



six sessions
Delivered by
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**FOREST SCHOOL
LESSON PLANS AND EVALUATION
FOR AMARLLIS NURSERY SESSIONS**

June/July 2024



Assessment Task Numbers:
9b 10 9d 9e

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ABOUT AMARYLLIS NURSERY



Limelight Stories

Simone Stephenson & Adi Shabini - Amaryllis Day Nursery at Limelight

Pictured: Nursery Manager Simone (l) and member of staff (r)

The community nursery is located in Old Trafford, situated within the newly constructed Limelight development. Catering to children aged between three months and five years, the nursery benefits from access to the facilities at Limelight, and Trafford Library, such as library resources, interactive rhyme time events, intergenerational activities, and the 4D immersive space. This inclusive environment is designed to nurture children's diverse learning and development needs. There will be a group of six children attending forest school but I have been warned that numbers may vary due to attendance.

OLD TRAFFORD

Old Trafford is located in the northern part of Trafford borough, which consists of 21 wards. These wards are assessed on the IMD 2019 scale, where 1 represents the most deprived and 21 the least deprived. Old Trafford is placed at number 2 on this ranking. Relative deprivation is determined by evaluating 39 indicators categorised into seven domains:

- Income
- Employment
- Education, Skills, and Training
- Health and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment

OBJECTIVES

Amaryllis Nursery has limited outdoor space, with a small enclosed area at the front. To allow children outdoor play during rainy weather, a shelter was recently set up. Trips to the park, which is a ten-minute walk for three-year-olds, are challenging to organise due to staffing constraints. Moreover, the absence of public toilets at the park limits their time there. Recognising that children from low-income families may have less exposure to outdoor settings, I focused on providing a wide range of experiences to help them learn about their local natural environment.

Forest School Lesson Plan 1

5. Game

Two children are mice, the rest are squirrels. The mice have to stop the squirrels storing up the nuts (beanbags) for winter.

4. Build a Den

Share the information cards about forest animals and their habitats. One soft animal per pair. Find items to build a habitat.

6. Reflect

Children draw faces on log slices using sharpie pens.

1. Introductions

Introduce Bella the Rabbit. Bella has a message to welcome the group. Read this and ask the children to tell Bella their name and say what their favourite outdoor activity is.

2. Forest Rules

Lay out the log slices with symbols on them. Ask children what the rule about each symbol could be. Discuss.

3. Snack & Story

Set up circle area and mats. Children have snacks and listen to story - 'The Very Big Den'.

EVALUATION

I was pleasantly surprised at how excited the five children were about coming to forest school. They all knew my name and two of the children: - Ivy and Nye were very vocal from the start. They insisted on calling me Abigail and not Abby as they felt a sense of accomplishment, I think, at being able to pronounce it . Although, Ivy frequently called me alligator when she forgot, which everyone found quite funny. I was a little nervous about how the children would respond to a different person in authority and whether there would be any issues walking to the park and having to pull the cart along with equipment at the same time. However, I was accompanied by two members of staff from the nursery and the children responded extremely well to my instructions about safety on the road and pavements. They were all very trusting and accepting from the start.

The conversation to the park was lively and the children were keen to tell me about their gardens and the colours of the flowers we saw. During the walk Ivy, Nye and Reuben were the most talkative. Daphne was a little upset because she didn't get to hold my hand along with Ivy but shortly afterwards she did join the conversation.

The letter that I read from Bella was a good introduction and they responded eagerly to Bella's words of welcome. Nye began by telling me that his favourite thing to do outdoors was roll down hills. All the children then told me that their favourite thing to do outside was roll down hills. Children do like to copy each other but I wondered whether this lack of imagination was due to the fact that the others hadn't really spent much leisure time in the natural environment.

I was not at all certain whether three and four year olds would find thinking of rules an easy or difficult task but they all grasped the concept very quickly and wanted to have long discussions about the rules and what we should or shouldn't be doing. It would be quite difficult to provide them with a list of written rules so I thought instantly recognisable symbols worked extremely well. Ultimately, they understood why the rule was in place and actively put it into practice as when collecting sticks for their habitats, both Daphne and Reuben stated 'it can't be longer than my arm. Nye was collecting huge sticks but when reminded he would put them down straight away because he remembered the 'rule.'

They are obviously used to story time. I displayed the book as I read. Reuben felt comfortable enough to come and sit by me and lean on me as I read whilst the others were in the circle. There was lots of positive engagement and questioning and they were all keen to answer questions and even keener to make dens of their own.



EVALUATION

It was heartening to watch their enthusiasm for collecting natural materials for their nest. They took it very seriously with no one wanting me to help collect things for them. They insisted on doing it themselves, aside from Henry who has the support of Luisha (a member of nursery staff). At the end of the activity, they displayed their habitats proudly for me to photograph.

It was obvious that these children need freedom to play. They embraced the game wholeheartedly at the end. They didn't always follow the rules of the game but we all had lots of fun. They just wanted to run. At the end of the session we drew on log slices and all had smiley faces. I was asked a few times if I was coming again.



DAPHNE

Daphne is very keen to be involved in every activity. She is not always first to come forth with answers or suggestions but she does make an effort when she can. She made lots of observations as we were reading the story and was extremely keen to explore independently when we were looking for materials to make a nest. At times Daphne does not respond to authority but this is because Daphne has something else that she wants to do i.e en route to location Daphne wanted to hold my hand along with Ivy rather than walk with another member of staff so she stood and refused to do anything instead of what she was instructed to do. Once I explained that I had to pull the cart she did as asked. Daphne wanted to explore further away when we went hunting for materials. I allowed her to walk a little distance from the group but not too far however, she did carry on walking and had to be asked to return several times. As we walked to another spot through the meadows, Daphne attempted to go off in another direction several times. She disrupted all of the nests (including her own). So that the other children did not get upset (we were about to move on and end with a game) I told them that Storm Daphne had come along. Daphne was very pleased by this.

NYE

Nye was quieter at the start when I met the group but he talked a great deal more en route to the park. He was walking behind me with Lourdes (nursery staff) but wanted to tell me all about the flowers that he had in his garden as he overheard the conversation that I was having with Ivy. Nye is a very confident boy. He needs to be constantly stimulated and always has something to contribute about any given topic. He was always the first to suggest what the rule might be when I displayed each wood slice and was correct every time. He also wanted to tell me about all of the animals that we read about in the story. Nye wants to complete every task quickly and move on and the challenge will be to enable him to slow down and be mindful in nature and to properly appreciate the environment that he is in. It is clear that Nye is familiar in these surroundings and spends time in nature with his family. His focus at the moment is intellectual and my aim is to encourage Nye to and move around more. At the end of the session, Nye said that he hadn't been feeling well today. He looked a little tired and this may well be the explanation for lack of movement in comparison to the others - he was simply tired and a little unwell perhaps.



HENRY

Henry was very reserved and quiet at the start of the session. He did not engage with me or any of the other children initially but clung to the member of staff from the nursery. When the other children were choosing the rules out of the bag with log slices, Henry refused to and shook his head. Henry has a cleft lip and Lourdes informed me that he took a long time to begin speaking to new people. However, I noticed that he looked keenly and he still wanted to see all of the pictures in the storybook whilst listening intently. Henry came to life when we went on our search for materials to make habitats. He remained with the member of staff but filled his bags with twigs and leaves. He was very hands on at building a drey for a hedgehog and when I told him that his work was amazing, he brimmed with pride, Henry took an active part in the game and moved much more quickly than the others to gather the nuts (bean bags) and throw them into the squirrel's nest (buckets). He was clearly very engaged in the game and was laughing and smiling as he ran around. Visibly, he was a great deal more relaxed and carefree than he was at the start of the session. He drew a happy face on his log slice to indicate that he had a good time today.

IVY

Ivy was keen from the offset. She is very talkative and naturally inquisitive. En route to the park, Ivy was keen to point out and describe things such as the plants and flowers, comparing them to plants and flowers in her own garden or her nan's. She spends a great deal of time observing what others are doing and making sure that they are alright as well as trying to do what she thinks may be expected of her. When we were doing the first activity with the symbols and rules Ivy took it upon herself (after everyone else had chosen one) to choose from the bag and show them round to everyone. Although she didn't manage to determine what most of the symbols meant she actively took part in a wider discussion about them. Ivy was very keen to find materials for her habitat. She was originally given the hedgehog but frowned. I was told that her favourite was the owl and she smiled happily when I allowed her to have this instead. When we came across some moss, which we had previously discussed as being a soft bedding for a nest she was keen to touch it and described it as soft and spongy. Ivy was very proud of her habitat and wanted me to feel how soft it was. I told her it felt like a comfortable cushion to sit on. She was very happy and continued to add to it. Although I had also collected some leaves, which I presented to Ivy, she wanted to use only the ones she and Daphne had collected. Ivy was upset when Daphne swept away the nest at the end of the activity. I told her that Storm Daphne had come along. I asked her 'what would the animals in the forest do after a storm had destroyed their habitat?' and she replied 'build it again' and proceeded to do just that - clearly very pleased that she had the opportunity. Ivy is always keen to point out things such as shape and colour and how it compares to what she has or has seen before. While she may not have all of the correct answers due to lack of exposure, Ivy is very keen to learn about a subject and explore it. She drew a happy face on her log slice for evaluation and said she enjoyed making her nest the most.



REUBEN

en route to the park Reuben talked a lot to Nye and Lourdes. At the park Reuben sometimes looked distracted as though he had difficulty focusing for any period of time. However, he opted to come and sit next to me when I read the story and was very comfortable leaning on me. Reuben appears a little overshadowed by Ivy and Nye and will often sit back whilst they answer questions but he is still talkative at times and made lots of observations during storytelling. Reuben likes to elaborate when he is telling you something so I would often stop the story whilst he told me his tale but the others all listened and responded to him too. Reuben likes to be tactile, so he enjoyed rooting on the forest floor for objects to line his nest with. When Reuben decides that he has completed something he is resolute. His habitat was not as full as the others but he was happy with it and ready to move on. When we played the game Reuben was ecstatic and wanted to run everywhere but not necessarily to the rules of the game. I could see that Reuben just wanted a sense of freedom and at this point we were on a big open field with no hiding spots and no nearby exits so I allowed him to run and that seemed to fulfil him. He was happy, smiling and laughing. Reuben drew a happy face on his log slice.



Forest School Lesson Plan 2

1. Introductions & Forest Rules

6. Game

Use skipping ropes to create circles. Each circle has a nature object. On instruction children have to race to object called out.

6. Reflect

Ask each child what they have enjoyed and what they haven't. Take note!

Display all the wood slices with symbols for rules. Check if they remember them and invite children to tell you more about each rule. Read another letter from Bella - explain we are learning about things that grow in nature.

2. Snack & Story

Read *Nature Trail* by Benjamin Zephaniah during snack time.

4. Knots

Learn to tie a simple knot using a skipping rope

5. Nature Art

Make a nature bouquet for Father's/Carer for Father's Day.

3. Nature Walk

Walk through Nature Garden, encouraging children to describe what they can see, smell and hear.

EVALUATION

Whilst waiting in the reception area of the nursery for the children I overheard the manager, Simone' asking the children if they were excited about 'going to forest school with Abby?' To which Daphne replied: 'Her name is Abigail.' All of the children greeting me happily and were keen to go. Henry was absent but there were two more children - Maya and Sam. Both looked very apprehensive. Ivy said 'we are going to make b...' she tried to say the word bouquet but couldn't and the said 'we are making flowers.' She was excited at the prospect of this. Whilst we exited the building, I asked the others what they wanted to do. 'Hunt dinosaurs!' replied Nye. Reuben and Sam then repeated this. 'Will we find dinosaurs at Hullard Park?' I asked. 'Yes' was the reply in unison. I told them that next week we would go hunting and then we could find out together.

Storytime was longer than anticipated but this was positive as all of the children wanted to tell me what could be found in gardens or what they had in their own gardens. They were pointing at the images and telling me what they were. They were all also very keen to count the minibeasts/flowers etc and they enjoyed doing this in unison, something they are probably accustomed to doing at the nursery setting.

Tying a simple knot is quite tricky and I wasn't sure whether they were ready for this. However, they were all so keen to do it, remaining focused and determined. It was a good exercise for Reuben and Nye especially as both were thoroughly engaged because of the complexity of the task. They were sat on the floor to do this activity with the rope underneath their legs as they tied a knot of top of their thighs. Each child displayed happiness at the sense of achievement of tying a knot.

In hindsight, I should not have selected two complex tasks in one session. The children enjoyed selecting from a display of materials for their nature bouquets - twigs, flowers, stem and pine - which were then wrapped in a pre-cut eco-friendly hessian, secured by the adults in jute twine or ribbon of their choice. Reuben found it difficult to sit and wait whilst others had their bouquets tied and the others joined him in wanting to run around before the activity was over. To combat this, I tidied up and the nursery staff conducted the game. However, the children had more fun simply chasing each other rather than running to the designated colour 'flower' in the rope circles. As this is what they wanted to do I let them play tig. They clearly needed to let off steam rather than another activity that was taxing on the brain. Plus, they were having so much fun.



EVALUATION

As we closed the session, Daphne noticed the portable toilet and wanted to have a wee. Ivy then asked for a poo. I set up the toilet relatively quickly and we used tarpaulin for privacy with the privet at the back because it was getting close to tea time and we had already run over by five minutes. Daphne could not relax enough to wee but took a long time trying. Nye was intent on peeping around the tarpaulin and Daphne wanted to play peek-a-boo whilst sat on the loo, with no regard whatsoever for her own privacy. Despite the shenanigans, toileting at the park with a portable loo was relatively easy to conduct.

I asked the children what they liked most about the session and they mostly said the game, Maya said she liked 'making flowers.' Each of them told me who they were going to present their flowers to. It was intended to be a Father's Day gift but I am aware that they do not all live in two-parent households so, in order to be sensitive to this I said the flowers were a gift to whoever they wanted it to be for.



DAPHNE

Daphne got to hold my hand en route to the park and was very chatty. She was very keen to find out exactly what we planned to do. Daphne actually mastered a simple knot by herself but then accidentally pulled it out and I helped her to do it again. She works very calmly and methodically and waited patiently for me to get around to assisting her. Daphne pays a lot of attention when things are being explained, she just isn't as vocal as the others; doesn't feel the need to tell me that she knows numerous things and then simply gets on with the task. Daphne is the kind of child that can have fun all by herself, demonstrated in week 1 when she happily destructed all of the habitats after I had taken photographs of the finished articles. She has a giggle to herself and is quietly content.

NYE

Nye was well today and appeared visibly brighter and happier than the previous week. He selected quite a large bunch of materials for his bouquet then promptly ran around the circle and dropped them all out without noticing. We started again. He has a very good eye for selecting things that look aesthetically pleasing together. Once again, when Nye has completed something, which is usually sooner than the rest, he wants to move on. So, it was no surprise to find him running around. He didn't get upset when he lost his materials, he simply sat down and selected more. But this time, once completed, he didn't run around with the bouquet.



IVY

Ivy is very confident and despite a slight speech impediment, she is determined to be heard. She is very enigmatic and sociable. She likes to follow instructions and remember what she has been told. When walking to and from the park she shows a lot of concern for others - making sure that we are all together and walking at the same pace. Ivy was very selective in her choice of materials. As with last week, she does not want any help and rebuffed any suggestions that I gave her and she knew exactly what arrangement she wanted to make. Ivy gets along with everyone and as she develops I'd like to see more of this confident attitude and less anxiety about safety, whilst still adhering to safety rules..

REUBEN

Reuben also became engrossed in knot tying and was not therefore wandering away from the group in search of something else to keep him occupied or entertained. It was a great activity for enabling him to focus and sufficiently challenging that he did not abandon the task because it was too complicated. He completed the knot with help from Luisha (nursery staff). His bouquet was very minimal. He added a few flowers and said 'I've finished' but I encouraged him to add more materials and he was pleased at the end of the activity with what he'd made. Reuben did not want to follow any rules for games, I think he'd had an instruction overload at this point. The others played the game and Reuben ran around the field wildly. Again, I let him because he needed this.



CARL

Carl began the session by continually asking what we were going to do today. He didn't appear very confident, so he held onto my hand on the way to the park and we talked about the things that we do at forest school. Carl was thereafter very talkative and grew in confidence throughout the session. He wanted approval for his bouquet and once received he was very happy. Like all of the children, Carl is very tactile and not afraid to pick up and play around with different materials. Of the three boys he was most engrossed in making his nature bouquet aesthetically pleasing.

MAYA

Maya began the session very, very quiet and looked apprehensive. She is not as talkative or bold as Ivy and needed lots of prompting to answer questions or to see if she had made any observations. She gradually began to talk more and to talk to me. Maya paid a lot of attention to detail. She came and sat by me and watched with intent as I demonstrated how to tie a knot. She tried very hard to copy but needed a little help, as most of them did. Maya was extremely eager to begin her nature bouquet and was also particular about the colour of the ribbon that she secured it with. She also wanted to ensure that I didn't mix hers up with everyone else's when I arranged them to take photographs. Maya was much more interactive with the other children when they played the game and ran happily around the field.





FOREST SCHOOL LESSON PLAN

SESSION # 3

DATE: 17/06/2024

1

On the way to the site, recall last week's discussion with the children about the living things in nature. Arrange a seating circle at the site for snack time. Lay out the log slices with symbols and have the children share their understanding of the rules.

2

Remind the children that last week they said they wanted to hunt dinosaurs. Read 'Dino Friends'. Will we see dinosaurs here at the park? What will we see here? Read 'Buzzy Bee's 123' (chosen because they enjoyed counting last week). Discuss the insects in the book and if they've seen them, where they will see them, have they seen any today?

3

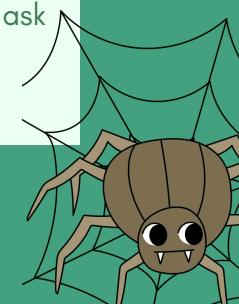
Before we begin, display the ladybird symbol from rules set. Remind the children that we have a duty to be kind to minibeasts. Do not pick them up, we look with our eyes and NEVER intentionally step/stomp on a bug. Each child to be given clipboard with laminated bug checklist and a magnifier (demonstrate how to use it). Teachers to hold pens. Bug hunt. Adults tick when children alert to finding bugs. Walk around the park to designated areas as a group.

4

Game: To enable the children to run freely and to listen to detail. Bug Hunt. The bean bags are beetles. Place them around the grass area. Instructions – collect a red beetle, blue beetle, green beetle etc. The race is on.

5

Children draw their favourite bug (they can use their checklist for inspiration) on a log slice. Tick on back if they had a good time today. Cross if not. Whilst they are drawing ask what they would like to more of next week.



EVALUATION

Carl and Maya were just as lively as the others at the nursery today. Maya was notably more chatty compared to the previous week. On our way to the park, Carl initiated a conversation about spotting various vehicles, their colours, and how they operated. We sighted cars, two bicycles, and a scooter. Upon reaching the park, Carl spotted an aeroplane high above, initially hard for the rest of us to see. This urban forest school setting led to different observations and discussions compared to a rural forest, yet their observations remained significant, providing them with opportunities to observe, reason, and converse. They were still outdoors, in their familiar environment, surrounded by things important to them.

Recalling their desire to hunt dinosaurs, I revisited the question posed last week, "Will we find dinosaurs in Hullard Park?" Initially a unanimous "yes," until Carl shared some facts, leading to a group decision to search for minibeasts or 'insects' as they referred to it, instead. Initially suggesting hunting for dogs, Ivy focused on a distant dog, while Maya proposed searching for "ladybirds" as a result of the insect story we had shared. The children enthusiastically suggested various other mini-beasts. Lourdes wanted to quieten them as they imitated animals. Despite being loud, I encouraged their animal noises as part of their learning and self-discovery, while requesting that Lourdes let them continue, as they were not causing any disturbance.

The children were highly engaged and eager to hunt for mini-beasts, feeling independent with their clipboards, striving to find and tick off everything on the chart. They led the way, choosing which areas to explore: the paths, nature garden, woodland, and wildflower garden.

To encourage movement and friendly competition, we played a game at the end, tiring them out, as they walked home slower than usual. They kept their nature charts as keepsakes.



CARL

Carl had grown in confidence and could easily rival Nye as the most talkative boy in the group. Carl was talking without being prompted and pointing things out throughout the lesson. When I asked if we would find dinosaurs at the park, Carl initially said yes and then said no 'because dinosaurs died hundreds and millions of years ago.' Carl was the catalyst for the group deciding to hunt for minibeasts (insects) instead. Carl dropped his magnifying glass below the raised deck in the nature garden. I climbed down to get it and Carl was very concerned - 'never, ever do that again,' he instructed. This revealed that Carl has empathy, can identify potentially dangerous situations and heeds warnings from adults about potential dangers.

MAYA

Whilst not loud or boisterous Maya was definitely more confident this week, sparking conversations and answering questions. She was very keen on the minibeast hunt - even peering into the cracks on the boardwalk to see if she could spot a spider. She also counted along enthusiastically during storytime with the others.



Nye was insistent that we hunt dinosaurs this week. He said we'd find them under a tree. But he later agreed with Carl that dinosaurs no longer lived on earth. Give him a task to do independently and Nye becomes engrossed and wholeheartedly engaged. Sometimes he attempts to explore further than the boundaries and has to be repeatedly called back. He did this today and his fingers were stung by nettles. After this he was a little subdued as the sting frightened him. Once I'd washed it off and wiped with a disinfectant he was fine but needed the reassurance of a plaster. He was very keen to head off into the woods after this incident and again had to be called back to the group several times. However, it was because he was so keen to tick off all the bugs on his list and not because his attention was wavering. I reminded Nye about the need for him to stay within our sight. Nye does respond well to being told, he just becomes over enthused at times.

IVY

Ivy wanted to lead the search! She spent the whole time telling us where we would find things and then asking 'well why isn't it there Abigail?' I told her that we just needed to look in different places and look a little closer...it was then that she spotted some ants and was very pleased with herself as that is what she had been searching for. Ivy was also searching for various other creatures that were not on the list. She was positively ambitious today!





SESSION # 4

FOREST SCHOOL LESSON PLAN

DATE: 01/07/2024

1

Start with the animal hide and seek game. Children choose the animal and the calling noise. Count to 10. Then count 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Untie the animal blindfold they make the animal noise and have a set number of seconds to tag the others. Any child tagged also becomes an animal and we start the process again until all children are tagged and back at base. Ask the children if they know a game they'd like to play.

2

Introduce Rita. (Whittled from Hazel). Rita is stuck. She needs to cross over a swamp so that can continue on her travels to Jamaica. Rita's friends are also stuck. Show them the magic leaf (made from Clay). Continue the story of how the magic leaf will transport Rita to safety.

3

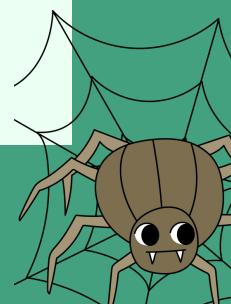
Split into working groups. Max two or three in my group to whittle and make their own characters (Rita's friends). Others make mud for swamp or mould their objects to rescue Rita with the quick drying Clay (show children my clay leaf).

4

When all the children have whittled and made a 'friend' and made a clay object/mud, allow those that want to to continue the story of where their character wanted to go and what object they made to make this happen. They can continue this next week if we do not have time to finish.

5

Make faces with the clay and mark happy or sad faces to indicate how they enjoyed the session.



EVALUATION

The weather wasn't ideal today but thankfully, the nursery manager agreed at the start of these sessions that we would not be deterred by a little light rain. The forecast said heavy rain would appear in the morning. It didn't. The heavy rain began just after we'd finished playing the game and were about to begin the crafts and skills.

What I learnt from this session is how adaptable the children are. We moved to a different area of the park where the trees formed a canopy overhead giving us a little shelter from the rain. However, the staff looked glum and had it been a nursery trip to the park I am pretty sure that they would have returned immediately. It lowered the mood as I didn't feel that I had the two members of staff on board.

What pleased me is that the childrens' enthusiasm did not wain. They still wanted to have a go at all of the tasks.

It would have been difficult to create the calm, engaging mood that I wanted to create for storytelling so I abandoned that activity - we will return to storytelling next week using their carvings.

The staff appeared deflated because of the weather so I packed up ten minutes early and we walked home.

However, this session felt like the closest I'd become in any session to deliver an authentic forest school experience. This is because the children made choices and discovered independently what they felt happy doing.

Furthermore, if I hadn't attended the second week of Forest School Leadership training after delivering my week 3 session, I may have considered whittling too high risk for three year olds. I purchased some quality peelers and the children wore safety gloves and although not every child excelled at it initially, all of them relished the opportunity to try this task independently after being given instruction.

Next week, we will do a game at the start again and another at the end of the session. The game was fun and I could see how relaxed they all were from the start.



EVALUATION

A reflection from my second week of training was that games played a big role at calming any anxieties I held about what was going to happen. I didn't enjoy every game that we played - in fact I disliked a couple - and that will most certainly be the case for the children so, allowing them to introduce games that they want to play each week would certainly be beneficial. They all told me that they enjoyed playing hide and seek and in fact, it was a game I played spontaneously with friends as a child at the same park. There is a sense of intrigue, mystery and fun about hide and seek and I need to find other games that the children find just as thrilling.



DAPHNE

Daphne was happy and excited today to be going to Forest School. I held her hand en route to the park and she wanted to jump along the way and pull me to walk faster despite the others walking slower. Daphne approaches everything with enthusiasm - snack time, games and activities. It's pleasing to see that she has become more relaxed and much more vocal than on our first visit. She really enjoyed the game of hide and seek and took hiding very seriously. She was more keen on hiding than she was chasing. Daphne was very good at whittling and practically managed the whole thing herself. In fact, she did not want my help because she said that she could. She still had plenty of energy on the walk home and was keen to have a turn at playing 'I spy.' Her contribution was: 'I spy with my little eye something beginning with m for mudbath.' She was very pleased with herself.

NYE

Nye immediately wanted to join in with the game. He did a very enthusiastic roar at the start when I asked for animal noises. He said that he was a tiger. The tiger then had to seek out all of the other children, who were hiding. Nye excelled at the game and wanted to be the tiger again. During the session he found it difficult to whittle and gave up very quickly, even when assisted and encouraged. Nye was happier playing with the mud. He still had the energy and enthusiasm to join in with the 'I spy' game on the way back to nursery. He was very tired.



IVY

Ivy is usually the most confident of the group but today there were a couple of areas where others excelled and she didn't and her immediate reaction was to give up. Firstly, she was keen to be the 'tiger' when playing hide and seek but found it far easier to hide than to seek and wanted to relinquish her role for one that she considered more fun. As it's about freedom of choice, I let her. At one point I had to clear away litter from the play area and Ivy was very concerned. She is very keen to know exactly what is going on in her environment but what I've noticed is that she is becoming less anxious about it. She asked the questions and then moved on, with no ongoing concern, Ivy was not very keen on whittling but she was very happy making mud and didn't want to stop or to have a go at making something with clay. She did have a little try but went straight back to mixing mud. She was constantly shouting across at me to look at what she was doing because she was so excited about it. On the way home, Ivy found it difficult to allow others to have a turn at playing 'I spy.' She eventually relented but each time she was due to take a turn Ivy could not think of a thing to say except 'A' which was for Abigail.

REUBEN

Reuben loved playing the game today because it was all about running and Reuben loves to run. In fact, he spent a lot of time running around and less time than he should trying to seek out the others. Even when Sam didn't really hide because he wanted to be found quickly and become the tiger, Reuben kept on running. Reuben didn't want to whittle as he preferred the clay and the feel of it in his palms as he kept moulding. He said that he was making a boat for the story. He also enjoyed making mud but at the end he wet back to the clay. At the end of the session Nye's pants became soiled by bird mess and he was very upset until we changed him into spare pants in the pop up tent.



CARL

Carl was enthusiastic about everything today. He was a real team player with the hide and seek game and because he is so fast, he found everyone very quickly. Carl embraced the trio of activities - he was good at whittling but what he loved doing was moulding the clay. He also made a boat but then became so carried away that he collected everyone else's clay and moulded it all together before trying to separate it all again. No one was upset with him for doing this because by then they were all engrossed in different activities. Carl was the only child that could play 'I spy' as it should be played but that did not detract from the fun that they all had.

MAYA

Maya has most definitely increased in confidence and she is quietly keen and positive about attending forest school and finds it easier to touch things. When Lourdes (nursery staff) made a remark about the rain, Maya replied: 'Well we can't change the weather.' She enjoyed the game but was not as quick as the others at finding a hiding place, sometimes standing right in the line of view until given assistance by Zainab (another member of staff.). She was a great whittler and wanted to come back and do more but it was by then time to pack up. Maya didn't have a suggestion for the 'I Spy' game on the way home but she loved guessing at what others said. Maya appeared to be a lot more light hearted and fulfilled.today.





SESSION # 5

FOREST SCHOOL LESSON PLAN

DATE: 08/07/2024

1

Start with the tree game. Ask children if they can think of variations of the game that they would like to play.

2

Tell the children that we are going to do some art with leaves and flowers. We will now be going on a forest hunt to find these items. Explain that the leaves have to be very green and not brown and curled up.

3

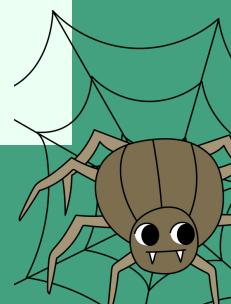
Use the long picnic table or sit in a ring on the main field. Space out! Explain the process and demonstrate. Children must be supervised by forest school leader. When complete, put the prints into their individual boxes.

4

Remind the children of Rita's story and her mission to get to Jamaica. They have to continue to make Rita's friends from the sticks that they whittled last week. Name their characters and each child to tell the group where their character wants to go and how they will get there.

5

Ask the children what they enjoyed the most today. Play another game if there is time. Allow the children to choose the game and/or follow their suggestions.



EVALUATION

It is evident from the comparative lack of detailed planning that I did for today's lesson that I endeavoured to make this session less teacher-led and give more choice to the children. With three and four year olds and a terrain that is not exactly a forest this is admittedly difficult to do but I think that I managed to some extent; at least to a greater extent than what I'd managed to achieve in week one. It was in fact more easily achieved through enabling them to select the games that they wanted to play over and above the activities. I have to plan for activities and bring all required materials with me in the cart so it doesn't allow for a great deal of choice.

Daphne was holding my hand on the way to the park, along with Sam. Ivy was absent today and Daphne was noticeably more confident and outspoken. She chose and led the song that we sang all the way to the park. She walked quickly and kept telling me to 'come on Abigail.'

The weather was much more pleasant this week as it was very sunny. Staff were happy and it altered the overall mood as it was less cumbersome and much more light hearted than the week before when the rain became heavier and heavier throughout the session. In future, when working in an area where there is permission to erect shelters I would choose to do so prior to the session. The weather is unpredictable and can change at a moment's notice. Participants may be able to endure the rain for short periods but relentless downpours are not fun for anyone. If the activities can be continued under a shelter then it makes good sense to ensure that we can do so if the weather changes.

We have had a break from our regular forest school session for a week because I was attending the second week of training. I planned for activities to begin with a game so that they could start with something fun that exercises their bodies and minds and helps to relax them (they were a little anxious and reserved in week one because they didn't know what was going to happen. That's something I can reflect on at this stage because I know them well now).



EVALUATION

Beginning with a game also meant that this could progress quickly to choices made by the children. Daphne chose the second game that we played and the children all played a role in telling me how to play it. It was a game that every child in the group enjoyed (Duck, Duck, Goose) and I think this was for the following reasons: - they each had a chance in the spotlight; the game was not regulated by an adult as they were able to choose who the goose would be and when they would decide upon this. They liked the autonomy. Most importantly, they had the opportunity to run, chase and be chased, which this group love. To play the game, we all sat in a circle. One person was 'it'. That person walks around the outer circle. As they walk around, they tap the player's heads and say whether they are a 'duck' or a 'goose'. Once someone is the 'goose' they get up and try to chase 'it' around the circle. The goal is for the 'goose' to catch 'it' before they are able sit/stand in the 'goose's' spot.

By now the children are experts at being hunters. I was impressed by how seriously they took the mission to find fresh, green leaves for leaf hammering. They were all keen to do the activity and their confidence has clearly rocketed as the most used expression that day was 'I can do it myself Abigail!'

I split the tasks into leaf hammering and decorating their characters that they had whittled last week from Hazel. When all was complete, each child told a micro story about their character and his/her intended destination.

I prepared a take home box each of the session's activities for each child. This enabled them to share the session's activities with parents/carers at home; thereby deepening their learning and understanding. It also gives them the opportunity to continue storytelling,, using the characters that they made.



DAPHNE

Daphne was a leader today. Exuberant, confident and competent at all of the tasks she approached. She thoroughly enjoyed playing duck, duck, goose and played with an air of mystery as she took her time to decide who would be the 'goose.' She was eager to try leaf hammering and could barely wait until it was her time to sit with me and a partner to use the hammer.

NYE

Nye loves playing games and took the tree game very seriously, although he was beaten by Maya he was a good sport. He could not contain his disappointment however at being chosen last to be the goose. Once he had a run around playing the game, Nye seemed to perk up significantly and this is definitely one of the obvious benefits of playing games first. At the beginning of these six sessions Nye had an obvious desire to be first and to show that he knows the most. He has become a lot more relaxed about this in subsequent sessions and focuses on forming connections with other children more than he did before. He played around and talked to Maya quite a lot in this session and that is something I hadn't seen before.



CARL

Carl embraces everything about forest school each week and he is a joy to have in the session. He contributes enthusiastically to all discussions and was very keen to tell us all about his character taking a trip to Spain.



MAYA

Maya is quietly confident. She doesn't feel the need to be a 'peacock' and show off her glory. She is simply content with her abilities, knowledge and capabilities. When playing the 'tree' game, Maya followed all instructions intently (as she always does) and with a very serious expression she posed as still as a cat in the gutter whilst forming a simply magnificent tree.



REUBEN

As always, Reuben ran! We played the tree game and rather than stand as still as a tree stump, Reuben just kept on running. He wasn't at all perturbed by the fact that he was always the first one 'out' as always Reuben found joy in simply running. He may be detached from the rules of the game but Reuben is not detached socially from the group. He runs around laughing with and in close proximity to the others, he just doesn't stop when they do. Reuben has a need to move around a lot and what I've observed is that if this need is fulfilled then he can focus on tasks that require him to be still and concentrate.



Reuben (on the right) finds it easier to focus on tasks after a quick run on the grass.





FOREST SCHOOL LESSON PLAN

SESSION # 6

DATE: 15/07/2024

1

Snack Time: Use the caterpillar tablecloth and cake to instigate discussion about the minibeasts in the woodlands. Let the children lead this week. Then talk about bigger creatures in the woodland, reminding them of the mouse that they saw last week.

2

Storytime: WOW said the owl. A reminder of the beautiful colours and sights of the woodland. Take out the woodland animals and allow the children to name and discuss them. Focus on the owl. Show them the owls on my bag and the artwork that I made from a river pebble and cardboard.

3

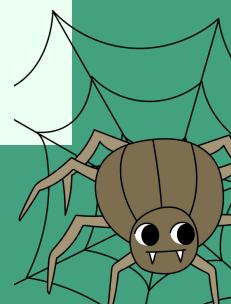
Children choose their colours and materials to make their owls and nest. First step is to paint the owl and allow it to dry.

4

Game: This week we will extend the tree game to include music. So, a little like musical statues but they will be musical trees. They freeze in a tree shape when the music stops. We will play games whilst waiting for the paint to dry. Allow the children to vary that game or choose others that they like.

5

When they've finished their artwork allow the children to talk about their creations and what their experiences have been like at forest school.



EVALUATION

I only just managed to pull on the tablecloth and bring out the cake before the children began the discussion on the caterpillar. What I hadn't considered when planning is how they would take leadership in this conversation. In week one they waited patiently for me to lead discussions. In week six they all began a lively discussion about caterpillars, butterflies, wolves and squirrels. I then showed them the owl on my bag and Ivy began to tell me how she had made a nest for an owl in week one. So, they were making connections in their learning and it was a joy to witness. There was lots of chatter throughout the story, which I encouraged. The narrator was making lots of observations about the colours of nature and they wanted to contribute with their own observations. What is interesting is that in week one it was Nye and Ivy that did much of the talking and this was in response to questions that I had asked. In week six, they all talked openly in conversations that they were leading.

This progress was also witnessed when we started the art activity. When I showed them the owl in a nest that I had made, each child immediately told me what colour they wanted to paint theirs. In between painting sides, we played lots of games. The first one was musical trees. I had the music player with me and this led to other game suggestions such as musical bumps. This week, Reuben did make attempts to freeze when required and it was Ivy who just found the joy in running and running.

The owl in the nest was a little tricky for them to make and because of time constraints we had to keep the activity flowing quickly but I was impressed by how well they adjusted to this and it is testament to their dedication and focus that they all completed it.



EVALUATION

At the end of the session, Lourdes informed the children that this was their last forest school session and they appeared to be genuinely sad. Sam asked me if it was because I was going away on holiday and Maya asked if I was going to come back. Lourdes asked them what they enjoyed the most about forest school, Sam replied 'everything' and the others echoed this. We realised that we weren't going to be able to pin them down to one aspect of forest school despite listing the activities. They seemed happy and content and overall I am pleased that they have all made such good connections with local nature and that they have learnt from their experience. I have also learnt from them. I've learnt that the simplest of things can provide entertainment and joy - the simple 'tree' game, where they ran around the field until I shouted 'tree' and they all had to pose very straight and still like a tree until I'd chosen the winner. I've learnt that seemingly difficult or tricky tasks can be adapted for tiny hands and minds and that all children can take joy from learning something challenging. It has given them increased confidence and by all accounts from the manager at the nursery a lot of discussion as they recount their experiences each week and hopefully share with the adults in their home. I hope it has given them all something beneficial and if I can speak on their behalf I would say that these sessions have also encouraged creativity and put their imaginations to use, they have learnt and practised responsibility, they have been more physically active and the ability to run freely and let off steam has enabled them to focus and thus improved behaviour.



CARL

Carl was very talkative in this session. He knew it was his last so I assume he wanted to give me all the bits of information that he needed to. He wanted to tell me all about his three holidays as he is visiting Spain, France and camping somewhere in the UK. He was excited about his camping trip and the activities he will be taking part in and hopefully his time at forest school will mean that he is enthused about spending more time outdoors.

MAYA

Maya takes great pride in whatever she does and she tries to do everything to the best of her abilities. She always pays close attention to whatever I am saying and then works hard to demonstrate her skills. She meticulously painted her rock and waited patiently for it to dry. Maya also wanted to take control of putting the glue on the eye to stick it to the rock, which was quite a tricky job. Maya began the sessions a little like a rabbit caught in the headlights. It's rewarding to see how much she has grown in confidence so that she is able to speak out freely and state boldly what her preferences are.



REUBEN

Reuben actually listened to the rules of the game today and made an attempt to freeze in the shape of a tree, albeit he was always a little late but it's some improvement to not listening at all and running off like a bolt of lightning. He has really embraced being out in the outdoors.

NYE

Nye wasn't as focused on painting as the others. Perhaps his creative skills in that area were not as tuned as the others but he was extremely keen to go off and play today. He could have matched Reuben today with his sprinting skills as it seemed the objective was to run as far as possible - so much so that he couldn't always hear when the music stopped and had to be reigned back in. He was clearly enjoying himself and it was good to see that his primary focus was not to be heard first, over and above the others. In this respect he has mellowed quite a lot over the weeks.



Ivy has thoroughly enjoyed her time at forest school. She is recognised as a natural leader and collaborates effectively with Daphne, who allows herself to be playfully directed. In Daphne's absence, Ivy remains a strong personality and enjoys engaging in discussions, often taking the lead in conversations. During games, she exhibits a free-spirited nature and may not always respond promptly, as she gets engrossed in the fun. While she likes completing tasks, her attention span can be limited; for instance, she showed a bit of impatience waiting for paint to dry on a rock. Nonetheless, with gentle reminders, she can learn to be more patient. Ivy has greatly benefited from activities that promote responsibility and enhance her listening skills for better results.



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