruit, vegetables and flowers.

At KS2, children have a weekly session of Forest School for a dedicated half term. Opportunities to develop outdoor learning experiences in KS2 along with Forest School experiences aim to build a strong bond and understanding of the natural world and the importance of caring for it. The experiences strengthen social and communication skills; improve the ability to work in groups effectively, work through practical problems and challenges, build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk, and generally raise self-esteem and a confidence in the children's own abilities. Research has shown that these foundations help to raise academic achievements.

We are fortunate to have wonderful sites in the locality including Milton Heath, The Nower and Pippbrook stream as well as the use of a private woodland.

Sessions are planned and run by a Level 3 qualified Forest School Practitioner with Outdoor and Paediatric first aid.

Planning and Resources:

Planning is linked to seasonal change throughout the year and where possible makes best use of links and themes across the whole curriculum. Activities such as den building, cooking and arts and crafts have strong links with Science, STEM, DT and Maths but can also provide inspiration for English, Geography and Music. The opportunities to embrace the PSHE and RHE curriculum are embedded in all sessions encouraging children to build relationships, negotiate boundaries, develop the capacity to make decisions, evaluate risk, problem solve, build resilience and appreciate the mental and physical benefits of time spent outdoors being in nature to promote a sense of positive emotional wellbeing. Children also build upon moments of awe and wonder found in Forest School sessions within the classroom where knowledge is applied to their real-life experience. The ethos of Forest School ensures that sessions have a child-led element which enables pupils to follow their interests thereby deepening their own learning.

Wherever possible, natural resources are gathered and used. To safeguard habitats (in line with the site management plan detailed in the Forest School handbook) some natural materials are imported from other local sources. Subject specific skills and knowledge, for each learning theme are mapped out, to ensure the curriculum is sequential and builds upon previous knowledge and skills, coverage and progression.

How are lessons taught?

In EYFS, and KS1 children attend a weekly session (EYFS morning, KS1 afternoon) throughout the year. At KS2, a weekly session in a half term block. We are fortunate to have the benefit of volunteers from parents and the local community to

assist with and share our sessions. This models the benefits of taking part in hobbies and community action (RHE curriculum) to promote positive relationships with trusted adults and the consequential boost to mental wellbeing. The curriculum is designed to develop knowledge of the importance of caring for our natural world as well as progressive development of skills. This includes the evaluation and management of risk and the techniques for safe tool use.

Forest school sessions begin where the children 'knock for nature', take part in enquiry-based learning, critical thinking, skill development and end with fire circle time and reflection time.

Impact

During Forest School and outdoor learning sessions, assessment for learning strategies are used such as questioning, feedback, peer and self-assessment. The EYFS Floor book also gives children the opportunity for retrieval practice enabling them to reflect on their sessions and communicate their findings alongside photos of their sessions. To monitor the impact, children are interviewed from each class to gauge impact, understanding and enjoyment!

Parents comments are welcomed and regular discussions with staff for feedback on how the sessions support and enhance the curriculum, delving deeper and embedding learning shape the planning. Working alongside the EYFS team, children's knowledge is assessed and submitted for Knowledge and Understanding of the world. In KS1 and KS2 information is passed on to teachers to ascertain children's understanding especially linked to the Science and Geography curriculum. Teachers, parents and children realise that outdoor learning and Forest School offer fuels a passion for learning that transfers into the classroom and improves outcomes for children.