

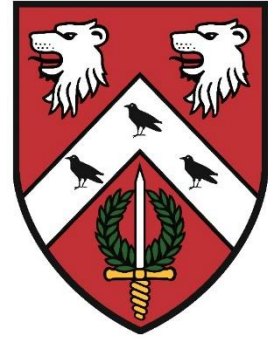


St-Anne's college nursery – Nature hand book 2022/23

St-Anne's college nursery wants to sing and shout about the Forest school association's nature premium campaign.

What is the Nature Premium?

The Nature Premium is a proposal to guarantee regular time in nature for all children and young people with additional funding and support to level up those with least access to nature.



The Nature Premium philosophy looks to:

- Improve children and young people's mental and physical wellbeing.
- Give children and young people agency to deal with the climate and biodiversity emergencies providing opportunities to address these in practical ways.
- Encourage healthier alternative habits to time spent on electronic devices.
- Develop skills in support of the green economy and a sustainable future.
- Help to achieve the objectives of the Government's Sustainability and Climate Change strategy.



Please visit naturepremium.org to:

- Help spread the word.
- Find out who are the campaign's key supporters.
- To help and to take action.
- To sign a petition.

St-Anne's college nursery has no direct link or affiliation with the FSA (Forest school association). But we believe strongly in their ethics and commitment to a greener future. St-Anne's college nursery are thrilled to try and do our bit to promote the important work and campaigns that they are involved in.

Forest school



We are a small urban setting, because of this our main challenge is to create a natural but still child friendly space. A place where children can feel safe and confident to learn at their own pace.

We are fortunate enough to have a well-established silver birch tree and a wild cherry tree that can be explored or used as part of a guided physical activity.

We also take pride in a beech hedge that splits our garden in two. We are developing this as a hedge for wildlife. Amongst the beech we have planted willow, dog wood and hazel along with a selection of grasses to make it as bio-diverse as possible. Of course, we let all parts of the hedge grow long and un-kempt so it's a fantastic playground not only for the children but the birds and creatures we hope to share the space with.



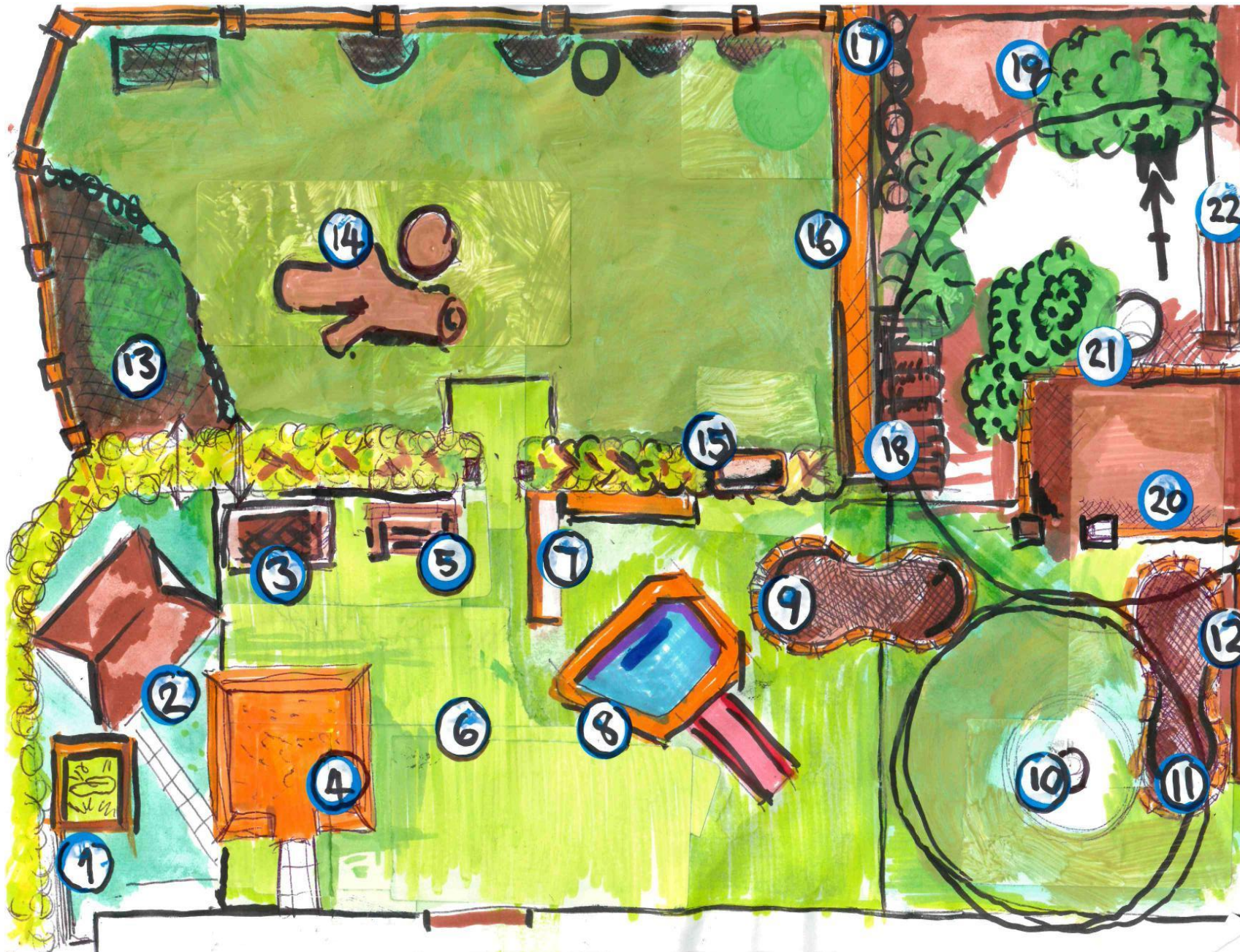
As mentioned the garden has two main areas, one of these is partly covered with Astro turf but the bulk of the outdoor space is natural, covered with either grass or mud/soil. Our continuous provision subtly changes all the time to suit children's interests and passions and there is a big focus on loose parts that the children can use to enrich their play.



Because we are such a small setting, registered for only 12 children, we are in a brilliant position where we can weave forest school into the curriculum. This means that we can approach nature-based activities daily, walking with children through all the risk-taking discovering, questioning and joy that a holistic nature-based way of learning can bring.

Our Garden!

Site Key:



1. Bug hotel and nature investigation area
2. Wendy/play house (with green roof)
3. Planting
4. Sandpit
5. Seating
6. Astro turfed area
7. Loose parts and free play
8. Climbing frame
9. Planting
10. Wild cherry tree
11. Planting
12. Seating
13. Planting
14. Fallen tree and stump for climbing
15. Bird feeding - (The bird feeding table has been built into the beech hedge that divides the garden)
16. Raised area
17. Woven fence to encourage wildlife(biodiversity)
18. Rotting, mixed log pile for wildlife and biodiversity
19. Woodland planting
20. Mud kitchen
21. Silver birch tree
22. Seating

The six principles of forest school as laid out by the forest school association are:

1. Forest school is a long term process with regular sessions rather than one off or infrequent visits. The cycle of planning, observation, adaption and review effects each session.
2. Forest school takes place in a forest or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest school aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved. Fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners
4. Forest school offers the learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
5. Forest school is run by qualified forest school practitioners who constantly maintain and develop professional practice
6. Forest school uses a range of learner centred processes to promote a community for development and learning



Why is Forest school so important to the nursery?

Kyle has been trained as the forest school leader (FSL) now for 5 years. During this time we have introduced a strong nature pedagogy to expose all children and adults to the benefits of the outdoors.

- Forest school is designed to help children to learn holistically. We want children to experience all areas of learning in a safe and supportive space where process, play and experimentation is celebrated rather than assessing and judging children on finished products produced from structured activities.
- Each child that attends the setting will experience their own forest school journey led by their own interests and passions. They will be supported and challenged by the nursery staff who will play alongside them. Staff will show and gift children with experiences that we hope will effect children in a deep and positive way
- Sticks, wood, trees, everything you look at in the outdoors is full of science, sensation and texture. Smells, sounds and sensations will come and find the children!
- Wood is a key tool in our daily learning and it is incredible!
 - o It burns, and when it does it changes colour. It floats, it snaps, some sticks are big, some are small, hard and soft.
- We use lots of tools to effect wood:
 - o Sand paper will change the texture
 - o Saws will cut through the wood
 - o A knife will shave off tiny pieces, we can shape the wood.
 - o Children will realise that with a pair of loppers they can cut sticks into tiny pieces. Sticks that have been cut to size can be used for a job/purpose. But often children just find a real joy in simply cutting, enjoying the responsibility of using real tools.
- We aim to give children the chance to grow and learn inside the strong and diverse bubble of a local community, supported by a circle of close friends that we invite to enrich the children's time at the nursery.
- The six forest school principals encourage staff to be always improving their practise and learning alongside the children.

Play

(See the nursery's play policies for further details in the handbook for parents)

Play is not trivial, play is highly serious and of deep significance – Froebel, 1862

(In Cohen and Garner, p.135)

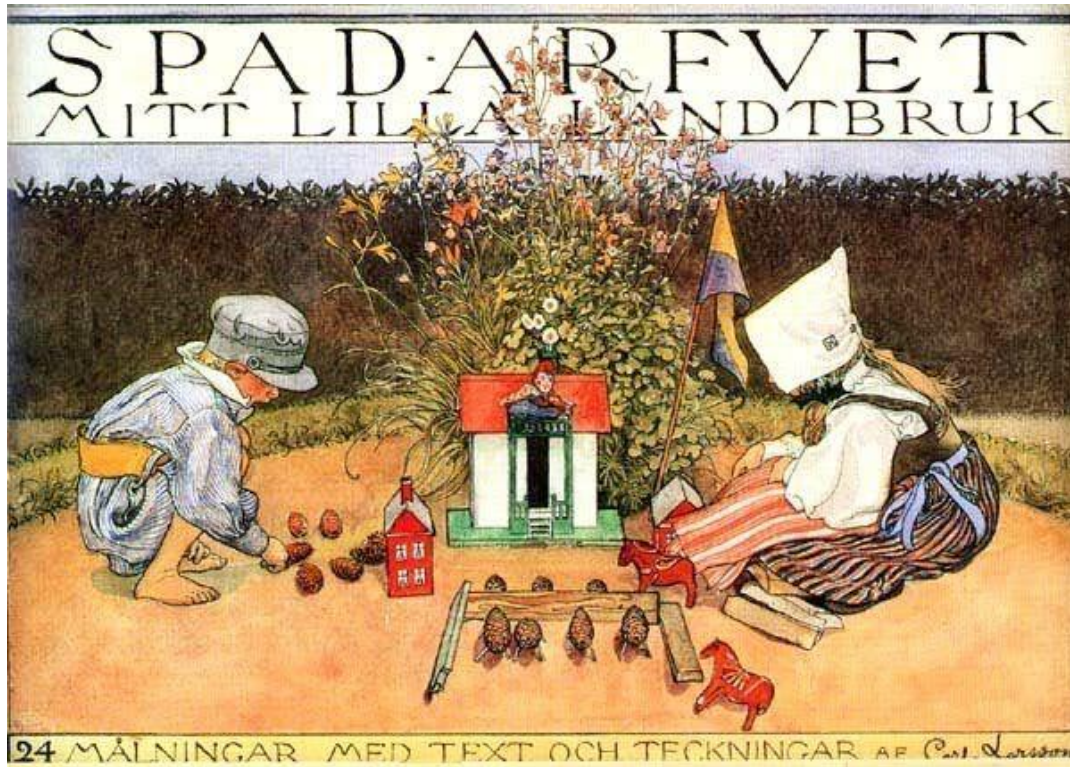


Image above is a painting by The Swedish artist Carl Larsson – It has been chosen to highlight the play policy. Not because the artist has any direct association with the college or the nursery.

We are not an outdoor nursery but do feel a commitment to the children in our care to make sure they can thrive in a positive, beautiful and challenging outdoor space.

Play is vital to a child's development and it is our job as practitioners to enable this. We build on what they scaffolding children's learning to inspire them onto the next stage, adventure or wonderful way of thinking.

All staff, parents, friends of St-Anne's college nursery are asked to...

WATCH-WAIT-AND THEN WONDER

Wonder what the child is doing, often when an adult intrudes on play without being invited incredible thinking can be disturbed. We aim to value a child who chooses to spend time alone deep inside their own creative thinking.

St-Anne's college nursery also agrees that play is the right of every child. We also believe strongly that every child has the right to access and end enjoy the outdoors as stated in the statutory guidance for the early year's foundation stage. The right for a child to play is also listed in article 31 of the UN convention which deals with the rights of the child (1991)

Children's play should always be intrinsically motivated. With this in mind we always give children the chance to free flow from the indoors to out. Children in our care always have a choice.

Babies

Babies learn best by doing. They are beautifully placed to explore the world from the ground up. We aim to show them nature by putting them in front of it, and making sure it is underneath them in a full on sensory experience. We want them to have sights sounds and textures that will draw them into a long lasting and loving relationship with the outdoors.

- Mud can be dry, wet, sticky, hard and soft.
- Worms are slippery, woodlice are a wiggly.
- The wind pushes on my skin.
- The sky can change-It can be blue black or sometimes grey.



Like the older members of the nursery group, Babies are invited outside at all times of the day to enjoy the garden in all weathers.

Crawling babies however will be closely monitored by staff when exploring the gardens in colder weather to make sure they are happy. The cool air and cold ground will mean they may get cold very quickly. This will lead to upset and a negative experience they will then link with the outdoors.

A forest school approach enables babies to develop very quickly physically, they are able to...

- Stretch the palm of their hand across the surface of a stone /pebble
- Pull up grass and carefully pick flowers
- Grip and swing sticks and bunches of flowers
- Pull themselves up onto logs and other natural resources

The babies in our care will begin to develop important physical skills that they can then start to train for more complex tasks later on in their development.



Communicating

Sometimes we talk too much when working with young children and important messages can be lost in our waffling. It is important to keep instructions short and to the point. Where it is appropriate to do so safety instructions can be issued as the activity goes along so they are clear and relevant to the job in hand.

All tools used during forest school sessions are used on a one to one basis, during this one to one time simple instructions can be briefly and relevant discussed with children.

"This saw has teeth, it might bite" or "we hide the teeth with the cover" maybe – "We only take out the teeth if we want to use them.

We believe in getting children to manage their own risk and think about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Members of staff are urged not to say no, instead children will be asked open ended questions like:

- "Do you think that's a good idea?"
- "Try doing it this way and you will be safe"

We are guiding children instead of telling them what to do, taking on the role of a mentor or facilitator rather than a teacher.

All safety procedures and roles are explained for visitors in this hand book and they are asked to sign the compliance sheet to show they agree with the policies within.

Staff in the setting all agree that children's play is important. Staff will observe with interest and let play develop. Only stepping in when it's necessary, appropriate or after they have been invited by a child.

Wait, watch and wonder.

Parents are asked to follow the all-weather policy .They should send their children to nursery each day in clothes that are fit for purpose allowing the children to function happily indoors or outdoors whatever the weather. Staff are also given adequate waterproof clothing to cope with all weathers.

All weather policy



We are a hands-on forest school/ setting. We are always ready for action.

Children of all ages are invited into all weathers to explore activities on their own terms.

We do our best to protect children's clothing and keep everyone warm and comfortable with a selection of waterproof and thermal clothing.

- Wellington boots
- Raincoats
- Waterproof trousers
- Umbrella



Because a lot of what we do is spontaneous, children's clothes might get wet or splattered with mud so we ask parents to bring in a supply of fresh clothes to make sure the children are comfortable.

During periods of colder weather we offer:

- Extra layers
- Jumpers/jackets
- Gloves
- Hats
- Scarves

In the summer months we ask parents to provide a sun cream that will be exclusively for their child's use. This sun cream will be applied before leaving the nursery site. Sun hats are also key in protecting the children from the sun.

Wellbeing and nature connection aim:

We aim to create a relaxed atmosphere where the nursery community can feel safe, comfortable and welcomed on a daily basis.



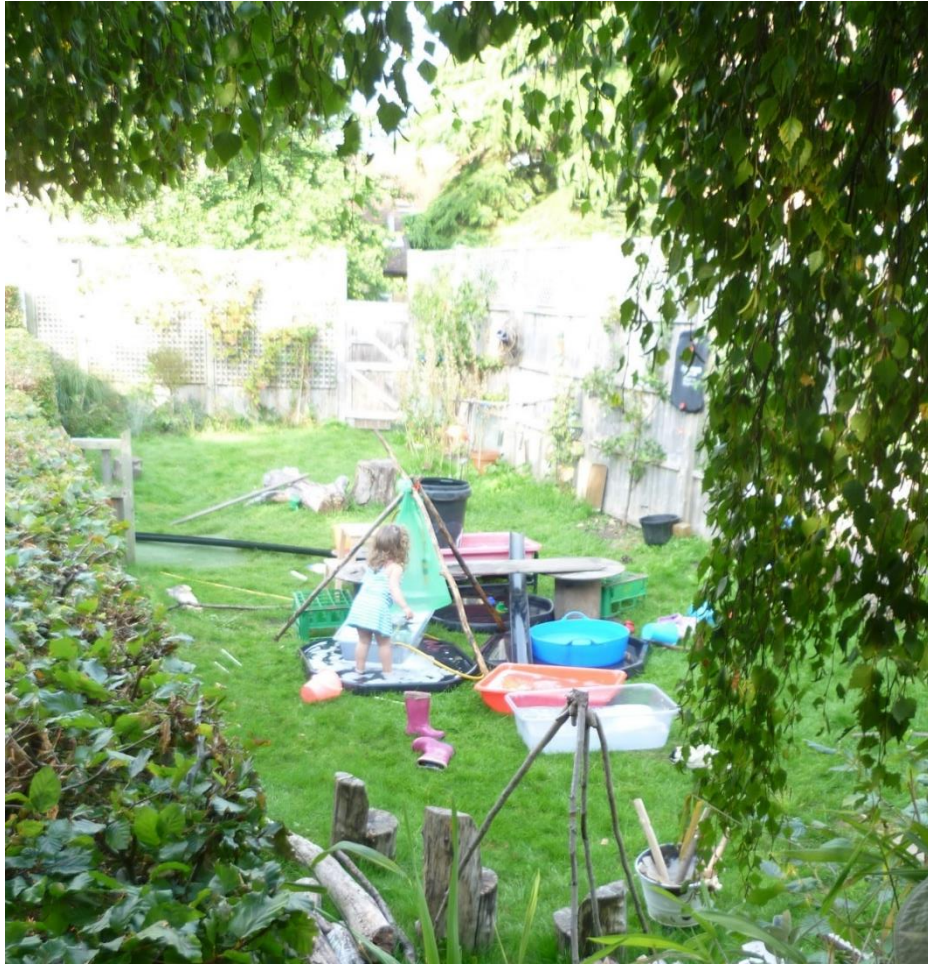
We would like to make a children's space with adults in it.

"As a mentor, teacher. Parent, counsellor or outdoor educator. Child passions will be your best friend and an easy way to begin the journey of knowing others. Why is it easy? Because you were once a child yourself. That child lives inside you waiting to storm out and play [...] shape shift yourself back into your childhood. Catch frogs, dive into muddy pounds' build forts and play pirates. Go on scavenger hunts and tracking adventures, act out characters, tell stories, sing songs out of key and laugh, laugh, laugh. If you want to help others come alive, stay alive and be connected to nature for the rest of their lives make sure to role model it yourself."

"Coyote's guide to connecting with nature", J. Young., E. Haas and E. McGown (2006)", 2nd Edition, OWLink media, September 2016: South Korea.

Adults in the setting are there to support, facilitate, guide and mentor children through the early stages of their lives. We all believe strongly that being in the outdoors effects physical and mental health in a positive way Science tells us that being outdoors helps to improve your mood, just looking at the colour green helps to reduce feelings of stress and anger.

Both big and small people are encouraged to take periods of down time during the day. This might be sitting on the edge of the sand pit to watch the world go by, or spending time away from the group to recharge with a cup of coffee.



Children might reflect on what they have been doing and rest without realising:

- Drifting off deeply into thoughts of their own as they enjoy the gentle movement of a rope swing.
- Taking the time to stand in water to think about what it feels like.
- There are benches, logs and seating areas throughout the garden that are not only quiet but interesting places to sit.





Risk

(See the nursery's Risk policies for further details in the handbook for parents)



The possibilities for child initiated outdoor learning are endless.

Risk is an enormous part of what we do and young children have a natural desire to experiment with risk, challenging themselves to find the edge of their capabilities. Achieving these risks independently or guided by an adult will boost self-confidence enormously. Of course, there is a chance that children will fail in a challenge they have set themselves. Our aim is to build resilient learners that can be supported as they pick themselves up ready to try again.





Building confidence and self esteem

During the day we give the children every opportunity to use tools.



These might be forest school themed tools designed for cutting green fresh wood. Or wood work tools designed for cutting seasoned or dried wood.

At an early age wood work is based around role play and imitating adults. But as the children move through the nursery woodwork becomes a new and powerful mean of expression. A new and interesting way to work creatively.

These activities are aimed at boosting the children's self-esteem and building confidence, along with the desire to be independent.

We have addressed all issues surrounding risky and sharp tools well in advance with detailed risk benefit assessment forms. Rebeka Power is the health and safety lead and will assess all risk assessment annually.

Kyle will continue to work on the Forest school risk assessments because he is trained as the forest school leader.

When using tools with the children we are very careful to source wood/ materials that are easy and satisfying to work with, the children should be able to cut and effect the material easily. Keeping the work interesting, exciting and above all successful. If we give children a length of hard wood that isn't easy to work with they will soon become deflated with the task.

We also maintain tools to the best of our ability, keeping knives sharp to make clean, safe cuts. If a saw blade becomes dull, it is changed before the children are allowed to use it again. A well-maintained tool will give the children good results that will boost their confidence and their self-esteem. They will be left looking forward with excitement for the next time they can have a go.

Climbing and letting the children move through physical challenges is a big part of what we do on a daily basis. This is often led and controlled by children themselves who are allowed and encouraged to take part in long periods of unrestricted play.

Again, a good risk assessment and risk benefit assessment give the children the opportunity to be bold with **their** activities.

Staff will endeavour not to say "no" to a child unless the situation is dangerous. Instead staff present the children with a series of open-ended questions:

"Is that a good idea?"

"Are you allowed to do that?"

"How high can you climb?"

Staff in the setting will also model behaviour, showing children how brilliant it is to be interested in something.

Most of all that it's ok to have fun!



Fire



Fire is a fully interactive, meaningful and powerful experience. Children are involved in every step from helping to split and prepare wood to feeding the fire with oxygen by blowing onto the hot embers to lift the flames.

Here we are toasting bread on the fire to enjoy with some jam

Fires are a great time opportunity to sit and talk not only about the magic and mystery of fire. It is an experience full of science, change and reactions that will positively affect any child

We use fire at the nursery regularly (Please ask staff if you would like to see a copy of the Risk benefit assessment form)



Staff use positive language to reposition children if they are not behaving appropriately near the fire. "I think you'll be more comfortable over here." Children at the nursery are never expected to sit around the fire as a whole group, or for long periods of time. If they don't want to join in they are asked/allowed to move freely to another part of the garden or the nursery where they can follow their own interests. Children who are made to sit will not benefit from an activity like this.



We have an ambition to make sure the children in our care know where their food comes from. Children, with the help of staff, have filled the garden with a selection of familiar and interesting vegetables some of these have been grown from seed. We have invested heavily in pans, pots and kettles so we can turn our produce into tasty snacks and meals. This way children will have the chance to experience the whole food cycle from seed to the food on their plate.

First aid



First aid kit

The college health and safety officer is charged with providing fresh materials for the first aid box, if for any reason, the box starts to run low or we find we have no plasters for example spare materials can be found in the Lodge at the front of the college.

We have a large green first aid box located high on the wall of the children's bathroom that we use for the bulk of the day to day needs. For outings we have a red back pack clearly marked with a first aid cross.

This contains things that will help us to deal with more complicated situations when we are away from the building such as:

- Silver space blankets and a survival bag (Large orange bag that we can use for keeping children/ casualties warm and dry until help arrives).
- Section of foam matting that we can manoeuvre under casualties, again to make them more comfortable
- A burns kit to help deal with fire related injuries.
- We have dedicated a whole front pocket of the back pack for plasters so we can reach them easily. Most first aid carried out on or off site will be cuts or grazes that can be easily fixed with a plaster.

During activities where fire or tools are used the bag is taken out and hung in a place where it can be easily reached by staff.

First aid courses

Every member of staff at St Anne's College Nursery has held a 12-hour paediatric qualification, where possible this is refreshed after 3 years. It has become difficult in the light of the pandemic/covid-19. However, we always meet the Ofsted requirement of at least one Fully Qualified first aider per session. As accessing the full face to face training gets easier we will make sure that every member of staff completes the 12-hour course three yearly.

If there are any additional needs / conditions that require special attention, like anaphylaxis or diabetes, a specialist care plan will be put in place and we will make sure all members of staff will attend an in-house training session so they have the knowledge to deal with the child's needs. With more complex conditions like diabetes the nursery will liaise with relevant health care professionals and care teams to devise a care plan.

Kyle (FSL) has completed a 16-hour forest school first aid course with ITC, this will also be revisited after 3 years.

In the unlikely event there is a significant accident/injury where an ambulance needs to be called the staff available will be split, some to deal with the incident and the others to control the rest of the group and reassure them in a situation that could be potentially distressing. 999 will be called and the lodge will be notified so the porters can direct the paramedics to the nursery. The 999 operator will be given the post code OX2 6HS. This is for 48 Woodstock road which is the nearest access point to reach the nursery in a time critical situation.

Nature connection Policy

"Nobody is going to protect the natural world unless they understand it."

- David Attenborough



We hope to play an important role in building a grounded and thoughtful generation who will understand and enjoy our wild spaces and places.

Staff act as mentors guiding children to discover nature on their own terms and connect with it in their own ways. Children are shown through staff modelled behaviour that each creature and plant is precious, important, and interesting. They are encouraged and praised for touching, looking, smelling and even tasting as they play.

Birds have a special place in our garden and we do all that we can to make them feel at home. Children are involved in regular feeding routines. Staff remind the children of the bird's names as they are spotted. Staff also point out bird behaviours such as alarm calling or chattering magpies. We value birds in the garden because they are a real-life experience and they visit regularly – we don't need to rely on pictures or flash cards to show or try and teach the children what they look like.



We have a similar idea with insects, these are a lot easier to collect, touch and investigate. The children are keen to do this. As well as an established "bug hotel" we have adapted other areas of the garden to make sure they are biodiverse and attract a wide range of life that can be enjoyed.



We are also keen to have the children growing plants, vegetables and even trees. We feel that a "nature wise" child will know that plants and creatures can be used to make food, drink, clothes, fire and decorations.



We want the outdoors to be a fun and interesting place with areas of interest and intrigue that can be revisited. A place to learn transferable skills and process that can be developed over time at a child's own pace.



Permaculture



What is Permaculture?

Permaculture according to "The children in Permaculture manual" is a design system that creates sustainable relationships between human beings and the rest of the natural world.

Why engage children in Permaculture?

The future of our planet depends upon a change of consciousness, in which the people and the resources of the natural world are no longer taken for granted and exploited without considering the long-term effects.

Supporting children from early childhood to develop a sensitive, compassionate and cooperative relationship with each other and the natural world is a crucial step in generating this new consciousness.

Alderslowe.L, Amus.G, DevapriyaD,A. "Earth care people care fair share in education. The children in permaculture manual" 2018, Published by-Children in permaculture

We will be sending staff on training so we can fit permaculture into our curriculum and use it to the children's best possible advantage.

Permaculture will work beautifully alongside our established work with forest school, nature connection and our other existing work in the outdoors.



How we hope permaculture will boost personal, social and emotional development

Our main aim for introducing permaculture into our day and our curriculum is to enrich the children's personal, social and emotional development.

We wish to develop a community of little and big people who are excited to help others by giving and sharing the produce from our garden.

We will grow a surplus, an abundance of food that can be shared and enjoyed by all.

- Food can be taken home.
- Plants can be taken home and grown in the family garden.
- Food, plants, logs and sticks can be grown and collected then shared with other local nursery settings, schools or even the college community.
- Friends, family members will be able to help work on the garden, all help and company is valued and welcomed here.

A very important part of this drive to introduce early ethical behaviour is to consider nature and the creatures who share our garden.

Children love picking and we encourage this, flowers and plants picked can be used in children's games and activities.





There are also amazing physical benefits gained. When a child picks something-It takes an amazing amount of fine motor skill to grasp a stem between thumb and forefinger without squashing or mashing it.



However, staff will also have a discussion with the older members of the group to encourage mindfulness when interacting for the environment:

"We can take but we must leave some for wildlife. Shall we leave some of these blackberries for the birds to eat?"

"We have harvested these potatoes and we will enjoy them, should we put the potato plants on the compost heap so the slugs and snails can enjoy eating them?"

"We could dig this soil to make it as crumbly as chocolate cake, but do you think we should do that? If we dig too much we might hurt worms that live under the garden."



We are not trying to teach, we are trying to provoke thought by leading and asking questions in a 'What do you think?' way and encourage individual freedom of ideas.