



Brompton-Westbrook Primary School

The Westbrook Trust

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@BWPrimary

Forest School: Evidence of Rights Respecting Teaching and Learning

Article 3

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

- 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. Leaders planning a Forest School Programme for individuals think carefully about how to meet the needs of the children, taking into account the physical and mental health, safety and welfare of children on sessions. Qualified leaders make decisions about learning opportunities based on consideration of short-term and long-term effects.

Article 7

You have the right to a name, and the government should officially recognize this. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country)

Article 30

You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

- During sessions, individuals can learn from each other and celebrate participant's various languages, cultures and religions. Through discussions, play and storytelling we give children opportunities to teach each other about their cultures and traditions and to reflect on what it means to them to belong to a particular group.

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Article 12

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

- At Forest School children are viewed as equal, unique and valuable. They are entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development. They have many opportunities to voice their ideas and opinions, and adults listen and respond accordingly. Small groups and a relaxed atmosphere creates space and time to develop listening skills and respect.

Article 14

You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

- Forest School promotes the understanding and cherishing of values and ethics such as honesty, integrity and fair play, and the consequences they bring, leading to developments of responsibility and empathy. Spiritual development is encouraged through the wonder of nature and allows children to identify their true authentic self, which can then flourish and realise its connection to all that is around it.

Article 15

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

- During sessions, children can play freely with whom they choose, or work by themselves if they prefer. They have the opportunity and time to develop lasting friendships. They can use play to establish and evolve friendships, with conflict resolution arising naturally and helping to cement relations.

Article 16

You have the right to privacy.

- At times during a session, children have the freedom to find themselves a private spot in the woodland and be by themselves. Adults will always enquire after their wellbeing, but if the child is choosing to be alone they are left. Children also know that they have trusted adults to talk to at Forest School about their private

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lives knowing that information will not be shared without reason (e.g. safeguarding).

Article 17

You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need

- At Forest School, there are always opportunities to talk. Adults can help learners to understand, process and reflect on information that they have obtained. In addition to discussion, play is another way in which children are observed processing emotions relating to information. Powerful feelings can often be unleashed in this way and leaders recognise that this often has valuable cathartic or therapeutic effects (but can also be disturbing) – children are entitled to expect that adults will understand and be responsive to cues that they may be in need of comfort or reassurance because of their play.

Article 19

You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

Article 39

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated

- Through Forest School, children learn about their responsibilities not to hurt or mistreat each other. Kindness is a key value that underpins every session: kindness to each other, kindness to self, kindness to nature. A high adult: child ratio enables leaders to spend quality time with each individual. Through increased interactions with adults, children feel valued, appreciated, listened to and cared for within the Forest School setting. They feel able to ask for help when they need it and may disclose information about mistreatment. Whole group social activities such as sharing food and drinks, storytelling and den building further instill a sense of belonging within the child and they feel comfortable to talk to the group about difficult emotions relating to being hurt, neglected or badly treated. Resilience is another key aspect of Forest School learning. Through appropriate challenge and risk-taking, participants are able to

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build their emotional resilience and at the same time develop their confidence to speak out when their rights are compromised.

Article 13

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Article 23

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life

- Forest School provides a high quality education experience. Leaders are qualified and have a deep knowledge of the National Curriculum as well as providing opportunities for learning in other areas. No one style of learning or aspect of development is favoured over another and the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner are all valued equally. This enables children and adults of all abilities, learning preferences and dispositions to learn, achieve and develop holistically. Leaders ensure that the experience complements their needs and allows them to connect with nature in a personal, rewarding way. Motivation at Forest School is intrinsic and participants are encouraged to develop a life-long love of learning. Children are encouraged to talk, draw or write about what they have learnt whenever appropriate.
- No children are denied a forest school experience due to a disability. Sessions are tailored to each individual learner, so care is taken to make sure any child with a disability has their needs met and can develop physically, spiritually, intellectually, socially and emotionally. Those with conditions such as ASD and ADHD often thrive in the setting, as they are not expected to fit into a particular mould and 'be normal'.

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Article 24

You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

Article 27

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

- Fresh water and nutritious food is provided on sessions and children have access to soap and water for washing. Spare clothing is provided to keep children warm if necessary and adverse weather conditions are considered and planned for. Through nature, they learn about microbes, bacteria, and other potentially harmful species. Children learn to appreciate, assess and take calculated risks, for example – identifying toxic species of plants or deciding if a tree is safe to climb.

Article 29

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

- By fostering a child centered and child-led learning environment, Forest School enables children to develop their talents and abilities. Opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests. They are free to engage in activities which interest and excite them, challenge them, or which they can 'lose themselves' in and achieve flow. They are able to follow their instincts and naturally play, collaborate and cooperate with their peers in a huge variety of ways. It is not necessarily the end result of the activity but more importantly the process.
- Forest School, by definition, is about environment. Learners are given the opportunity to connect with nature – developing a continuous relationship with the natural world and all its ecological systems. This deepens their

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understanding of how they are part and parcel of it all. They begin to see how they are fed physically as well as emotionally by the natural world. With this deep appreciation, they can then truly realise that they must not take the relationship for granted, and see the sacrifices they need to make in order to protect the environment. Long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community are developed through Forest School.

Article 31

You have the right to play and rest.

- Many pressures increasingly dominate the lives of children and their freedoms are being restricted like never before. The curriculum-centred approach in school places increasing demands on children's time and energies in pursuit of educational attainment, and constraints their free time. Forest School allows children to slow down, to be present and to rest. The rich, stimulating environment of the woodland provides space and endless opportunities for learning and relaxing through play. Children are encouraged to explore both themselves and the world them, through their freely chosen play. Forest School leaders understand that the child's control of their own play is a crucial factor in enriching their experience and enhancing their learning and development: they recognise that play is something that children do very well on their own.

Article 37

No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way

- All pupils receive fair and honest treatment at Forest School – staff are committed to enable children to have the right to be heard, to be safe and to learn. If negative behaviours are displayed by individuals which remove these rights from others, leaders focus on 'the problem not the person' to manage difficult behaviours in the short term. Rather than punishment, challenging behavior is tackled in the long-term through reflection, modelling and mentoring, and with activities designed to foster self-esteem and empathy.

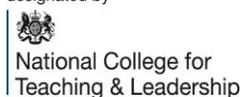
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Article 42

You have the right to know your rights!

Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

- The entire Forest School ethos is centred around the rights of the child. Leaders are passionate about using a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

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