

Forest Schools Newsletter

Summer Term 2023

By Nicky 'Nightingale' Powell

What a spectacular summer term out at Forest Schools. The sun has shone for us and we have used the tree canopy to keep cool and shaded on the hotter days.

We have identified foxgloves growing on our site and have learnt that all parts of this plant are poisonous; the stem, leaves and flower. The children's knowledge is forever growing, gaining more awareness of the world around them. Our wildflower garden is in full bloom, providing a source of food and nectar for bumblebees, butterflies and other insects.



Foxgloves



Our Wildflower Garden – a mix of German Chamomile, Cyanus Segetum, Common Poppy, Corn Marigold, and Creeping Thistle

The children have shown such resilience when fire lighting, persevering and not giving up, and the pride they feel and the smiles on their faces when they accomplish it by themselves is such a privilege to watch.





Fires are always a firm favourite and the children are constantly building on their knowledge, talking about how to stay safe, what equipment is required and how to prepare, from splitting wood to starting their own mini fires and helping to build and start the main group fires. We have cooked many marshmallows, enjoyed tasty s'mores and the excitement around nettle crisps was fabulous! The children saw first hand how the heat of the butter in the pan and the fire reacted with the tiny hairs on the stinging nettle, crisping them and making them safe to eat – it was great that so many were keen to try them.



Our amazing gardening duo have been eager to clear areas of the forest on a weekly basis and welcomed peers into their team. We have spoken about the importance of leaving wild plants to grow, as protection for insects against predators but some areas need to be cleared to keep us safe while using the forest area. The children have used trellis to cordon off working zones and used loppers and secateurs, making it their mission to keep the log circle and paths clear and safe of stinging nettles and thorns.



For the first time this year we have been able to access the pond area, after it was cleared last term. The children have been so excited to see what they could catch – our finds have included smooth newts, freshwater shrimps and leeches.





The children have developed their gross motor skills, using various tools to dig and hammer, and climbing trees. They have spent many sessions digging and combining natural materials in the mud kitchen and used hammers to make leaf prints – we call this Hapa Zome.



Shelter building is always a popular activity and the children are developing their ideas and problem solving every time they build a new one. This term we have used tarpaulins to provide shade from the sun, as well as rain! There has been some fantastic teamwork, communication and creative designs – here are just a few...





We are always very keen to find out what insects are living under the logs and show such excitement when we find anything in other parts of the forest. We have identified lots of new and different insects this term, including ladybird larvae, a black and yellow long horn beetle and a stag beetle, to name a few!



I always love it when the children bring in things they have found and share their love of the outdoors with me and their peers during our sessions. We have had two old or abandoned bird's nests brought in this term and it has been amazing to see how intricate these are and how incredible birds are to build these. We went on to have a go at making our own nests and had some fantastic creations.



A **BIG** thank you to Mr Barford-Buzzard and John Jackdaw for their contributions to this year's sessions. We could not achieve so much in our sessions without you both and your help is very much appreciated.

I am already looking forward to September to see what next year at Forest School brings!

Wishing you all a wonderful summer holiday!

