

Lansdowne

Forest School



Background



- The forest school approach originated in Scandinavia, where their early years provision is largely outdoors, student-centred and play-based
- In 1993 a group of nursery nurses from Bridgewater College in Somerset visited Denmark to observe their practice, and left inspired by their approach and the impact it was having on their children
- On their return to the UK they developed a Forest School programme and went on to develop training and accreditation for other practitioners
- Forest Schools have now been adopted by schools, early years settings, environmental projects and community groups
- The Forest School approach has taken on it's own unique style here in the UK which is now being adopted elsewhere in the world



The Six Principles of Forest School



1. Forest School is learner-led
2. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners
3. Forest School is a long-term process involving regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits
4. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice
5. Forest School takes place in a natural or woodland environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world
6. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves



Forest School at Lansdowne



- Sessions take place on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings at the South London Scout Centre in Dulwich
- Students are selected from across the school to give them the opportunity to develop new friendships
- Students are selected on the basis of:
 - Interest they may have expressed themselves
 - Students who staff members feel may benefit from a less structured learning experience
 - Students who staff members feel are lacking confidence or self-esteem
 - Students that may not have had experience of the natural world before
- Students who are particularly benefiting from FS – as well as students who are particularly enjoying it - may continue year on year, otherwise new groups are selected each September



Forest School at Lansdowne



- As per principle 1, we adopt a learner-led approach, and while we have a set of activities prepared weekly, we are flexible and can work with students' own interests – as well as changes in weather and other circumstances (eg playing in the snow, hunting for spider webs on dewy / frosty mornings, observing foxes etc)
- The emphasis is very much on enjoying time spent outdoors in nature as a group, and encouraging each other to take appropriate risks (to develop self confidence and improve self-esteem)



Forest School at Lansdowne



Each session follows the same routine to allow our students to feel relaxed in their new environment as quickly as possible

- Sessions begin with various jobs that students do in pairs, eg collecting water, litter picking, chopping wood, putting up a shelter
- We then play a game to warm up, eg hide and seek, 'spud', ring the bell
- Main activity: this may be cooking, whittling, arts and crafts, conservation, building dens, scavenging, orienteering...
- If we haven't already, we then build a fire, and enjoy a toasted marshmallow and a hot chocolate (during this time we will also enjoy a chat or play a game, eg I went to the shops)
- Finally, we wash up and pack up (again, students work in pairs)



Evidencing value



- Although the ethos of Forest School is very much about getting away from the normal school environment and the pressures of having to demonstrate progress etc, we wanted to find a way to demonstrate the *value* of Forest School
- We are building this evidence base around two of the principles underpinning FS:

Principle 2. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

Principle 5. Forest School takes place in a natural or woodland environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world

- Forms of evidence:
 - Student observation records at the start and end of the program (completed by FS leader)
 - Student surveys at the start and end of the program
 - Photo evidence of participation in activities





































