

The AIMS of Forest School Worcestershire

The following AIMS have been determined to show practitioners the elements that produce the unique alchemy of the Forest School experience. While each aim has elements found in other styles of education, it is the blend that makes Forest School so special.

1. WORK WITH THE HOLISTIC CHILD

- a) **Build upon self-confidence and self-esteem.**
- b) **Always use positive language and genuine praise,**
- c) **Promote a feeling of well-being.**
- d) **Encourage autonomy**
- e) **Support any processes the children use to explore the activity, even if the outcome is not what you originally envisaged.**
- f) **The whole experience should enable a positive disposition for learning**

2. PROMOTE EDUCATION AND EMPATHY FOR THE NATURAL WORLD

a) **Ownership of the forest school site,**

Children need to feel that the site is theirs. Including children in; planning and constructing, health and safety, devising games and activities, respecting their privacy and special places, valuing and honouring their contributions to the development and maintenance of the site can confer ownership.

b) **Respect for the natural world,**

The leaders need to model care and consideration for the animal, plant and bird life at the site, encourage the children to see each living thing in its context and as part of a habitat.

c) **Education for Sustainability,**

Where possible and relevant apply a) and b) to the children's world outside the Forest School site eg composting organic waste at the setting and at home, walking for exercise and fun instead of going by car, enjoying the

outdoors, using simpler, more natural things to play with, observing and respecting the natural world and caring for the environment.

3. MODEL GOOD LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

- a) **Step back and observe**, this is simple to say yet difficult to do! Learning how to shadow supportively is a delicate skill.
- b) **Allow time for child-led activities and discoveries**- be prepared as a leader to abandon plans for spontaneous happenings!
- c) **The emphasis is on a partnership in learning** - not teaching
- d) **The Health and Safety** of the children and adults is of paramount importance

4. STRUCTURE AND PLANNING

- a) **Forest School works as a continuum** - i.e. visits build over many weeks, all weathers, all seasons
- b) **Early sessions focus on the structure of the session**, ensuring a sound basis and understanding of the health and safety routines. Once these are established sessions become more flexible, leading to freedom within boundaries.
- c) **Simplicity**. Set small achievable tasks so that every child can succeed. Not overplanning (see 3 above)
- d) **Forest School sessions often include volunteers, parents helpers etc.** These people may be just as unsure of the woodland as the children, include them in routines, give them specific roles and clarify how you want them to support the children.
- e) **Observation and assessment**. These are just as important at Forest School as in the setting. Children are often seen in a different light at Forest School and preferred learning styles