

The key characteristics of play and its roles at forest school

“Play is an essential part of every child’s life and is vital for enjoyment of childhood”(Play England 2022) In forest school, play is fundamental to its principles and how leaders support learners with the development of their well being, love of nature and thirst for learning and the process of learning that they go through while connecting with the outdoors.

Forest school leaders extend children’s play and balance risk with developmental benefit. In forest school, leaders manage risks to help learners develop resilience and problem solving skills while connecting to nature.

Play is a biological necessity fundamental to wellbeing -In forest school, we provide opportunities for children to learn and explore in a natural environment through freely chosen play, supported play and balance of risk.

Play is a process which is freely chosen - In forest school, the learner is given the autonomy of which activities they want to engage in and how they want to engage in it.

The key focus is to support and facilitate the play process - In forest school, leaders recognize their impact on play and balance risk with developmental benefits. Leaders check learners have the resources they need to play.

The key characteristics/ principles of play at forest school

The role of the forest school leader is to support all children in the creation of a space to play - In forest school, the leader makes sure the play process is effective and successful for each participant.

The play process takes precedence and forest school leaders act as advocates for play - In forest school, learners are given freedom of choice and can engage in enriching play opportunities alone or with their peers in a space they feel safe in and leaders observe what their learners need to develop intellectually and emotionally.

Forest school leader recognises their own impact on the play space. In forest school, the leader knows when to role model play, when to step back and allow a learners creative thinking to flourish. Leaders are reflective on each session and adapt following observations.

The forest school leader has up to date knowledge of the play process and reflective practice - In forest school, the leader knows what influences the dynamics of play and check they are meeting the needs of all learners.