

WHY?

Increase and improve the quality of physical activity for all pupils over and beyond that provided by the two hours of PE that they receive during the school week.

We provide an extensive PE curriculum with built in progression, as well as after school clubs. However it was becoming increasingly clear that the rest of the curriculum was sedentary. We wanted to find a way to reduce the amount of sitting down during the week.

Reduce the number of disputes at playtimes when playing games.

These days, for various reasons, children rarely play out & almost every activity they encounter is adult led and controlled. This results in playground problems as they cannot self-manage their games without an adult to referee. We had noticed that during playtimes there were a number of altercations on the playground with children not being able to self-manage their games. As well as the disputes at playtime, we were experiencing a large number of first aid issues. When we looked into the reasons why, it became clear that as well as the lack of resilience, the children appeared to have a lack of care for their own safety & that of others due to heightened emotions whilst playing games.

This behaviour then carries over into lesson time due to the continuing friction that developed on the playground. These confrontational situations can also have a negative impact on the less engaged & cause them to become even more disengaged in physical activity especially when it is self-managed by the children.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

We talked & listened to parents, pupils and staff as to how to increase & improve the quality of physical activity over & beyond the two hours of PE that they receive during the week.

Overwhelmingly, the common theme was that we should use our school grounds & local environment, which led us to include Forest School in our curriculum planning. Through Forest School we aim for all the pupils to develop a healthier lifestyle, foster resilience, build confidence, understand risk & become independent learners. It will also improve their physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social & spiritual aspects & develop emotional intelligence.

The Forest School ethos is to allow children the time & space to develop skills, interest & understanding through a range of activities centred around play which provides practical, hands-on experiences in a natural environment. We felt that through the continued use of PE & the introduction of Forest School, we would be able to increase the quality, experience & change family's attitudes towards physical activity as well as:

- reduce the number of arguments on the playground
- improve focus within the classroom
- allow the children to become more creative
- reduce injuries on the playground
- become more resilient, independent learners
- encourage team skills
- increase the cross curricular links e.g. Science etc.



The Premium over the last three years has allowed us to train 5 members of staff to become Forest School practitioners, who deliver in Early Years, Key Stages 1 and 2. This ensures that there is progression & continuity throughout the life of the pupils at the school. One practitioner is our Sports Coach. This provides the cross over between the two curriculum areas. We have also been able to purchase some essential tools, design the weekly time table so all pupils have access & adopt & adapt some of the Forest School methodology for PE

Within PE we have been working to encourage the children to self-manage games through the use of small sided games, which gives increased opportunities for children of all abilities allowing better engagement & enjoyment. The less engaged children get a more positive experience of PE by being more involved. Children are reminded of the core values for each session which also complement those of Forest School.

IMPACT?

The regularity of Forest School sessions has meant that we have been able to regularly monitor the effect on the children over the last three years.

- Overall confidence and self-belief has increased. They are demonstrating independent child led-learning rather than adult-led.
- Social skills show an increased awareness of the consequences of their actions on other peers and adults and they are better able to work cooperatively.
- The children have developed more sophisticated uses of both written and spoken language prompted by their visual and sensory experiences at Forest School.
- Motivation & concentration has improved. There is enthusiasm to participate in activities as well as the ability to focus on specific tasks for longer periods of time.
- Stamina & gross motor skills have developed through free & easy movement round the Forest School site. They have developed fine motor skills by making objects & structures.

The practitioners have a better understanding of the children, and are better able to identify their individual learning styles.

The impact has reached beyond the classroom. The children have taken home things that they have made and spoken of their experiences at home. Parents are taking them outdoors to do various things at the weekend or in the school holidays. Parents can see the positive impacts on their children.

"I love trying new things even if it feels scary at first."

"I love going outside and having fun."

"I really look forward to Forest School."

"I love working with the others to create and make things." - from a child who usually does most things on their own.

"Forest School is the best thing I have ever done at school."

"My daughter doesn't normally enjoy exercise but really enjoys Forest School activities; she has even started climbing the trees near home!" -from a mother of an overweight child.

"Please let the Forest School staff know they are doing a great job in what they provide and for the positive impact it has had on my children's personalities."

"My son loves taking part & has embraced being able to go out in all weathers - he even influences us to do so at home!"

"My children look forward to their Forest School session every week & keep checking whether it is their Forest School day."

"Thank you for all that you do in Forest School. My children absolutely love it."

Our Head Teacher has said how positive Forest School shows within the school. Staff and parents alike have told her how much the children look forward to it and are really able to engage.

Staff have said that often after a Forest School session, the children are more able to enthusiastically engage in the rest of their learning.

During Lockdown the Head teacher asked a year 2 pupil of a key worker if he had had a good day after a Forest School session. His response was, 'It was the best day of his life'.

A new member of our senior staff said on arrival in September that;- I think that our outdoor provision is a key aspect at Much Birch. Through high quality PE and Forest School our children know that knowledge & understanding can be procured in a variety of settings and that resilience & perseverance help them problem solve in and out of the classroom.

There are less injuries on the playground due to rough games- a reduction of about 20%.

Creativity has improved within the playground. For example children are using the games shop equipment to develop skills by challenging themselves with different child led tasks. They are more inclined to embrace the 'learning struggle' and that mistakes are ok. They persevere with repetitive skill challenges. As Forest School takes place in all weathers, the children now accept that PE can too.

Playtime disputes are less because the children are able to make compromises. The children are changing the rules and adhering to them to make for a better game. This better behaviour has created a better experience for both the engaged and less engaged children. These calmer playtimes have produced calmer classrooms and there has been a significant reduction in the time spent straight after playtimes by the class teacher sorting out disputes that run into the classroom. This has been particularly noted in an Upper Key Stage class.

This demonstrates that Forest School has enabled the school to promote better and increased physical activity within the school and at home with lasting consequences, as well as enabling the children to play self-managed games at playtime and during PE sessions.

SUSTAINABILITY

Using the Sports Premium funding we have been able to ensure that:

- All classes from Year R to Year 6 experience regular weekly sessions throughout the year.
- Forest School practitioners have been trained in Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage
- The Sports Coach is a practitioner in order to ensure that the values of Forest School can be embedded into those of the PE curriculum.
- The head teacher and senior leader management team have designed the curriculum, the time table and Teaching Assistant support in the classrooms to ensure that Forest School and PE complement each other and have that they too have dedicated time and resources to ensure that this initiative is sustainable and can be built upon.

Apart from the initial training costs and a start-up budget, the school has funded the salary of the lead Forest School Practitioner, those of the other practitioners and provided money for further resources from the school budget.

