



AMONG THE TREES NEWSLETTER



Rope

Rope is a very popular resource in Forest Club. Whether it's making knot puzzles in the trees, slithery rope snakes exploring the woods or horsing around, our learners always come up with creative ways to make use of rope.



Forest Club Sign

Earlier this term we made a Forest Club sign, using natural materials. We used wood, cardboard, glue and leaves. The children really engaged with this activity and had a wonderful time gluing and sticking. Mr Couper put a final waterproof coating on for outside use. Keep an eye out for it at one of our sessions.



Live Stream

In autumn, we see changes in the woodland. The leaves begin to fall from the trees, swept along by strong cold winds. Fungi pop up across the woodland floor, rain is more regular and increasingly horizontal, the days shorter and woodland animals prepare for winter.

One of our activities this term was to make streamers. We used sticks, red white and blue raffia and some electrical tape. Once completed, we came up into open space and waved our streamers around, making different shapes and patterns.

As it was a wet day, we also had to battle soggy raffia, but the children were resilient. It didn't hamper their efforts or enthusiasm for the activity.

We also had a learning opportunity with the long sticks while working at the Fire Circle. Working safely, we had the long end of the stick on the outside, while the working end of the stick was with us inside. This helped to avoid poking and hitting other learners while assembling our streamers.





Remembering

November is remembering month, with bonfire night and Remembrance Sunday key dates. We marked this by making Remembrance Stones at Forest Club.



Mandalas

I use mandalas in Forest School for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are easy to produce with only a few resources and can be made year round. Secondly, they are wellbeing friendly, asking the maker to focus, think and consider their creative work and be present in the moment. Thirdly, they are creatively repetitive. Fourthly, using natural materials connects the learner to their physical environment and requires physical effort to make. Finally, a mandala provides rich cross-curricular opportunities within the school environment. Learners are able to make mandalas independently or with others as a collaborative effort.

The Road To Greatness

Unsurprisingly, no one activity or service is a catch all. What might surprise you is that Forest School can offer learners a broad range of unique opportunities not available anywhere else. Almost straightaway, we can achieve 'good'. Becoming great - that takes time, struggle and effort. Forest School requires a good chunk of time, on a regular basis, over time, to pave the path to great.

We want our young people to always have fun, safe and exciting experiences in Forest School.

Learning to safely manage risk is one of the important keys to unlock the potential of the Forest School experience. Mortlock's Zones of Risk provide a helpful overview of comfort, play, learning and danger. The primary relevance for Forest School with Mortlock's learning theory has to do with where we want to position our learners so that they are in a place to acquire and apply knowledge in a supported way.

Learning To Manage Risk

Failure to be exposed to risk and learning how to manage it safely leads people to what Mortlock calls the 'Misadventure Zone'. This zone is where serious incidents and injuries happen. We, however, envisage learners who are able to manage risk in a supported environment. The skills they learn can be developed in the safe zones of comfort and play, which sets them up for future expansion of risk management.

Risk Benefit

In assessing where and how we do Forest School, Risk Assessment plays an important role...up to a point. Risk Assessment usually looks at an activity and tends to find reasons not to do it. On the other hand, we have Risk Benefit Analysis. Risk Benefit looks at the risk and the reward gained from taking part. If the benefit gained from participating in an activity outweighs the negatives of it, then we tend to deliver it in such a way as to minimise the danger and maximise the benefit.

