

## **Outdoor Learning Update, February 2015**

Dear all

It's been a busy time behind the scenes on the outdoor learning project, and I am now pleased to report that we are at a stage where we have something to show for our efforts, and for you to see where the funds are being spent.

### **Paddock progress**

Many of you have been asking about the work going on behind the gates in the paddock. The long wall stretching down to where the sandpit used to be, is almost finished and looks fantastic. In the sandpit area we plan to reinstate the pond and make this a wildlife garden - it will have paths going through but will be a quiet science area only, used during lesson time. The stone wall here has still to be finished but we are hoping to section off this area, so it shouldn't interfere with the children being in the main part of the paddock.

With the generous funding we received from Burford's Falkland Hall Trust we have been able to install a 'bird hide' - a walkway extension onto the Captain Mannering climbing frame that we put up last year. This will provide a lovely opportunity for the children to look out onto the river and study the wildlife. We have also put up a rope climbing frame; the nets are still to come but it looks impressive. In front of Captain Mannering there is a new sandpit with two sand hoists for the keen diggers amongst us, and this is bordered by a tiered mound, another area for sitting or climbing on. Trevor Stewart who installed this equipment installed the playground at Shipton and also Cogges Farm, so we're very fortunate to have had his expertise. So .... it all looks muddy, but great and we're hopeful that after the Easter holidays the children will be able to enjoy it as much as possible.

Also in the paddock, we hope to rearrange the raised vegetable beds to make them more accessible. I am in the process of looking for helpers to run a gardening club so that we can keep on top of the veg patch and hopefully get some tasty produce! I have a couple of parents interested in helping, but if you think you might enjoy being involved with this, then please get in touch.

### **Other grounds work**

We have arranged various site visits with contractors and are now finalising quotes for the remaining groundwork projects - funding permitting, these will include amongst other things: creating new seating areas in the playground, installing a bike rack at the front of school and resurfacing the area closest to the Foundation unit on the Trim Trail playground. We also plan to paint doors opening on to the veranda and the ceiling, as well as the school's front door.

### **Forest School**

Teresa Lock has just started her Forest School Leadership training at Hill End, nr Farmoor - this is a really exciting course that will take her until Christmas to complete, but we hope to start Forest School initially for the foundation stage children after Easter. After a long hunt to find a suitable site, we are fortunate enough to have been granted permission to use a lovely woodland site at Filkins. We're still in the process of discussions with the landowners and would need to organise transport, but all being well this will be a wonderful site to take the children.

## **Nature club**

After a very successful first term of Nature Club, where we focussed on birds, six bird boxes were very kindly made by Tracey Cross and her partner, painted by the children and Rod has just put them up in the in the paddock in time for the spring.

This term we are focussing on waste and recycling. March is 'Waste Awareness month' and we have been looking at recycling various different items that would otherwise have been thrown away. Last week the Nature Club team built a wonderful plastic bottle tree with all sorts of creatures crawling up and down! We made some papier mache flower pots out of old plastic milk bottles and in the next couple of weeks are planning to paint wooden pallets and make plant stands for the playground. Please do keep collecting your 2L plastic bottles for the School council's plastic greenhouse project. We need to collect over 1500 bottles, so please bring them into school whenever you can; any questions, please see Timoney Pitt.

My gratitude goes to the parent helpers at Nature Club - they make a great team, full of ideas and fun, and we're all extremely grateful to them.

## **Training and Funding**

We have recently received funding from the Burford Foundation for staff to receive training on outdoor learning, so that it can be embedded in the everyday life of the school. This will be a great opportunity to use the outside space as much as possible in lots of different areas of the national curriculum.

Whilst our fundraising successes so far have been fantastic, and parents have been very generous with their funding, time and skills, our work is not over yet! We are waiting to hear whether we have been successful with a number of funding proposals, but still need to raise approximately £10,000. We will be asking for your support in organising fundraising events over the summer term.

If you have any questions or would like to help with the any of the activities, please do get in touch. Otherwise I look forward to updating you in a few weeks time.

Best wishes

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