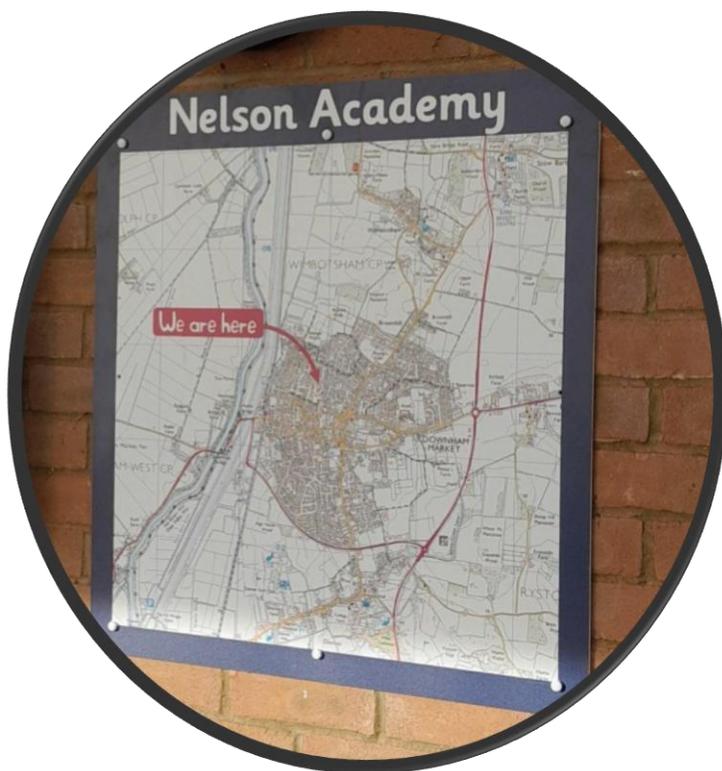


Nelson Academy's Outdoor Learning Showcase-

March 28th, 2025



The Day

Today is a chance for us not only to celebrate what we have achieved so far, but a day to get everyone excited about continuing our outdoor learning journey.

Each year group was scheduled five special activities throughout the day.

Two focused on learning new games that strengthen a variety of skills not limited to coordination, motor skills, and teamwork. These games include 4 Square, Molkky, Kubk, and Round the World.

One activity was visiting with our guest artist., Kaitlin Ferguson. This amazing artist uses nature to inspire her designs by using natural materials and a 3D printer.

The final two activities are more lesson based. Some year groups may have incorporated maths or science into a lesson. Others may have selected a project that incorporates many subjects at once. A gardening lesson, for example, obviously would touch on science- but teachers can bring in maths, English, PSHE, DT, or even art into the same lesson under the guise of taking care of some plants.

Today also provides a chance to share our lovely additions to the grounds- thanks to the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) Grant we were awarded the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council. It has taken a bit of time to complete it, but we hope the Sensory and Discovery Trail can enhance the fun and education for students here at Nelson.

The Importance of Learning and Playing Outdoors

It has been proven repeatedly that working and playing outdoors greatly improves both physical and mental health.



We were very lucky to be awarded a grant from Learning through Landscapes which was funded by the Postcode Lottery. It allowed staff members the opportunity to learn about how the National Curriculum can be taught outdoors enhancing classroom learning and also providing an educational opportunity for those children that struggle with classroom learning.

The next page shows a diagram which we believe visually represents many of the reasons learning can be taught outdoors. Thank you to Learning through Landscapes for granting us permission to include this amazing diagram in this booklet.

Our Plan

As educators, we are constantly looking at ways to make learning more fun, more engaging, and more attainable. We want students to enjoy learning and to retain the skills and knowledge they need in their future education. We often call it sticky learning and we hope to achieve this quite literally with a stick or two.

It is a process that doesn't happen overnight, nor one that has an actual "finish". Instead, we are taking gradual steps such as the introduction of an outdoor classroom, training for staff, interactive play zones and analysing these things to see how they work and how they can be improved. We begin by installing an ethos in school where every class spends at least one lesson outdoors a half term, then gradually increasing the quantity of lessons towards a goal of one lesson each week. Many of our classes now have at least one session of outdoor learning a month.

We want to build connections between our school and the community enhancing the learning opportunities, resources, and experiences for the children. Taking a trip to the local bakery, looking at architecture around the village, or even having parents come join in today's activities are building memories that the children can draw upon to make curriculum links, help with understanding in future lessons, and expand their vocabulary and their social skills.

We plan to continue, asking the children what they think works, and what they enjoy. We can gradually add, adjust, and adventure into the future.

Our thanks go to:

Parents and Grandparents who donated time, the odd bits and bobs, and have supported our eco and learning projects.

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk: CIL Funding Grant

Cindy Grant and the Learning Through Landscapes Team

Postcode Lottery

The Tree Council

Woodland Trust

1Level

Gavin Jones

FON (Friends of Nelson)

Tesco

Morrisons

Kaitlin Ferguson

Jewsons

Lawnboy

The Berry Bank

We took an unused slope and planted a variety of different berries. Hopefully this year we will be able to harvest gooseberries, blueberries, serviceberries, blackberries, raspberries and of course strawberries.

Sensory : Taste

Curriculum connections: DT, Science, History

Well-Being Through Gardening



The Sand Pit

We often associate sand pits with early years, but there are many older children who would benefit from digging and sand play. It is both therapeutic yet provides a creative outlet. Our sandpit has a sliding lid which not only keeps the sand clean, but when closed can provide seating or a mini stage providing another resource for outdoor learning. The sand pit itself could be used in history lessons by staging “archaeological finds” that the children need to excavate.

Sensory: Touch

Curriculum

Connections: Drama,

History, DT, Music,

Science

Well-Being through Play

“The sand pit is so much fun.”



Geography Zone

This station has large, eye-catching maps the Downham Market, the UK, and the World. We've also added Time zone maps and clocks and a peg board to recreate countries flags. To complement the maps, we hope to sponsor a country each month that represents one of our student's backgrounds. We have Ukrainian, Latvian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Bulgarian, Polish, Lithuanian, Romanian (and many more) families at our school. We hope to have parents come in and share about their countries, speak into sound buttons to help the children learn simple words. We will display this information including flags, landmarks, culture and holiday facts. Etc- we think this will help build bridges and understanding in our very rich multi-cultural community.

Sensory: Visual, Listening

Curriculum connections: British Values, Geography, RE, Maths

Well-Being through Community ties



The Weather Station

This station has a hands-on weather board for the children to evaluate and record the weather.

Students will also have access to an actual weather station which provides accurate



weather readings (to be installed after our roof work is done). We hope to soon be able to share these readings with the community via our website. Visual displays of cloud types and their significance help children take steps towards meteorological interpretations. On a more aesthetic slant, a variety of mesmerizing wind spinners provide a calming atmosphere.

Sensory: Visual, Auditory

Curriculum Connections: Science,

[Well-Being through Community Connection and Mindfulness](#)

“They spin really fast and are fun to watch.”

“I like to know which way the wind is blowing.”

“They are mesmerizing.”

The Boulders

We've installed three types of boulders to our school grounds. Igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic examples allow children to explore the qualities of these types of specimens. Beyond the scientific benefits, the rocks are attractive and tactile. They provide natural seating and a place to scramble.

Sensory: Touch

Curriculum Connections: Science, Outdoor safety, History



The Willow Arch

This station was funded by the Community Levy Fund, FON and staff donations. This area is devoted to quiet contemplation, reading, and making friends. Three of our staff members have sadly passed away from cancer in the last 5 years and we wanted a lasting and meaningful memorial to them. Those closest believed that a living dome of willow and a handmade bench would honour them. We felt that a quiet space that is sheltered and partially hidden would help many children calm and relax. Seeing the world through trees would give them an interesting perspective.

Sensory: Visual, Auditory

Curriculum Connections: Science, Reading

Well-Being through Mindfulness

“The willow bench helps you relax.”



Musical Sculpture



This area has several outdoor sculptures that are not only visually pleasing but also provide a platform for students to experiment with composing and sound experimentation. When creating the station – we used the excavated earth to create a grassy bank to sit and play on. Future plans for this area include the planting of “noisy plants” which when the children are silent provided a peaceful natural noise.

Sensory: Visual, Auditory, Touch

Curriculum connections: Science, Maths, Music, English

Well-being through mindfulness

The Herb Garden

This area is devoted entirely to herbs and plants with purpose. Though not at its peak time, come the summer and fall it will be filled with plants that stimulate several senses. Some have unique textures, others have intoxicating smells, whilst others can be used in delicious recipes.



Beyond this, some plants can be used to enhance history lessons through discussions on how earlier generations used plants for medicine, dyes, potpourri, and cooking. A bonus, is that herbs are excellent wildlife plants which helps pollinating insects thrive.

Sensory: Taste, Smell, Touch

Curriculum Connections: History, Science, DT, English, Maths
[Well-Being through Gardening, ECO heroism](#)

“I like the herb garden because it is really beautiful.”

The Meadow

We already had an established, beautiful meadow. Our grant allowed us to provide informational lecterns, habitat enhancements, and accessories to encourage exploration. Children will be able to use the guides to help identify the wildlife found in this area. We plan to take part in various citizen science projects such as butterfly counts and the Big Bird Watch. The area is also a wonderful space for children to sketch, read, or be inspired to write. Future plans will see children creating life cycle signs, more habitat enhancements and feeding stations, and seating spaces.

Sensory: Visual, Smell, Auditory

Curriculum connections: Art,
Science, Maths, English **Well-being through Mindfulness, Eco Heroism** Community connections

“I like to look at the pictures.”



The Fire Pit

This station is a restricted area due to safety, and children will have to have an adult escort to explore. We wanted a specialized area to use our existing tools and fire pit. It is important for children to learn to respect fire and know basic fire safety.



Students can learn about outdoor cooking, see the physical and chemical changes to wood as it burns, talk about history and the importance of fire to mankind. They can even use the charcoal created in art.

Today we will not be using the fire pit area as it is too small for groups larger than a class, so through our fire training we can show the learning benefits of fire on a site more conducive to larger groups.

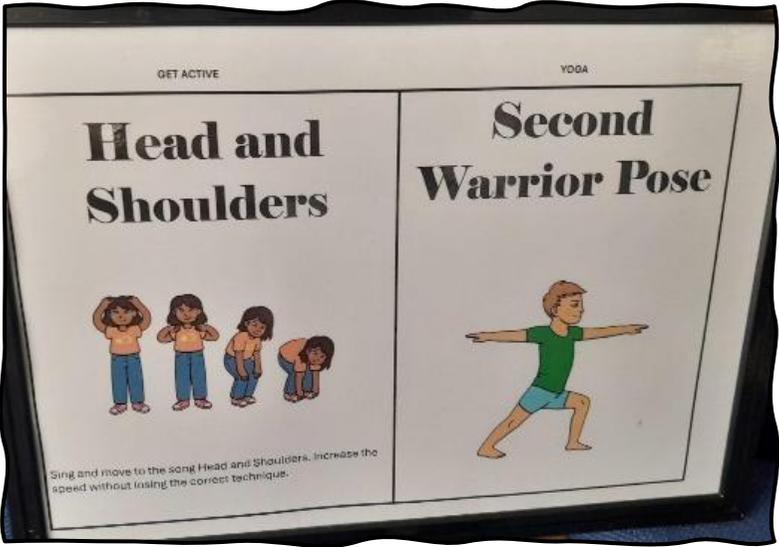
Sensory: Visual, Auditory, Smell, Taste, and Touch

Curriculum connections: Science, DT, History, PSHE, Art, English

Well-being through mindfulness

Fitness Circuit

Initially, each station was to have an exercise and mindfulness activity displayed. During the winter months we adapted this to have a circuit trail along the footpath as some areas were too wet for children to access. Either way each display contains a cardio or strength building exercise as well as a yoga inspired or mindfulness activity.



The Ants

This station also had to be altered from its original intention. The ants were originally housed outside, but in reality, we began to see safety concerns for both the children and the ants.

To prevent problems arising, we moved the ants inside where they could still be viewed, and the children can still benefit from our original aspirations. Our hopes were that children would be intrigued by the ants and their activities, see the teamwork and ants' lifecycle firsthand, and eventually take part in the care and responsibilities of our formicarium.



Sensory: Visual,

Curriculum connections: Science, Values, English, Maths

Well-Being through Mindfulness

What is it?

We have added, thanks to FON, other stations to our Discovery trail. These stations are more open and ambiguous which allows the children to direct what the purpose of the item or structure is at that moment in time. For instance, this structure can be a stage, a dance hall, a fort, a castle, a jail, a shop, or another 1,000 possibilities.

Another spot that is actually being created today by our year one classes is the a small world zone. These are plantings in tyres that can become a fairy garden, a rainforest, an ancient land, or a scene for a story. Again it is a platform to allow the children to use their imagination and learn through play.



Through grants from Learning through Landscapes, prize money from eco competitions, FON, and direct donations of “oddities” from families- we are building up a collection of (to the uneducated eye) junk- but what we call treasure. The odd bit of guttering, the bamboo stake, the clips and bits of materials become the tools children can use when constructing a fort, building a an aqueduct, or turning themselves into a wild animal. In short, these bits and bobs allow children to be children and to learn through play.

Gardening at Nelson

We find as educators, lesson plans sometimes need to be changed if despite our best efforts- they just aren't working. This is the case of our gardening program in the last few years. Thanks to a Tesco Community grant, we were able to install a type of an allotment in our wild area. The trouble was that this area wasn't as accessible as it needed to be for the year groups to take advantage of. After deliberation, we have made some significant changes to our growing arrangements. Come this spring, each year group will have a growing space that borders their normal play area for break. This means gardening can be done each day without much effort to balance other lessons around it. Teachers have been positive about this change and today you may even find some classes working together with families to prepare their year groups' growing spaces.



What's next?

We have lots of plans like creating a bird feeding zone and a hide to observe from. We will bring back our Wildlife Watch Newsletter. We want to connect more with the community through events like our Earth Day Festival (this year April 26th), beach cleans, and art exhibitions.

We want every class to have regular outdoor lessons. We want an official play policy to create a more “fun” and consistent break time for both students and staff alike.

Students have said they would like things like the bird watching area and a bug zone.... and we are going to see if we can make it happen.

Thank you all so much for joining us today.