



Forest School – April 2022

Welcome back! I hope that you all had a restful and enjoyable Easter. For your Spring Forest School update, I thought that I would share some more work from my Forest school portfolio which focuses

on how I try to develop self-confidence through risk taking and problem solving during forest school sessions. Personally, I feel that self-confidence is a crucial life skill and I feel proud of the fact that my children become more self-confident as a result of our sessions. For more information please refer to the following websites which I used for this unit: www.mind.org.uk and www.caba.org.uk .



Self-confidence embodies a point of view of oneself, how we feel about ourselves, our ideas and our abilities to do something. Our level of self-confidence is determined by how we take on challenges, how we overcome problems and obstacles and how successful we are in doing that. If we are successful in overcoming obstacles or improving a skill by working hard at it then this builds our self-confidence and better prepares us for the next challenge that we will inevitably face. We have to try new things and take risks in order to develop self-confidence. A crucial part of taking risks is to face possible failure and learning how to deal with that when you don't succeed. People with lots of self-confidence treat this failure as a learning experience and an opportunity to learn more skills, thereby boosting their confidence more. If you define yourself by your failures then you will become down about it and have very low self-confidence.

I have promoted self-confidence at forest school in many ways; here are a few examples:

Lighting fires with a fire striker – this is a particularly difficult skill for the children and teaches them to persevere, be resilient and boost their self-confidence. We have practised lighting fires a few times now and we are taking it one step at a time, celebrating those steps along the way. For example, many of them have created sparks but not yet managed to light the cotton pad but that in itself is a big achievement. I have remarked on how well they are holding the fire striker or the pressure they are putting on the striker. I have also remarked on how well they have fluffed up the cotton pad in order to get more air in there. What has impressed me more than anything is their ability to keep going, even though they have not yet lit the fire. Some children who have managed to light fires have then helped their peers which has made them feel really great about themselves. I have shared those achievements as a group and we have posted photos of their activity in regular half-termly newsletters so that they can talk about it with friends and family and get an extra boost. The children are well aware that they are taking a risk by trying to light the fire and this is an important part of boosting their self-confidence and taking them outside of their comfort zone. Many of them said at the beginning "I'm scared." but have then carried on to feel really comfortable trying to light the fire, excited even! This is because we have talked through the situation, the nature of fire and the safety procedures, giving them ownership of their own little striker and area to light their fire and reassuring them that they are safe as I am with them.



Drilling holes using a hand drill – this term we were using the hand drill to make holes in wooden discs that we had decorated with woodland creatures and living things. This would then become our forest school pendant that the children could wear whenever they want. The hand drill is cumbersome and requires effort, good hand coordination, strength and concentration. I also got the children to help set up the clamp that held the pieces of wood in place and made sure they were aware of how we protected the table that we were using, how to stand and how the tool works. Once I had set them up, they were on their own with me supervising and the children loved it. They were aware that they had complete ownership of this task and they simply had to keep going. They knew they were doing it right when they saw the little bits of wood coming out of the hole and when they felt more resistance, they knew they had got all the way through. They loved blowing the sawdust out of the hole at the end and really felt a sense of accomplishment as they had done it themselves, using a proper tool and everything! We then showed them how to tie a knot for their pendant, which they had a go at doing - they were so happy wearing it for the rest of the session, proudly showing their friends. We also have a palm drill available in forest school which we occasionally use as and when we need it. For example when we were making our instrument from forest school materials, we used a palm drill to make a hole in the tin cans and the bits of bamboo so that we could thread them on to the branch. The children enjoyed practising this drilling skill again and the fact that it doesn't have to be a planned activity – we can do it whenever they like. This takes the pressure off and makes the challenge more normal and therefore achievable for the children.



Sawing pieces of wood using a pruning saw – I was given a pruning saw at Christmas and I couldn't wait to have the opportunity to share it with the children at forest school. It was the first time that they had used such a big saw (previously we have used much smaller saws for smaller pieces of wood) and I was impressed with their enthusiasm to use it, concentration whilst using the tool as well as their calm, confident attitude. We talked through all of the safety aspects such as using a cutting glove to protect their non-working hand, the importance of having a bare hand to hold the saw for better grip, the parts of the saw including the handle and the sharp teeth and of course the position that we sit in with the knee nearest the saw bent and well out of the way of the blade, leaving space around us to ensure that others are safe (blood bubble). We found that the fire circle provided the perfect table for this activity. The storm had sadly blown down a tree but we made the most of the opportunity to cut up some branches to use as firewood later in the term. In this way, the children could see that this activity had a purpose in providing food for the fire and also lessened their sadness about the tree falling down in the first place. They absolutely loved it, particularly Isla from Year 2 who was feeling nervous as it was her first experience of forest school. She couldn't wait to come back the following week and wanted to get the pruning saw out again! Well done Isla.



It is a privilege to watch your children flourish in forest school and I look forward to another term of risk taking and challenges over the summer.

Mrs McInnes
Forest School Leader