

Forest Schools Spring Term 2023

Written by Nicky 'Nightingale' Powell, Forest Schools Leader

Since the term began in January, Explorers and Navigators have been participating in forest schools sessions. During this time, they have experienced a range of different weather types and seen lots of changes in the environment.



We have been visited by some friendly robins, who have kept a close eye on us at Forest Schools. We have offered them seed and mealworms to enjoy. Some children have observed the crows collecting sticks in their beaks for nest building. We have looked at nectar in flowers and talked about the importance of leaving wild flowers to grow so that bees and butterflies have lots of nectar available to them.



It has been lovely to see some children so keen to take ownership of the Wild Flower Garden, clearing weeds and revealing Spring shoots. We have self-set daffodils and have added more wild flower seeds to create our own meadow, which is a prime pollinator habitat to attract bees and butterflies. We have learnt about different flora (plants) which are growing on our site, including Snowdrops, Foxgloves, Daffodils and one poisonous species, Cuckoo Pint. In developing an awareness of the species growing on our own site, the children are able to take this knowledge into the wider world and be cautious of things growing in the wild.



The wet weather has lent itself to shelter building, encouraging teamwork and problem solving, as well as developing resilience to overcome challenges. The older children had the brilliant idea of building their own treehouse. They worked collaboratively to collect logs, position them securely and add rope for extra strength.



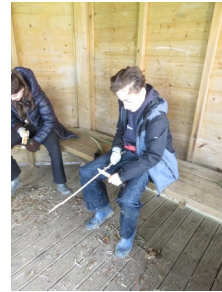
It really is lovely to see the children building on existing skills. They have been tying knots to create their own rope swings, whittling and setting themselves personal challenges such as climbing a little bit higher, in the trees.



The children have requested fire lighting as part of their sessions, using the flint and steel to create sparks and tools to split wood for kindling. They have made their own mini fires, experimenting with natural kindling and doing some cooking on the main fire. We have also enjoyed hot chocolate to warm up after colder sessions!



An extremely windy day kept Year 5 and 6 out of the woods so what better than a session spent in the Dragon's Cabin putting our skills to good use and creating crafts to take home. Following safety talks and recaps, children used tools including the bow saw, potato peelers and sheath knife, secateurs and hand drills to cut, whittle and make holes. Here are some photographs of them in action and their fantastic creations:



Since clearing the pond last term, we have been waiting patiently for the warmer weather to do some pond dipping. That time came for some children in the final weeks of term, when they had the opportunity to see what life was present. The children caught lots of shrimp and even two newts, which caused a lot of excitement!



Another brilliant term of forest schools and we look forward to more outdoor adventures, learning and fun in the Summer term.

