



A Guide to



Forest School



"I love Forest School because I like
climbing the trees and jumping
down from them. It is so exciting!"

Daniel, Kindergarten

What is Forest School?

Forest School offers everyone, particularly children and young people, the opportunity to learn through experience within a woodland setting in a hands-on manner to develop their self-esteem and confidence. At Dwight London, the Forest School programme supports and complements the principles of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme as well as our three educational pillars. This is what we aim to achieve:

Personalised Learning

Open-ended tasks create opportunities to share passions and understandings in ways that are motivating for our students. This is definitely not a 'one size fits all' approach to learning. Instead, the learners are seen as competent and capable of choosing their personal inquiries and in turn, they feel respected, trusted and valued when given time and freedom to explore their ideas and interests in motivating and relevant ways.

Community

The very nature of learning in an outdoor environment strengthens the class community. Whether that be sitting around a campfire or taking action to rid the woodlands of litter, Forest School provides opportunities for students to make a positive difference to their school. Our students have many opportunities to develop skills from the IB Learner Profile. In the forest, they can be risk-takers, inquirers, reflective, communicators, knowledgeable, open-minded, caring, thinkers, balanced and principled.

Global Vision

By teaching our students to connect with their natural environment we are encouraging them to want to care for it so that it remains for future generations to enjoy. The knowledge they gain about caring for nature could have an impact globally due to our diverse community as our students take their ideas, understandings and attitudes to countries around the world.

Our Forest School Vision

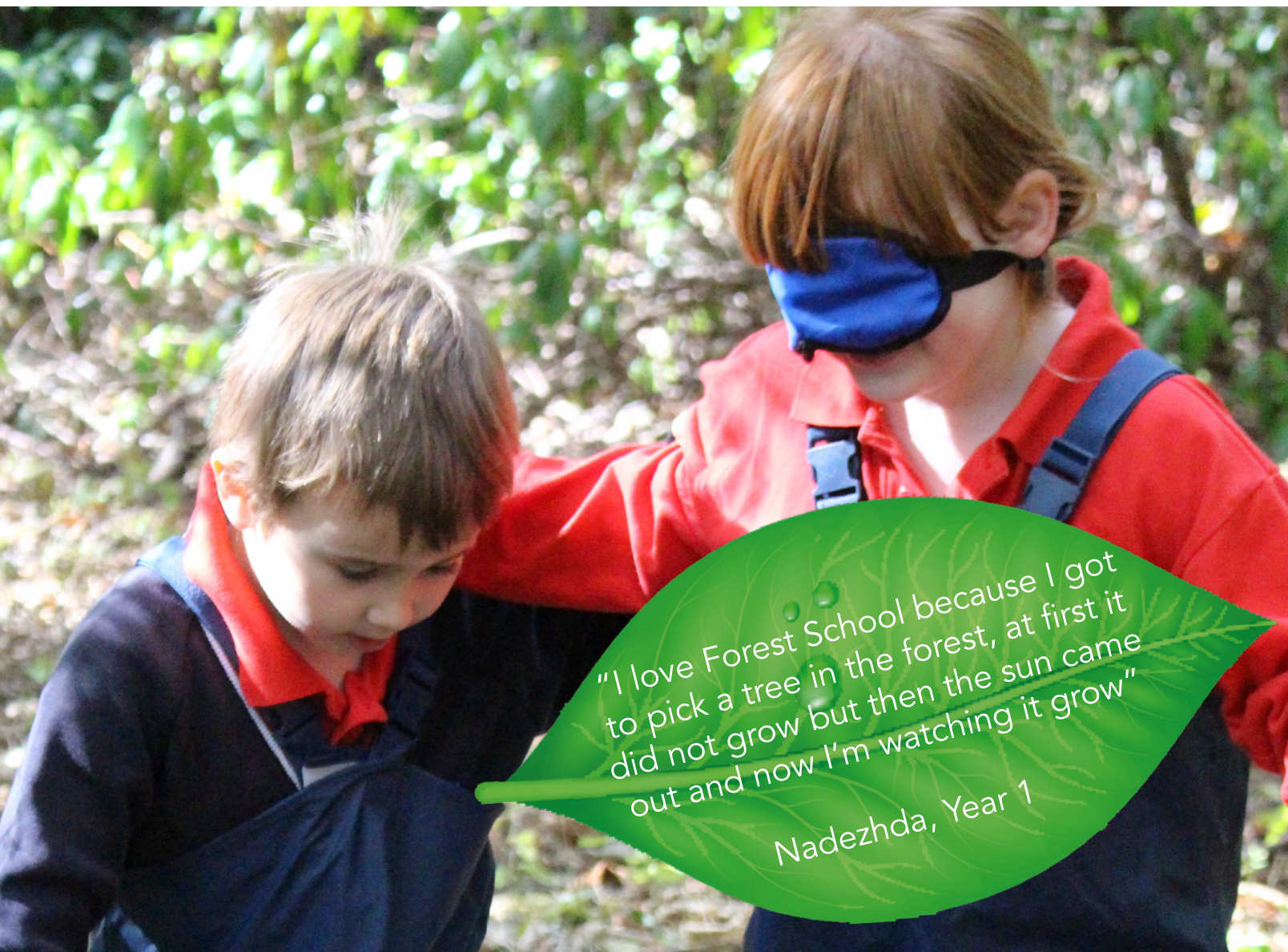
To enable each student attending Forest School to have the opportunity to develop an inquisitive and positive relationship with the natural world. To increase confidence, self-esteem, and respect in preparation for an ever-changing world. To give every student the opportunity to achieve their holistic, full potential.

Our Forest School Philosophy

The philosophy of Forest School is to inspire individuals of any age through positive outdoor experiences and provide them an opportunity to appreciate the wider, natural world to encourage responsibility for nature conservation in later life.

Our Forest School Aims

- To provide an opportunity for individuals to develop, learn and enjoy themselves.
- To provide a safe and non-threatening environment in which children can take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning.
- To help children understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment.
- To provide ways of developing practical life skills in an outdoor environment.
- To develop self-esteem, confidence and a positive disposition to learning through the completion of small, achievable tasks.
- To meet the needs of children with all learning styles.
- To develop social and team-working skills.
- To enable children to be independent, self-motivated and considerate.
- To be true to the Forest School ethos and approach.
- To develop a secure, happy and welcoming environment.
- To provide stimulation and varied learning activities appropriate to the child's needs and stages of development.
- To help each child build independence, self-control and interpersonal skills.



"I love Forest School because I got to pick a tree in the forest, at first it did not grow but then the sun came out and now I'm watching it grow"

Nadezhda, Year 1

Forest School Principles

The Forest School ethos has six principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011. The six guiding principles of Forest School are given below. Criteria for good practice relating to each are listed directly underneath.

Principle 1

Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 2

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

- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/manager, the Forest School practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3

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

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and/or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

Principle 4

Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk-Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Principle 5

Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

Principle 6

Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.

(forestschoolassociation.org, 2019)



"I like Forest School because we
get to clean the forest, take away
the rubbish and put it in the bin."

Luthia, Year 3



"I really love doing activities like finding creatures such as spiders and woodlice at Forest School! I really like them!"

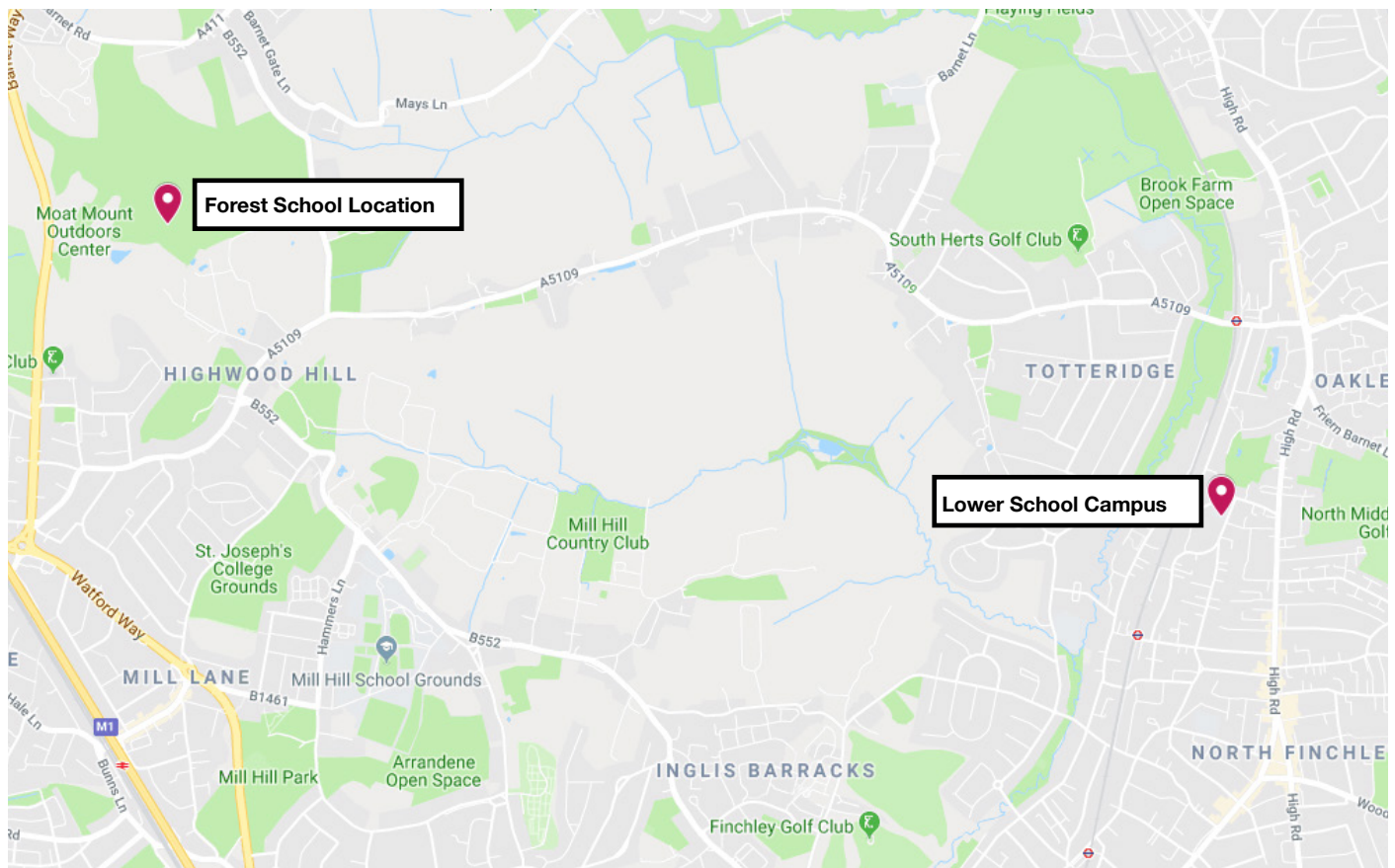
Fable, Year 2

Forest School Location

Our Forest School takes place in a small, private woodland less than 15 minutes away at Moat Mount, Mill Hill and is led by a trained Forest School Leader and supporting teaching staff.

The site offers us opportunities to explore, use tools, light a campfire, observe nature and seasons, climb trees and be creative. Daily risk-assessments are carried out to ensure the site is safe for use. We aim to use the site in all weather, building a shelter on rainy days or having a warming campfire on cold days. For safety, we will only cancel a session due to high winds.

Travel to and from the site is provided by the school and each vehicle has seat belts. Medical bags are carried on board the vehicles.



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Sara Tomlin
Accredited to
Level 3
Practitioner Award
www.forestschoools.com



Forest School Uniform

We learn in all weathers so the correct clothing is essential. The children spend time sitting and kneeling on the forest floor which is often damp so waterproof trousers are extremely important. Please use this uniform guide so you are aware of what your child should be wearing. Please make sure long hair is tied up on Forest School days.



Sun



Sturdy trainers or walking boots



Leggings or tight trousers



Sunhat



Suncream



Rain



Waterproof boots



Waterproof dungarees/trousers



Waterproof jacket or raincoat



Fleece if cold



Cold



Snow boots



Waterproof jacket or raincoat and thermal underwear including fleeces



Hat, scarf and gloves and thermal socks



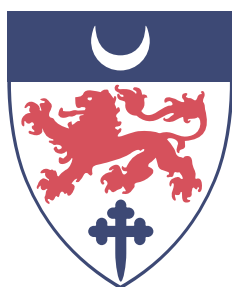
Waterproof dungarees/trousers



"I love Forest School because I
can make things out of the wood
and other items from nature I
find in the forest"

Tess, Year 4

There is no such thing as bad weather,
only the wrong clothes.



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