

Forest School at Drake Primary School



Information for supporting staff and parents

September 2023

What is Forest Schools?

Forest Schools has developed from the Scandinavian education system and arrived in the UK in 1993. Forest School sessions offer children and young people the opportunity to building self-esteem and independence through exploring and experiencing the natural world. Forest Schools is a long-term program delivered by trained practitioners within a natural environment. The ethos of Forest Schools allows learners the time and space to develop skills, interests and understanding through practical, hands-on experiences. Activities are child initiated and therefore child-led, they could be anything from building a rope swing to making art from natural materials. Children are encouraged to make their own choices and to take supported risks.

Why have Forest Schools?

An increasing body of research shows that Forest Schools has a measurable impact on children, which can then positively influence the participant back in the classroom. Forest School sessions help children develop holistically (social, emotionally, physically, mentally, and intellectually) whilst having fun.

Skills that are developed include:

- communication skills
- responsibility
- decision making
- negotiation
- social skills
- confidence
- fine and gross motor skills
- observation skills
- imagination
- resourcefulness
- resilience
- persistence
- imagination
- problem solving
- leadership
- respect for the natural
- risk management
- cooperative play
- concentration

Play Cycle

Here at Drake Primary School we value the play cycle to help us understand children's play and how best to support it. This also shows how adult intervention can affect or disrupt the play.

"The Play Cycle has proved, and continues to prove to be an effective way to observe and map the process of play. This has implications not just for playwork, but anyone who is in contact with children in a play capacity (parents, childcare workers, early years workers, play therapists). This can be in the home, park, open space, school, in essence everywhere children play."

Dr Pete King, Lecturer on childhood studies and play at Swansea University



Pre-Cue - The thought or idea in the child's head that will start the whole process. An instinctive feeling, thought, fantasy or idea sparks the desire to play. The Pre-Cue can also be referred to as the meta-lude.

Cue - Is the process of the child transmitting their thought or idea out into the world. It is an invitation, enticement or action issued to others to create play. The Play Cue can be quite subtle, such as making and holding eye contact, or it can be a more obvious action. Whatever the Play Cue looks like, it needs to be taken up by someone else in order for the Play Cycle to continue.

Play - Response - This happens when the Cue of one child is picked up by another child or other children and they respond to it, activating play.

Flow - The cycle or cycles of Play Cues and Play Responses that follow. As the play progresses, it triggers more Pre-Cues and Play Cues which in turn trigger more Play Responses. At this point, children can seem caught up in play and completely engrossed by it.

Play Frame - The physical or imaginary boundary within which the play takes place. This could be the Forest Schools area or perhaps an imaginary dragon's den! The Play Frame can also be an agreed set of "rules" for the game or even just an understanding between the participants. So long as the Play Frame remains intact, the play cycle can continue.

Annihilation - This occurs when one of the children involved in the play, either the child who made the initial play cue or one of the others, ends the play.

There is another way that the Play Cycle can end and that is known as **Play Adulteration**. This is when the Play Cycle is broken by an adult who has not been involved in the play.

The adults role in the play cycle

When an adult becomes involved in the Play Cycle, it is usually in one of four ways; however, each way has the potential to disrupt the Play Cycle.

Play Maintenance - Where the adult remains outside of the Play Frame and passively observes the play. Here, the adult can check that the Play Cycle remains intact and is not disturbed by external factors. In this way, the Play Cycle is allowed to continue through its natural Flow and, eventually, Annihilation.

How this can disrupt the Play Cycle:

When observing play, especially when it may involve an element of risk, an adult might feel the need to intervene. Whilst this is triggered by a genuine concern, the Play Cycle is, nevertheless, shut down.

Simple involvement - Occurs when the adult might be just inside the Play Frame but remains passive. The adult does not participate in the play but may act as a resource to further facilitate the Play Cycle and to maintain it. For example, a child wants a cardboard box to use as part of their play. Not being able to find one, they ask the adult, and the adult provides them with one to use.

How this can disrupt the Play Cycle:

The adult, acting as a resource, might suggest or provide something other than what was requested. This is often done to try and be helpful or offer the more logical choice, but it changes the Play Frame and disrupts the Play Cycle.

Medial Intervention - demonstrates a more active role in the Play Cycle. The adult may take up the Play Cue offered by a child and issue a Play Return in response. The adult then becomes part of the Play Cycle.

How this can disrupt the Play Cycle:

Once involved in the Play Cycle, the adult might play in a way unsuited to the child and the initial Play Cue. This can cause frustration, disappointment or boredom, causing the child to end the Play Cycle.

Complex Intervention - Where the adult becomes even more involved in the Play Cycle by both responding to and issuing their own Play Cues. This then causes the child to respond to the Play Cues of the adult.

How this can disrupt the Play Cycle:

The adult might issue too many Play Cues to direct the play and the child will stop responding. In this case, the adult has effectively taken over the play and the child can once again feel frustration, disappointment or boredom and bring the Play Cycle to an end.

Recommended videos to watch that explain the play cycle/Ludric Process:-

<https://youtu.be/dSacWWtto4E?si=tqUN22x9XPmzNU2->

<https://youtu.be/jkT8J2wUVG0?si=Yk-MXizNsmFgJFfb>

Who runs Forest Schools?

Forest Schools will be led by Ms Farish who is a level 3 Forest School lead and first-aider. If Ms Farish is unavailable your Child's session will be cancelled. The sessions will take place on the school grounds or in Sir Fredericks's Wood which is adjacent to the school. Sessions will be a morning or afternoon;

What do children need to bring?

Children should come to school in their Forest School clothing, ensuring no jewellery is worn including earrings.

Forest School clothing consists of -

-sturdy footwear (bring wellingtons in a bag)

-trousers/Long sleeved top to protect arms and legs from bites, stings and ticks. Old clothes are recommended

-waterproof coat and trousers

-hat and/or gloves and Sun cream if necessary

Please note that we will run Forest School sessions in all weathers except extreme conditions where safety could be an issue. So, come prepared!

Information for assistants

Before the session begins, you must ensure you read this leaflet thoroughly and read all procedures and risk assessments that are shown to you.

All volunteers in Forest Schools need to have a DBS carried out. This is something the office will arrange for you before you begin assisting at Forest Schools. You will be able to assist whilst your DBS is being processed, however you will not be allowed to be on your own with a child or taking any child to the toilet etc.

Supporting adults inc volunteers

Please wear appropriate clothing - I recommend you wear trousers to protect your legs from bites, stings and ticks - no skirts or shorts below the knee. Bring a water bottle and a snack if you would like one. Please ensure mobile phones are placed in a locker at reception (reference our safeguarding policy which all-supporting adults have training on).

What is expected of you

It is important that you are.....

Playful yourself

Encourage participation

Allow children to lead you and let them be in control

Allow children to repeat activities

Ensure they feel safe

Allow them to get dirty/muddy

Allow the children to be alone if they wish to be

Allow safe risk taking

As a helper, we ask you to observe the children and interact where it is deemed appropriate. Please show a positive approach to all situations/scenarios. Throughout the session, we will all be supervising, risk assessing and ensuring all children are accounted for.

We have agreements that the children are asked to adhere to. These are addressed at the beginning of every Forest School session and we will all abide by these:

- Be kind
- Be Gentle
- Be Respectful to everyone and everything
- And Be Awesome

Some reminders

No eating anything found in the site only food made specifically during the session as well as their own snack that you and the children bring with them to the site. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses.

Children needing the toilet use their class toilets. A member of staff needs to be made aware they are going and once they have returned. Please inform the Forest School Leader if you need to use the amenities.

Tools will be demonstrated at the beginning of the session as a reminder of correct and safe use and storage. A copy of the tool procedures will also be available.

If children are climbing trees, please ensure you supervise but from a distance so that the children are not necessarily aware that you are doing so.

Please inform the Forest School leader of any injuries and or accidents immediately so they can be dealt with, treated, and recorded where necessary.

We hope you enjoy your Forest School experience with us and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support.

If you have any questions or any feedback let the Forest School leader know. Feedback is always appreciated and will help us plan future sessions

If you are a parent/carer and would like to volunteer some of your time to Forest Schools then please email the office on office@drake.norfolk.sch.uk or telephone 01842 762055.

Thank you for reading this information. We hope you have found it a useful introduction to Forest Schools.

Sara Star

Forest Schools lead and Play Manager