



Ditchling St Margaret's Primary and Nursery School



Kindness



Respect



Perseverance

'Living life in all its fullness' John 10:10

Forest School Curriculum





'Living life in all its fullness' John 10:10

Forest School Curriculum

Intent

At Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary and Nursery School, our Forest School program aims to harness the rich outdoor learning spaces within the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to foster holistic development in our students. We are committed to providing all year groups, from Nursery to Year 6, with immersive, nature-based experiences that promote physical, emotional, and social growth. Our bespoke wellbeing curriculum for Key Stage 2 is designed to build resilience, confidence, and a deep connection to the natural world.

Implementation

Each term, every class spends a dedicated day engaged in Forest School activities, either within our own grounds or through excursions into the surrounding natural landscapes. These sessions are led by qualified teachers who integrate the Forest School principles with our curriculum objectives. For our youngest learners in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the focus is on sensory exploration and foundational skills, while students from Year 1 to Year 6 engage in progressively challenging tasks that develop teamwork, problem-solving, and environmental stewardship. Our Key Stage 2 wellbeing curriculum incorporates mindfulness practices and social-emotional learning, tailored to the unique needs of each cohort.

Impact

Through consistent participation in the Forest School program, our students demonstrate enhanced physical health, improved social interactions, and a greater sense of responsibility towards the environment. Teachers observe increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning, as well as notable growth in self-esteem and independence among pupils. The program also supports academic achievement by providing experiential learning opportunities that reinforce classroom instruction. By the end of Year 6, our students are well-equipped with the skills and attitudes necessary to navigate future challenges, embodying the values of respect, perseverance, and curiosity that are central to our school ethos.

Skills Coverage EYFS to Year 6

Using Tools Tools are a key part of the Forest School curriculum as they enable children to create small projects and develop fine and gross motor skills. Ability to use tools will develop at different stages. They will only use tools when they are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so.						
EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Be aware of tool rules; back in box after use, no running, small groups, etc. Use hands and fingers as tools when digging. Safely use trowels and forks for planting. Use scissors to cut string.	Be aware of and understand why tool rules exist. Use mallets / small hammers for bashing in craft (e.g. Hapezome).	Put tool rules into practice. Show good practice. Use peelers to whittle wood.	Put tool rules into practice. Show leaders good use of tool safety (e.g. returning tools back to box without being asked). Use palm drills for craft activities.	Actively initiate tool rules. Repeat tool rules back to leaders. Use loppers to cut. Use secateurs to cut. Select correct tool for the task (e.g. loppers or secateurs?).	Start to monitor tool rule compliance of other children. Recognise inappropriate behaviour with tools. Use bow saw to cut wood into discs.	Manage tool rules within the group. Identify inappropriate behaviour with tools. Use knives to whittle wood.

Fire						
Fire is used for a variety of purposes in the woods: for heat, for cooking, for community, to teach the fire triangle, to help children understand risk.						
EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
(In the Summer Term): Learn the basics of the fire triangle. Understanding of safe practice around fire circle: entrances, exits, distances, safe numbers, etc.	Awareness of the fire triangle. Understanding of safe practice around fire circle: entrances, exits, distances, safe numbers, etc. Contribute to fire lighting by gathering wood/fuel. Show 'respect' position around fire. Understand how to heat water over a fire to make a hot drink.	Understanding of the fire triangle. Demonstration of safe practice around the fire circle. Sort wood for fire - understand difference between green and seasoned wood, wet and dry. Show 'respect' position around fire. Learn how to make popcorn using fire.	Implementation of the fire triangle into fire lighting activities. Understand structure of a fire and help to build a fire. Use simple toasting techniques.	Implementation of the fire triangle into fire lighting activities. Help to keep the fire going through safe use of bellows. Use the fire to cook fruit in foil.	Implementation of the fire triangle into fire lighting activities. Assist in using flint and steel to light a fire. Use the fire to make damper bread.	Implementation of the fire triangle into fire lighting activities. Assist in using flint and steel to light a fire, help to keep it going and put it out safely. Use the fire to make campfire pizza.

Knots						
Children are given knot skills to increase dexterity, eye hand coordination and encourage critical thinking. Through the knot tasks they learn independence, whilst developing self-esteem and learning to assess risk.						
EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Learn how to do leaf threading to make eg a leaf necklace. Learn how to wrap string to make eg a natural paintbrush.	Learn a basic loose tie knot and weave ends to make a willow wreath.	Learn how to tie a figure of 8 knot to tie 2 or more sticks together.	Learn how to use a clove hitch to attach tripod sticks.	Learn how to use a timber hitch to attach a ridge line to a tree.	Learn how to use square lashing to make a picture frame.	Learn how to use square lashing for making a tipi shelter. Using knowledge of knots, select the correct knot for the job in independent activities.



Shelters / dens

Children will be encouraged to create dens and shelters using both natural materials and bought in materials. Shelter building develops forest school values and in particular helps children develop teamwork and problem solving skills.

EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Begin to learn how to safely move branches and logs. Build a mini, small world shelter from natural materials.	Build a mini den using a tripod shelter.	Create a lean to shelter.	Build a tarp shelter as part of a group. Assess shelter.	Design and build lean to shelters / tarp shelters / tipi shelters – compare and evaluate.	Create a shelter which is raised off the floor. Compare to other previous shelters in relation to sturdiness, durability, weather proofing, etc.	Erect a shelter of choice, considering which would be the best overall to make as quickly as possible and in sudden rain. Learn how to camouflage chosen shelter.

Geographical Skills and Navigation

Children foster teamwork, communication and problem solving. There is opportunity for thinking on a wider scale, regulating emotions through failure and finding solutions from past mistakes.

EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Follow rules and boundaries. Promote free exploration and investigation. Use positional language - next to, between, behind, under, in-front, over, high, on top, up, in on, first, second, third, fourth.	Use simple directional language (near and far, left and right). Describe the location of features and routes on a simple map.	Use simple compass directions (North, South, East and West). Use simple directional language (near and far, left and right). Recognise and navigate to landmarks and human and physical features.	Navigate around site to landmarks and human and physical features. Demonstrate understanding of the concept of a basic map.	Use the key on a basic map. Navigate way around a simple orienteering course using compass directions.	Navigate way around a simple orienteering course using the 8 compass directions. Measure the distance between key landmarks to create a scale.	Use grid references to plot geocache points across the site.

Science / Nature / Environment

Children will learn how to treat living things respectfully. They will develop curiosity for the natural environment and learn to feel comfortable in the natural world.

EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Show awareness of risk – brambles /nettles /water. Know that trees and plants are different. Know what plants and trees need to grow.	Discuss awareness of risk – brambles/nettles/water. Name the basic structure of flowers and trees. Discuss the seasons and changes. To observe the life cycle of the trees in our grounds and learn to identify deciduous and evergreen trees.	Discuss awareness of risk – brambles/nettles/water. Identify a variety of garden plants. Observe and describe seeds and how they are scattered. Recognise animal habitats. Use the senses to recognise sounds.	Demonstrate risk awareness. Discuss the function of the parts of trees and plants. Identify the parts of a plant which help a flower get pollinated. To know about life cycles of different species that live in our grounds. Name sounds that they hear.	Demonstrate risk awareness. Talk about how to encourage wildlife into the area. Discuss the benefits of biodiversity. Identify food chains on our site. Identify how different habitats become homes to different animals.	Demonstrate risk awareness. Identify and improve pollution indicators in different habitats. Classify animals and plants according to their characteristics. Share responsibility for maintaining the school's forest school area.	Demonstrate risk awareness. Investigate native and non-native flora and fauna on site. Carry out fieldwork – classifying and surveying/ photography to record. Support the development and sustainability of the forest school site.

Physical Development / Healthy Lifestyle, Exploration and Play

Children develop an understanding of safety and how to navigate risk in exploration and play. In turn this develops problem solving, resilience, teamwork and independence. They also learn about wellbeing, mindfulness and how strongly these are linked to nature.

EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Learn the rules and boundaries. Know how to travel around the forest school area safely. Promotion of free exploration. Promotion of independent learning opportunities /skills. Investigate the natural world.	Discuss rules and boundaries. Describe how to travel safely around the area and on different terrain. Know how to carry different sized sticks safely. Talk about how being outside makes them feel. Discover what is living in different areas of our school. Learn to dress independently for the weather in preparation for forest school. Take part in finding games such as hide and seek and 1,2,3 where are you.	Demonstrate an understanding of the rules and boundaries. Demonstrate how to move different sized sticks and logs around safely. Learn about the benefits to being outside. Learn to dress independently and appropriately for forest school according to the weather. Take part in simple team games in small groups.	Demonstrate an understanding of the rules and boundaries. Create obstacles and challenges using natural materials. Describe the benefits to being outside. Learn how to play team games in larger groups.	Demonstrate an understanding of the rules and boundaries. Explore sustainably, leaving no trace. Learn about the benefits of mindfulness in nature (e.g. sit spots). Describe their flexibility, strength, control and balance when participating in outdoor activities. Explore a range of team games and play types with peers.	Demonstrate an understanding of the rules and boundaries. Know and use a range of mindfulness tools. Learn about survival in the wild (e.g. what humans need to survive, identify and find safe wild food, understand the rules for safe foraging). Play a range of team games safely and fairly with adult support.	Demonstrate an understanding of the rules and boundaries. Call upon previous knowledge of mindfulness to apply to creating their own versions. Learn how to collect, store and purify water. Demonstrate knowledge of human survival (e.g. survival essentials kit). Independently organise and manage team games safely and fairly with adult supervision.



WELLBEING CHECK IN & CHECK OUT

This is a measurable outcome Claire uses within every wellbeing session. It helps us to meet the children where they are at and monitor the impact of the work we do to support their wellbeing.



**Coverage in each session**

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
3	Explore the plant: Orange Create a product: Cream Learn how to self-care	Explore the plant: Ginger Create a product: Cream Learn how to self-care	Explore the plant: Turmeric Create a product: Cream Learn how to self-care	Explore the plant: Frankincense Create a product: Cream Learn how to self-care
4	Explore the plant: Lemon Create a product: Household Cleaner Learn to reduce chemicals in the environment	Explore the plant: Grapefruit Create a product: Household Cleaner Learn to reduce chemicals in the environment	Explore the plant: Eucalyptus Create a product: Household Cleaner Learn to reduce chemicals in the environment	Explore the plant: Tea Tree Create a product: Household Cleaner Learn to reduce chemicals in the environment
5	Explore the plant: Mandarin Learn how to increase your capacity and energy	Explore the plant: Geranium Learn how to increase your capacity and energy	Explore the plant: Rose Learn how to increase your capacity and energy	Explore the plant: Jasmine Learn how to increase your capacity and energy
6	Learn how to create your self-care environment Create a product: Space Spray	Learn how to create your self-care environment Create a product: Space Spray	Learn how to create your self-care environment Create a product: Space Spray	Learn how to create your self-care environment Create a product: Space Spray

SELF-CARE WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

Using The Better Wellbeing Club principles we apply all curriculum subjects into a session;

Latin - the names of plants

English - journaling

Maths - measuring quantities

Chemistry - making products

Art - designing a product and label

Cooking - recipe design and healthy foods

P.E. - walking meditations, movement practice, and breath work

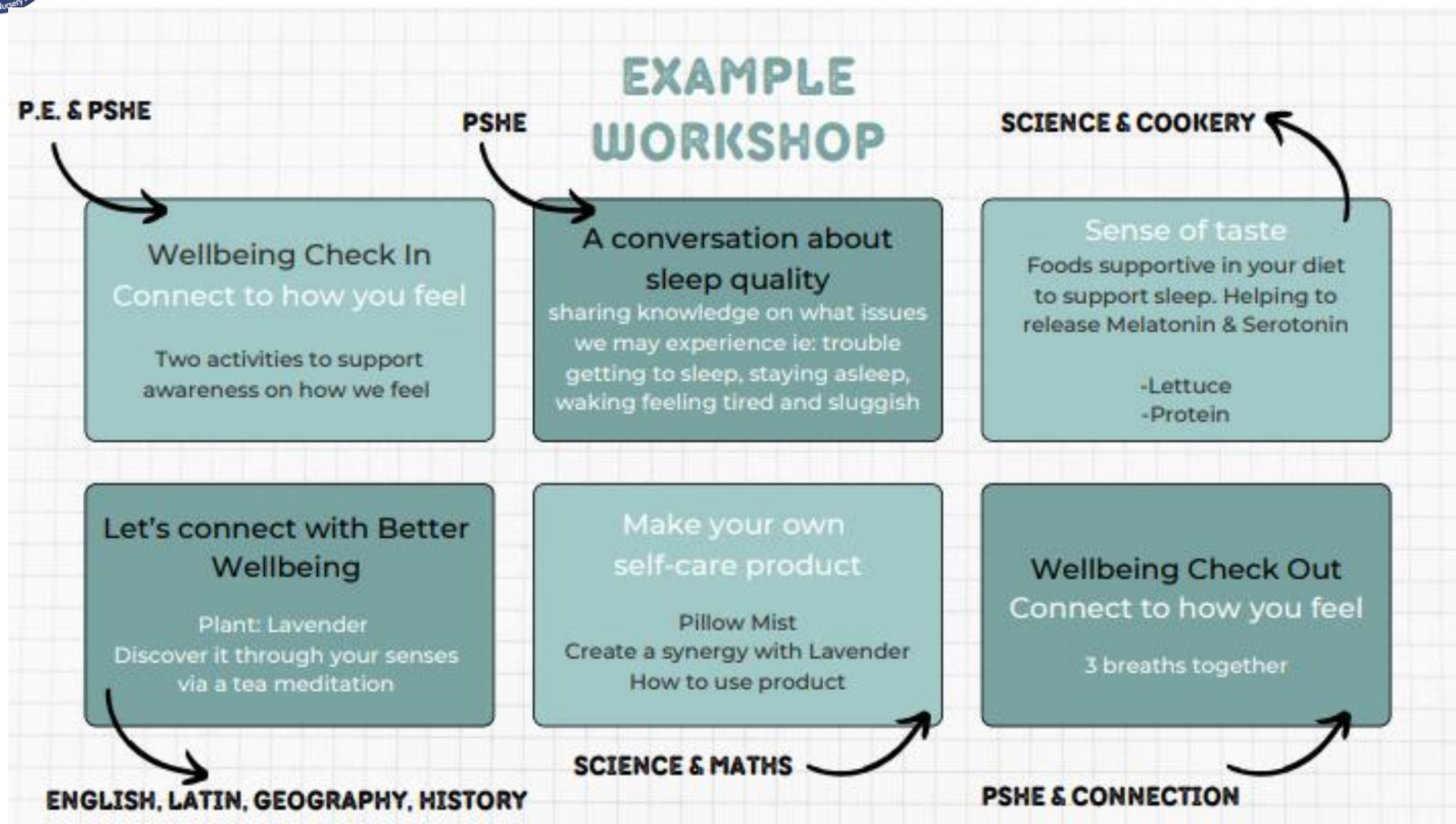
History - uses of self-care practices over the years

Geography - where and how a plant thrives

Music - drums, sound meditations, playlists while we create

PSHE - turn-taking, deep listening, socialising, and teamwork





WHEN A DITCHLING PUPIL LEAVES OUR SCHOOL THEY SHOULD KNOW;

that mental wellbeing is
a normal part of daily
life, in the same way as
physical health

that there is a normal range
of emotions and scale of
emotions that all humans
experience in relation to
different experiences and
situations

how to recognise and talk
about their emotions,
including having a varied
vocabulary of words to use
when talking about their
own and others' feelings

the benefits of physical
exercise, time outdoors,
community participation,
on mental wellbeing and
happiness

simple self-care techniques,
including the importance of
rest, time spent with friends
and family and the benefits
of hobbies and interests

it is common for people to
experience mental ill health.
For many people who do, the
problems can be resolved if
the right support is made
available, especially if accessed
early enough



IT TAKES A
COMMUNITY
TO BE WELL