

## **Outdoor Learning – Forest Schools**

At Davyhulme Primary School, we offer our children the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways. We are strongly committed to using the outdoors as a place of learning, discovery and adventure through our Forest School approach. We know that inside the four walls of a school classroom, children can gain knowledge and skills, but they can be sedentary and shut off from the natural world outside. We strongly believe that being outdoors has huge benefits for children, both physically and mentally, and it is our intent that all of our pupils will benefit from learning outdoors as part of our curriculum. We are fortunate to work with excellent practitioners from 'Nature's Den' (a local Forest School Centre) who work alongside our teaching staff and pupils to engage, inspire and nurture. Our pupils have the opportunity to enjoy adventures such as making and using tools, digging in the mud, baking bread, making bird feeders and singing around a fire. It is our belief that such activities provide many benefits for our pupils such as:

- **Building confidence and independence**

Building dens, navigating with a compass and using a knife in woodwork are just some of the activities that instil children with confidence and a sense of independence.

- **Feeling empathy for others and nature**

Working as a team in a natural setting bonds children as a group. It also makes them aware of the need to care for each other and for the environment.

- **Physical fitness**

Running around and climbing trees develops muscle strength, aerobic fitness, and coordination.

- **Health benefits**

Studies have highlighted a multitude of health benefits to being outside - sunlight and soil micro-organisms boost the body's levels of serotonin, the chemical linked to feelings of wellbeing, while vitamin D, which is essential for bone and muscle health, is also provided by the sun's rays.

- **Improved mental health**

Today's children are experiencing increased stress caused by a range of pressures, from school exams to social media. Mental-health professionals

acknowledge that maintaining a relationship with nature can be very helpful in supporting children's emotional and mental wellbeing.

- **Learning by experience**

Research suggests young children learn best from experience, by using their senses actively rather than passively, and it is via these experiences that learning remains with us into adulthood.

- **Exposure to manageable risk**

At Forest School, children can run and make a noise, get their hands dirty and experience manageable risk, which is essential for healthy child development, through activities such as supervised fire building and cooking.

- **Better sleep and mood**

Children – and adults – sleep more deeply after either playing outside or going for a long walk, and mood lifts just from breathing in a few lungfuls of fresh air.

- **Learning about spiritual meaning**

Outside the confines of four walls, without the distractions of electronic devices and excessive supervision, children can move, explore and discover at their own pace, connecting to the natural world. This underpins our ethos of allowing children time to stand and stare and enjoy the beauty of the simple things in life.

Our commitment to learning outdoors is also shown by our '10 Things to do by the Time You Leave Year 6' pledge which encourages our pupils to get outdoors and embrace the joy in the simpler things in life by taking the time to 'stop and stare.' This commitment runs through our entire school as pupils are encouraged to complete a passport of activities, both at home and at school, and these are celebrated within our school community.

## **10 Things to do Before You Leave Year 6**

Finding Joy in the Simple Things in Life Pledge... These are the top ten experiences that we would like every child in our school to experience by the end of Year 6. These are experiences which lie at the heart of our curriculum and are things that really matter to us at Davyhulme Primary School.

1. Climb a tree.
2. Build a den.
3. Roll down a big hill.
4. Have a sing-song around a campfire.
5. Dance in the rain.
6. Fly a kite.
7. Create some wild art.
8. Skim a stone.
9. Make a grass trumpet.
10. Grow, harvest and cook something to eat.