

## Forest School – February 2022

The time has really flown by during this short half term and despite some quiet weeks of forest school due to children and staff off with covid, we have been as busy as ever! Recently the children have been really excited to see the first signs of spring with daffodil shoots coming out to say hello and the bulbs that we planted last term also growing. There has also been a big focus on experimenting with Loose Parts which is always a crucial part of my forest school sessions and the children absolutely love it. Miss Dye kindly donated some crates and kitchen items the other week which have gone down extremely well so I thought you might like to read more about it.



This is an extract from the work I submitted for my Forest School Leader Training that I completed in the summer. If you would like to read more about Loose Parts, then please refer to [creativestartlearning.co.uk](http://creativestartlearning.co.uk) where I collected information for this unit or click on the link below to read Simon Nicholson's journal.

In 1971, Simon Nicholson wrote an article in a Landscape Architecture journal called [How NOT to Cheat Children – The Theory of Loose Parts](#) which has since influenced many childcare professionals. Nicholson believed that everyone was able to create and invent and needed no formal materials to do so. Creating with Loose Parts encourages resourcefulness, problem solving and creativity. I have certainly enjoyed experimenting with Loose Parts in my forest school sessions, as have the children.

Nicholson believed that it is the loose parts in our environment that will inspire and strengthen our creativity. Loose parts are open ended materials that can be assembled, combined and manipulated in a variety of ways and have no predetermined play pattern. This allows for materials to be redesigned and repurposed as the individual sees fit. They may be used alone, or in addition to other materials. They can be synthetic or natural materials and many treasures can be recycled items. There is no set of specific directions for materials that are considered loose parts. The child is the direction.

Open ended materials, environments, and experiences encourage problem solving and are child centred. Children involve themselves in concrete experiences using loose parts, which lead to explorations that occur naturally and independently, as opposed to adult directed. However, adults do play important, intentional roles in preparing, guiding, and documenting open ended learning experiences.

Examples of loose parts that are available to your children at St Mary's forest school sessions include: stones, stumps, sand, gravel, fabric, twigs, hazel branches, pegs, wood, pallets, balls, buckets, baskets, old kitchen cooking trays, crates, boxes, logs, stones, flowers, rope, tyres, balls, shells and seed pods.

Here are just a few ways (the possibilities are endless!) that we integrate these loose parts into the sessions:

- large sticks, ropes, tarpaulin are popular loose parts that the children love to use to build dens.
- milk crates have been used to make a huge selection of things including: mini stages with drums on top, rocking chairs, animals with shells, tables in restaurants, knights with shields and rowing boats.
- collection of different shapes and sizes of wood for the children to build with (children in my sessions have built roads, cities, houses etc).
- wooden pallets have been used to create boats, cars, restaurants and with a little bit of help from Mr Tait we have also made our own herb garden using a pallet.
- large planks of wood - children carry them around, balance on them and put them on top of logs to create see saws and vehicles.
- buckets, ropes, pullies can be put together and used to transport various items.

Loose parts theory is about remembering that the best play comes from things that allow children to play in many different ways and on many different levels. Environments that include loose parts are infinitely more stimulating and engaging than static ones. The play environment needs to promote and support imaginative play through the provision of loose parts in a way that doesn't direct play and play opportunities, but allows children to develop their own ideas and explore their world.

Enjoy your half term holiday and maybe have a go at experimenting with some loose parts yourself – let your imagination run free!

*Mrs McInnes*

