

Forest School Case Study

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Specialising in Forest School Practice

What is Forest School?



An inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment (FEI, 2005)

Forest School

Forest School offers a unique opportunity for children to experience the outdoors in a way that facilitates their holistic development and fosters their growth as confident and competent learners. (Knight, 2013)



Spending time in nature is part of a 'balanced diet' of childhood experiences that helps to promote children's healthy development, well-being and positive environmental attitudes and values (Gill, 2011)

Impact on Physical Activity

Research suggests regular Forest School experiences in a woodland or wild space impacts positively on children's physical stamina and co-ordination skills (O'Brien and Murray, 2007)

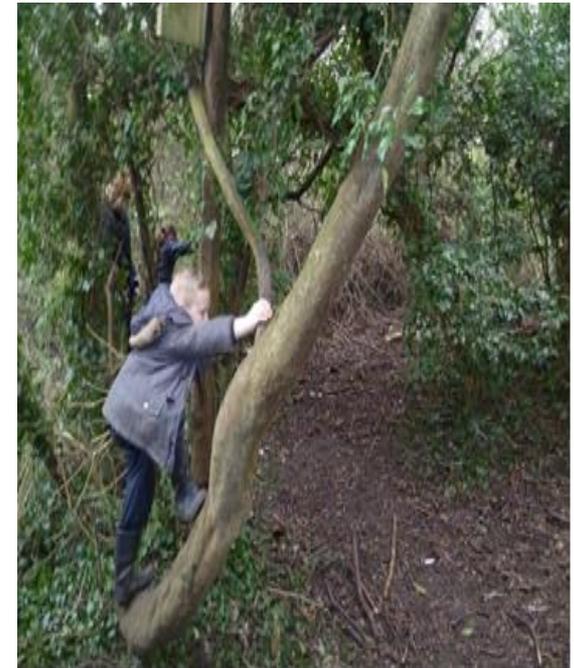


Physical activity levels in mothers and their young children are directly associated

(Hesketh et al,2014)

Ripple effects have also been observed at home...families are engaging more with the outdoor environment

(O'Brien and Murray, 2007)



Impact on Mental Health



Forest School enhances well-being through:

- Regular contact with the natural environment
- Offering freedom, time and space to learn and achieve through participant-led learning
- Fostering independence and resilience
- Encouraging children to effectively manage risk

Cambridgeshire Case Study

Mental Health Impact

- South Cambridgeshire Primary School used Pupil Premium Funding (PPF) to fund project with the aim of increasing children's self-esteem
- 15 PPF children participated aged 7-9 years old throughout spring 2015 term
- Participating children had varied backgrounds (Social care intervention, behaviour concerns) most were identified as displaying limited levels of self-confidence and self-esteem in the classroom.



Impact Measurement Tools

- 2 different self-esteem measures were merged into one questionnaire
- These were administered to the children prior to the first session; before the final session; 7/8 weeks after final session.
- Interviews with teachers: to measure impact observed back in the classroom.
- Parents were emailed after each session with feedback and photos...home engagement was encouraged



Mental Health Outcomes

- Average self-esteem of cohort increased.
- 86% of children demonstrated an increase in self-esteem in at least one of the measures.
- Clear impact observed back in classroom with confidence, happiness, children 'coming out of themselves', self esteem noted. Some increase in academic achievement.
- Positive links made between observations during sessions (increased self-confidence) and those children demonstrating most impact in the classroom.



The child's voice

- Children talked about changes to their feelings - from feeling worried or scared at the beginning to feeling happy with their achievements and proud of themselves.
- This was the first time they had participated in an experience like it, it was risky/dangerous and they were able and allowed to take part!



Looking Forward

- Continuing work with south Cambridgeshire primary school during Autumn 2015.
- Working with Ashbeach Primary School (Ramsey St Mary's) with the same focus.
- Working/worked with over 30 Primary schools or early years providers to develop Forest School practice across the county
- In excess of 120 primary schools/300 early years settings/childminder/out of school clubs on mailing list



What do Cambridgeshire schools say?

- ◆ **Holywell C of E Primary School, Needingworth, St Ives** – Forest School sessions support children to become confident, brave, resourceful, independent and considerate young people. Children rapidly develop genuine independence, take risks and make decisions. (Mrs Julie Branch, Headteacher)
- ◆ **Ashbeach Primary, Ramsey St Mary** - Our Forest School sessions are well under way. I can see lots of Personal, Social and Emotional and Physical development progress already. (Charlotte Routley, Foundation Stage Teacher)



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- ◆ Hesketh, et al. (2014) *Activity Levels in Mothers and Their Pre-School Children* [on-line] <http://www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/publications/publication/activity-levels-in-mothers-and-their-preschool-children>
- ◆ Knight, S. (2013) *Forest School and Outdoor Learning in the Early Years 2nd ed.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd
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