



Forest School – July 2022

What a fantastic summer term we have had here at St Mary's forest school! We have missed a few sessions due to the extreme hot weather, however there was plenty of time before the heat wave hit to enjoy the great outdoors and connect with



nature. The children have really impressed me with their creativity and use of the senses this term. I recently read something (www.standinbalance.com) which struck a cord with me: 'The key to creativity lies in our ability to gain from experience and build connections to generate new energy & ideas. If we are mindful of all of our five senses – sight, sound, touch, scent and taste – we can use them to our advantage to stimulate our minds and spark more creativity.' The children have certainly showed this in abundance and I have been really proud of all that they have achieved. Of course forest school is the perfect place to encourage creativity as the children can engage with all of their senses without any restrictions or pressures. It is a feast for the senses where you can smell the rosemary, hear the birds singing, feel the grass beneath your feet and see the trees dancing in the wind. In addition, it is not surprising that this ability to connect with nature using all of your senses is very therapeutic for children, helping them to feel grounded and happy.



Have a look at their work with the elder branches. We love elder at forest school – it grows abundantly, has a lovely smell in the summer with beautiful flowers and the branches have a thick, pithy centre which can be removed in order to make all sorts of things. We started with humble beads to make jewellery and the kids absolutely loved every step of the process from peeling the bark off the branches and cutting them up using secateurs, to threading them on the string with other colourful beads to make wonderful bracelets and necklaces.



The children have also enjoyed making dream catchers from flexible willow branches and having a go at the Japanese art form - Hapa Zome. This involves using mallets to beat leaves and flowers on to material, creating wonderful pictures using the natural dye from the plants. Our governors even had a go at this and were very impressed with the results they got!



We have set up many activities for the children focusing on the senses including a sensory ladder that we made using branches, stones, leaves, water, dry grasses, sand and sticks. It was fascinating to see how engaged the children were in this

activity as they removed their shoes and socks and spent ages enjoying the feeling of the different textures under their feet. It has prompted me to think about creating this as a more permanent fixture in forest school as the children enjoyed it so much.





We have also enjoyed playing Find My Tree where we had blindfolds on, were led to a tree by a partner and then had to use our sense of touch to help us identify that tree when we were back at the starting point. We used our sense of hearing to help us with the game Mr Teddy Bear's honey and that has definitely become a favourite across the year groups now – easy to play inside or outside!



There are so many things to see and appreciate at forest school. Other highlights this term include observing, drawing and measuring worms, finding the elusive Angle Shade moth and experimenting with the shadows on the tarpaulins to create wonderful shows as well as super dens.



Thank you children for making forest school so rewarding and fun - I look forward to seeing you back in September, ready for some more adventures. In the meantime, make sure you get out and about as a family and tell me all about what you got up to. Here are some websites with ideas for you over the summer.

<https://www.dayoutwiththekids.co.uk/things-to-do/east/essex/outdoor>

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/woodland-walks>

<https://www.discoverbushcraft.co.uk/bushcraft-for-families/>

Mrs McInnes

