



Nightingale Primary School

Forest School Policy

2023/2024

Introduction:

At Nightingale Primary School, we believe in providing our students with holistic and immersive learning experiences that promote a deep connection to nature, foster personal growth, and develop essential life skills. Our Forest School program aims to create a safe, inclusive, and enriching outdoor environment where children can engage in meaningful and experiential learning. This policy outlines the principles, guidelines, and practices that guide our Forest School program.

Objectives:

Our Forest School program seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Nature Connection:** To nurture a strong bond between students and the natural world, fostering a sense of wonder, respect, and appreciation for the environment.
2. **Holistic Development:** To promote the holistic development of students by providing opportunities for physical, emotional, social, and cognitive growth through nature-based experiences.
3. **Life Skills:** To facilitate the development of essential life skills, including problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and resilience, in a supportive and outdoor setting.
4. **Environmental Awareness:** To educate students about the importance of environmental sustainability, conservation, and ethical responsibility towards nature.
5. **Play-Based Learning:** To encourage child-led, play-based learning experiences that allow students to explore, experiment, and create within a natural context.

Guiding Principles:

Our Forest School program is guided by the following principles:

1. **Child-Centred Approach:** Forest School sessions are designed to be child-centred, allowing students to shape their learning experiences based on their interests, curiosities, and developmental needs.
2. **Qualified Staff:** All Forest School sessions are led by experienced and trained educators who hold appropriate qualifications in Forest School leadership, outdoor education, and child safety.
3. **Risk Management:** Our program employs a balanced approach to risk management, enabling children to engage in age-appropriate risk-taking while ensuring their safety and well-being.
4. **Inclusivity:** Our Forest School program is inclusive and caters to the diverse needs and abilities of all students, providing equitable access to nature-based learning experiences.
5. **Environmental Stewardship:** We instil a sense of environmental stewardship by teaching students about sustainability, biodiversity, and ethical practices to foster a lifelong commitment to caring for the environment.

Program Implementation:

1. **Sessions:** Forest School sessions are conducted on a regular basis, offering students ample opportunities to engage in outdoor learning experiences.
2. **Curriculum Integration:** Forest School experiences are designed to complement the school curriculum and enhance learning across various subjects.
3. **Safety Measures:** Stringent safety protocols are in place to ensure the well-being of students during Forest School sessions, including appropriate adult-to-student ratios, first aid provisions, and site assessments.
4. **Site Selection:** Forest School sessions take place in safe and suitable outdoor environments, chosen for their biodiversity, accessibility, and potential for rich learning experiences.
5. **Assessment and Reflection:** Our educators regularly assess and reflect on the effectiveness of Forest School sessions, making adjustments to improve program outcomes and student experiences.

Staff Responsibilities:

- Forest School practitioners will be responsible for planning and facilitating sessions, ensuring safety, and fostering a positive learning environment.
- Classroom teachers and support staff will collaborate with Forest School practitioners to integrate outdoor experiences with classroom learning and address students' developmental needs.

Behaviour and Conduct:

- Students will be educated about responsible behaviour during Forest School sessions, including respect for nature, peers, and educators.
- Disruptive or unsafe behaviour will be addressed in accordance with the school's behaviour management policy.

Health and Safety:

- Risk assessments will be conducted for all Forest School activities, and appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.
- Students will be provided with appropriate clothing and footwear to suit the outdoor environment, weather conditions, and activities.
- First aid kits and trained personnel will be available during Forest School sessions.

Equipment and Resources:

- Adequate outdoor clothing and footwear will be required for all participants to ensure their comfort and safety during Forest School sessions.
- Natural materials and resources will be utilized for activities, and their collection will be guided by sustainable practices to minimize environmental impact.

Assessment and Reflection:

- Students' progress and development during Forest School sessions will be informally assessed through observation, anecdotal records, and reflections.
- Reflective practices will be encouraged among students, teachers, and practitioners to enhance learning outcomes and experiences.

Review and Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with the school's goals and objectives.
- Feedback from students, parents, staff, and practitioners will be solicited to continuously improve the quality of Forest School sessions.

Conclusion:

At Nightingale Primary School, our Forest School program is designed to ignite a passion for learning, foster a deep connection with nature, and empower students to become responsible and engaged citizens. By adhering to the principles and guidelines outlined in this policy, we are committed to delivering a high-quality Forest School experience that enriches the lives of our students and contributes to their holistic development. We aim to provide our students with a well-rounded and enriching educational experience that supports their growth, well-being, and love for learning.

Mrs Helen Brown
Forest School Leader

Date of Policy Approval: Autumn 2023

Date of Next Review: Autumn 2025