

Cheapside School Forest School Reflection and Review - 2018-2019



It is hard to believe we are at the end of another busy school year. Forest School has been a privilege and a pleasure to run this year and I have loved working with each and every class. We have learnt about the environment and the trees growing within it, we have made things out of natural materials, cooked pizzas on a camp fire, made hot chocolate, built dens, played hide and seek and had lots of fun!


One of my main aims of Forest school is to make sure the children develop a shared sense of responsibility to maintain, protect and promote the forest school area both for themselves and others at this current point in time and for future users. In order to facilitate this, I aim to involve learners in sustainable woodland management. This must begin by developing and fostering that relationship with the woodland and this has been the overarching aim for this year. All the children have been able to observe and notice how our woodland has grown and changed but they have also seen for themselves their own impact. We have talked about what happens if we snap a branch, pick a flower or drop our litter and all the children have come face to face with their role in looking after the space.

In November our Tree saplings arrived! It was wonderful to involve every child in the school with planting tree saplings. The saplings are thriving and growing really quickly which is great to see and the children take great pride in checking on their progress. This year, I talked to the children about the Charter for Trees, Woods and People and this is very much the philosophy that we are promoting through forest school. A copy of this can be found on the forest school page on the website.

Back in the autumn term we all enjoyed celebrating National Tree Week by taking part in tree dressing day. Every class has also made bird feeders and we have seen birds really enjoying the food we left out for them.

In February, some of the classes took part in the RSPB Garden Bird survey and last month some of the older classes took part in a schools Biodiversity survey on behalf of Royal Holloway University.

Our pond area has been fantastic this year, and thanks to the help and support of Mr Ashley from Maidenhead Aquatics we have been able to clean out the pond, carry out some



maintenance and ensure that it is a thriving environment. One of the highlights of this year has been pond dipping and newt handling, with every class listing this as one of their favourite activities!

The allotment is looking good this year, with crops of peas, beans, courgettes, potatoes, strawberries and cabbage ready to pick. Next year I would like to develop this site a little further by having a good clear up of the site, planting the bank with wild flowers and replacing the fencing. I will be asking for a working party of keen volunteers early on in the autumn term to bring work on this, so if you are able to support this I would be very grateful.

I was delighted this year to have been able to make contact with Silwood Park and we have been using their site for some trial sessions. Year 3 and 4 have both visited Silwood Park and studied some of the different habitats on site. We have also been fortunate enough to use their labs to look at plant and animal samples under microscope. I plan to build on this next year and hope to take our KS2 classes across the year.

Royal Holloway have been teaching science in the Forest School site to Years 5 and 6 and will continue to do so next year. They have worked with these classes on a variety of different lessons, from studying how birds fly to setting moth traps and surveying moths on the site.

A small group of children from across Key Stage 2 have been working with me each week both in Forest School and in the allotment. On Saturday they will be presenting their wheelbarrow of plants for pollinators which they have planted, designed and grown on for themselves at The Royal Windsor Summer Show and I wish them the best of luck with their entry.

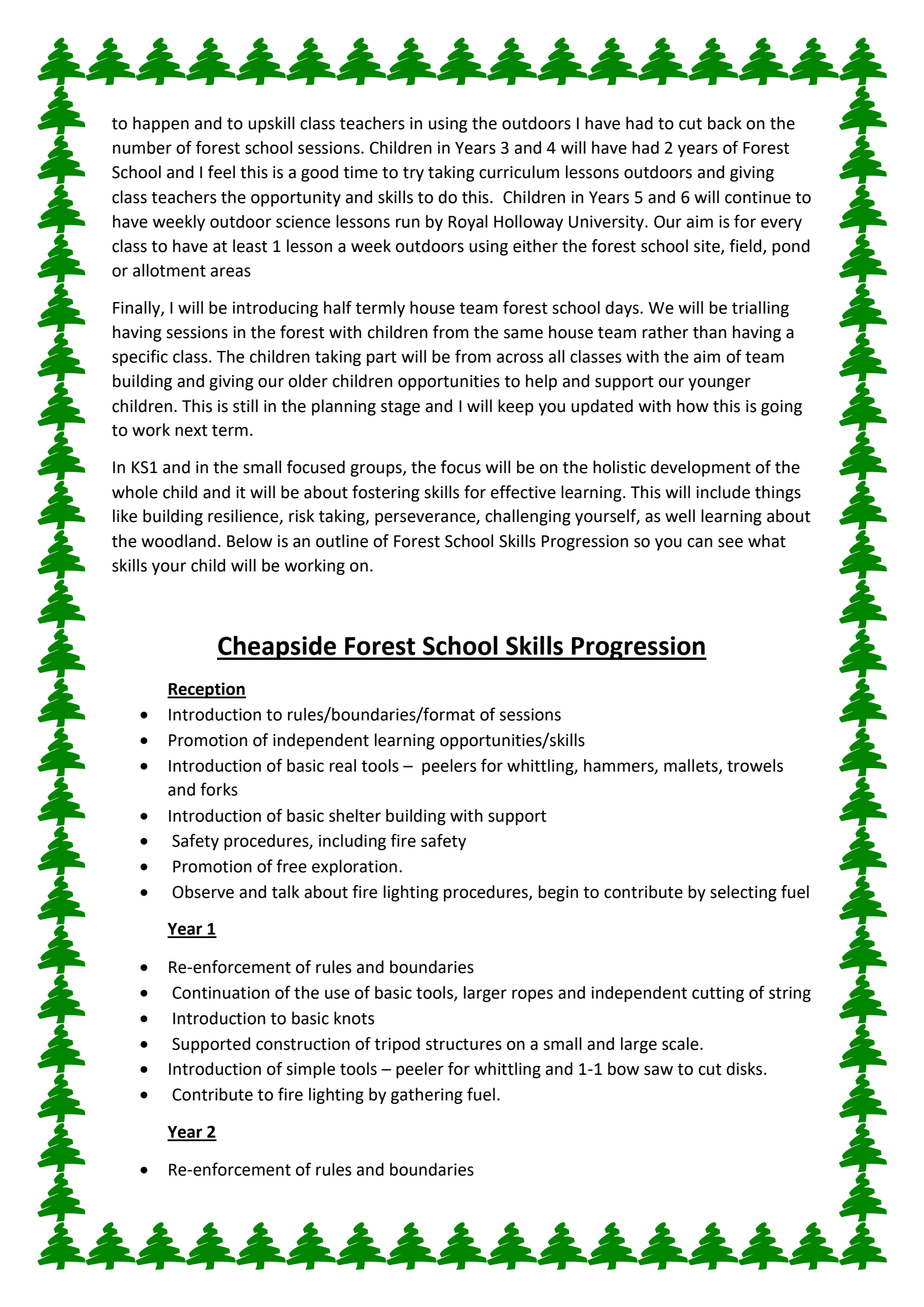
The 'Growing Together' project being run with Year 3 has been a great success and will continue into next year. Please take a look at the webpage for more information.

Strategic Usage for 2019-2020

In September, we will be making some slight changes to how the Forest School site is being used and I am delighted with the plans moving forward for the forest site. They will be as follows:

- Wrens Class – 1 half day Forest School session per week on a **Tuesday morning**
- Robins Class – 1 half day Forest School session per week on a **Monday morning**
- Doves Class – 1 half day session per week on a **Tuesday afternoon**.
- There will be a small Year2/3 Forest School nurture group which will run on a Wednesday morning along with a Year 4/5 group that will run on the same morning. These groups will be for invited children only and you will be contacted if we feel your child would benefit from a place in these groups.

In Key Stage 2, I will be supporting class teachers to plan outdoor curriculum learning. This year class teachers will be taking lesson outdoors and using the forest school space to teach their curriculum. This might be a Maths lesson, Art lesson or English lesson. In order for this



to happen and to upskill class teachers in using the outdoors I have had to cut back on the number of forest school sessions. Children in Years 3 and 4 will have had 2 years of Forest School and I feel this is a good time to try taking curriculum lessons outdoors and giving class teachers the opportunity and skills to do this. Children in Years 5 and 6 will continue to have weekly outdoor science lessons run by Royal Holloway University. Our aim is for every class to have at least 1 lesson a week outdoors using either the forest school site, field, pond or allotment areas

Finally, I will be introducing half termly house team forest school days. We will be trialling having sessions in the forest with children from the same house team rather than having a specific class. The children taking part will be from across all classes with the aim of team building and giving our older children opportunities to help and support our younger children. This is still in the planning stage and I will keep you updated with how this is going to work next term.

In KS1 and in the small focused groups, the focus will be on the holistic development of the whole child and it will be about fostering skills for effective learning. This will include things like building resilience, risk taking, perseverance, challenging yourself, as well learning about the woodland. Below is an outline of Forest School Skills Progression so you can see what skills your child will be working on.

Cheapside Forest School Skills Progression

Reception

- Introduction to rules/boundaries/format of sessions
- Promotion of independent learning opportunities/skills
- Introduction of basic real tools – peelers for whittling, hammers, mallets, trowels and forks
- Introduction of basic shelter building with support
- Safety procedures, including fire safety
- Promotion of free exploration.
- Observe and talk about fire lighting procedures, begin to contribute by selecting fuel

Year 1

- Re-enforcement of rules and boundaries
- Continuation of the use of basic tools, larger ropes and independent cutting of string
- Introduction to basic knots
- Supported construction of tripod structures on a small and large scale.
- Introduction of simple tools – peeler for whittling and 1-1 bow saw to cut disks.
- Contribute to fire lighting by gathering fuel.

Year 2

- Re-enforcement of rules and boundaries

- Continuation of the use of basic tools, larger ropes and independent cutting of string
- More sophisticated use of knots for attaching to structures, trees etc.
- Independent use of tripod structures
- Introduction of lashing and frapping techniques to make frames.
- Use of bow saw 1-1 to cut disks and peelers for whittling.
- Experience Using fire strikers to spark a flame a light a fairy pillow (cotton wool 1-1)

Finally, I would like to thank all the Parents for their overwhelming support for Forest School. Thank you to the wonderful team that gave up their Tuesday night this week to do the fencing around the forest school boundary. It looks great and has made the space look even more special! Thank you to all the Parents who have contributed to the Forest School snack bank and for providing any resources I have asked for and for volunteering to help out with sessions.

I would also like to say a huge thank you to Fran Miles who is my Level 2 assistant and helps me run sessions. Moving forward the more help we have with running the sessions the better. I would be delighted to welcome anybody who is interested in supporting Forest School to come and help out with our sessions. It might be yourself, an interested relative or maybe you know a retired member of the community that might enjoy spending an afternoon in the forest with children? Please spread the word and come and have a chat with me if you would be interested in helping out. All you would need is an up to date school DBS check, plenty of enthusiasm and some waterproofs!!

The website will continue to include a gallery page for Forest School in September where I will post regular updates and photos to keep you all in touch with what is happening in the Forest. Please feel free to come and speak to me if you would like to find out any more information on Forest School or to view our policies and procedures.

I hope you all have a fantastic summer, hopefully out and about exploring lots of wonderful places!

With thanks

Mrs Summers

