



## Selattyn C.E. Primary School

### Statement of Intent for Forest School

#### Our School Vision

---

As a loving community, our vision is to nurture each individual in our care, giving them the skills, resilience and hope to succeed and flourish, both academically and spiritually, in God's ever-changing world.

#### Intent

---

At Selattyn C.E. Primary School, our intent is to use Forest School experiences to help pupils to develop holistically, facilitating each individual's social, physical, emotional and spiritual growth. Children are encouraged to work collaboratively and to be excited as they acquire new knowledge and skills, to be physically active, to take calculated risks and to develop their curiosity. We value the development of lively and enquiring minds, and we strive to enable all children to develop resilience to succeed and flourish on their learning journey.

Our ambition is to inspire an enjoyment of and respect for the natural world through allowing children the freedom to explore the outdoors and the woodland area that forms our school grounds. We do not take our school setting for granted and are thankful for our unique environment which has the power to engage and nurture our school community.

#### Implementation

---

At Selattyn C.E. Primary School, our established Forest School approach (since 2012/13) has developed from the Scandinavian education system.

Weekly Forest School sessions are led by a trained Level 3 Forest School Leader.

Every year group in KS1 and KS2 is allocated a half term block of Forest School sessions.

Our Early Years children participate in Outdoor Learning sessions with their class teacher within the Forest School site.

As we are a small rural school, staff teach mixed age classes which bridge the transition stages, however Forest School sessions are arranged to accommodate single cohorts. This not only

facilitates a more favourable ratio of adults to pupils, but crucially it gives pupils a cohort identity and helps to cement friendships and a sense of responsibility and respect for peers.

Forest School sessions take place within the school grounds in the designated Forest School area.

There is a purpose-built shelter which is also used to store Forest School resources.

There is a designated fire area.

Forest school sessions offer experiences that play a vital role in enabling pupils to make strong links and connections in their learning. Learning in the classroom can be consolidated outdoors, e.g. learning about the skeleton and bones in the body in a science session in the classroom can be revisited through using twigs to build outdoor skeletons. Curriculum links in science, e.g. studying habitats, becomes meaningful when experienced first-hand. Drumming using sticks on logs covers many aspects of the music curriculum – possibilities are endless.

Children have direct experience of the changing seasons and weather. Sessions happen whatever the weather, our mantra being

*'There is no such thing as poor weather, just the wrong clothes.'*

However, due regard is taken of extreme weather conditions the Forest School leader may terminate a session early if conditions compromise the safety of pupils and children.

Following the Covid Pandemic, the learning and teaching strategies adopted by adults at Forest School are mindful of the current need to foster independence and develop language and communication skills, particularly with our younger children.

Staff also prioritise the importance of appropriate physical activity and emotional wellbeing. Time is given to explore pupils' thoughts, feelings and relationships, and children are encouraged to understand, appreciate, and care for the natural environment.

Opportunities are provided to work collaboratively, take risks, make choices, find new ways of learning, problem solve, initiate learning, develop practical skills, and become confident and capable learners. This is achieved by giving the children challenging, but realistic tasks, a high level of support from educators and allowing children time to reflect upon their experiences and discuss what they have achieved, how this makes them feel, and what they might like to do next.

## Impact

---

At Selattyn C.E. Primary School we measure the impact of our curriculum through the following methods:

We have seen a broad range of benefits from our Forest School approach which transfer into other aspects of children's learning ;

- Time in nature is proven to improve a sense of happiness and positively impact emotional wellbeing. Children who play outside laugh more, which means they're happy!
- Social development - problem solving, communicating, sharing, and learning together.
- Physical - fine and gross motor skills, movement, balance and co-ordination improves. Physical strength and stamina develop as muscle strength increases.
- Healthy lifestyle - being outdoors and active. Children who play outdoors regularly are far more likely to be fresh-air loving, active adults (research has proven this).
- Speaking and listening skills improve as language development is prompted by the children's sensory experiences.
- Working and playing outdoors helps pupils develop a life-long appreciation of and affinity with nature that we hope they carry throughout their childhood and beyond.
- Respect - children take ownership of their own area.
- Children develop positive dispositions and attitudes, becoming more adventurous and self-motivated, better able to understand and assess risk, they learn to make safe choices, improve in confidence, resilience and physical wellbeing.

- Challenging environments with opportunities to balance on logs, use tools and build dens, offer children the chance to engage in 'healthy struggles', where their bodies and brains develop resilience, which is critical for all learning.
- The woodland area encourages group interests to develop, which are often continued back inside the classroom.
- Nature provides unlimited inspiration for children to wonder and marvel about the natural world.

Above all, our children enjoy the outdoor environment and have fun at Forest School. All year groups have asked to participate in sessions. They are motivated to learn and return to the classroom muddy, smiling and feeling proud of their achievements.

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

Margaret McMillan (1925)