

Batheaston Primary School

How can we support children's and adults' creative relationships in the outdoors?

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Working with whole class groups of Y5 and Y6 children, their teachers, teaching assistants and parent helpers, the focus of our research was to see how we could support children's and adults' creative relationships in the outdoor environment and explore how 5x5=creativity and Forest School practice complement one another to extend possibilities for creative thinking.

Weekly sessions were held in Mike's Meadow - Batheaston School's new outdoor learning space - over a term. The space offers different environments: a copse, a giant grass covered earth newt, a fire pit and story circle - and these various areas gave us scope to extend ideas and draw on found natural materials to develop interests further.

The initial provocations for each group were framed by the KS2 topics, creating links between the children's learning indoors and outdoors. Throughout the sessions with both groups, however, we found that the environment would become a key provocation for the developing narratives of the children and enabling creative expression.



The Y5 group were keen to build their own habitats, to 'become creatures' themselves. A group of boys are monkeys, they make a habitat under thick ivy, using leaves for beds. This extends into a 'community' habitat as different animal dens join together:

'We help each other. If we are intruded, we call each other.'

Natural materials are transformed as stories start to emerge around role-play. Adults notice new collaborations between some children who don't usually play together.



Using movement to explore the environment and their own physicality within the space, a group of boys start to work together on a movement piece that they are keen to share in a performance.

The children are supported to use movement safely and channel their physicality in a creative way, developing body and space awareness.

The outdoor space offers greater physical freedom, permission to be loud and to explore and express ideas and playfulness in a natural environment.



As the narratives develop, the stories are documented by the adults and retold to the group, reflecting back the children's ideas to them and inviting them to extend their experience.

The importance of ideas in the story making process is highlighted and the process given value - anyone can be a story maker using their own ideas.

The role of the adult is explored - we are 'catching the stuff', showing there is something there and providing ideas of where it can go next.



The Y6 children use the whole outdoor space dynamically and playfully through drama. They work inclusively as actors and directors and, in reflection sessions, make decisions collectively on how to develop their drama. By stepping back as adults and trusting their decision-making, giving them responsibility for their learning, we notice increased maturity in the quality of discussions and open, honest feedback.

E: 'With this play we let everyone have the parts they wanted, even if at the start it didn't look like it would work.'

K: 'Our group kind of went together and put all our ideas together - everyone got parts.'

R: 'Me and E hardly every play with each other and today we've got on really well.'



The child-led approach of both 5x5=creativity and Forest School allowed all the children the freedom to make choices, follow their ideas and experiment. Through movement and drama they took risks and became more confident, their creative expression embodied in the outdoor space.

'The children tapped into their dramatic ability whilst exploring their physicality in the outdoor environment. It was a powerful message for them that being artistic and being out with nature are not separate, mutually exclusive things - indeed the skills that we celebrate underpin both.' (Claire Fegan, Y6 teacher)

'It doesn't matter who you're with, you can make something out of nothing' (Y6 pupil)