

Derwent Stepping Stones

Garden Makeover Newsletter

As you are aware Derwent Stepping Stones is going all out to develop excellent teaching and learning opportunities outdoors. The project began last year when we started a fundraising campaign to pay for the changes we want. The project has built momentum and we want to keep you up to date with what we have been up to.

There has been much research completed about the benefits of outdoor play for children because it offers a whole different perspective and with the environment constantly changing due to light, weather, seasons etc there is always something new for children to discover. There are known health benefits too for children being outdoors more, less spread of germs, better mental health, more active and building better resilience.

There is a lot of information on the internet about the benefits of outdoor play for children and we will be posting information and updates on our facebook /Derwent-Stepping-Stones, twitter @DSSNursery and website www.derwentsteppingstones.co.uk

We very much want all of our families to be involved in the project so please leave us your views, comments and thoughts on our email enquiries@derwentsteppingstones.co.uk

Janet Holland, Chief Executive

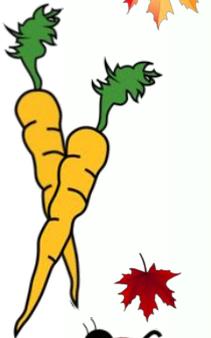
Our Plan

The garden project will be in 2 phases, repairing and cleaning up our existing outdoor space and developing a forest school type provision with lots of areas for the children to explore in a natural environment.

Our ideas currently include areas for:

- Bug dens
- Mud kitchen
- Den building
- Creative arts
- Growing plants, fruit & vegetables
- Climbing & balancing
- Small world
- Water play
- Bikes & trikes
- Role play

The first elements have taken place with the rubber surface being jet washed and repaired.



Fundraising



We have held various fundraising activities during the past year with many more planned - see the board behind reception. So far we have raised £3,000 which is incredible and we thank everyone who has supported us.



Garden Makeover Team

A member of staff from each unit has volunteered to be part of the project team.



Janet Holland
Chief Executive



Jenny Seagrave
Deputy Nursery Manager



Natalie Kilmartin
Room Manager



Kate Jackson
Early Years Professional



Kyra Wightman
Nursery Officer



Jacky Blakemore
Nursery Officer



Teresa Ashton
Nursery Officer



Jurgita Martisiene
Nursery Officer



We held our first meeting in February and have some really exciting ideas of what we want to do. Our next step is to get the children outside and find out what they want to see developing outdoors for them. Look out for waterproof jackets and wellington boots we will be buying for the children over the next few weeks.



Our Early Years consultant Kate Young will be delivering training to our project team at the end of February so we can make sure the project is developed to maximise teaching and learning opportunities. The team will also go on visits to other inspirational outdoor settings to get ideas and inspiration.

We have a number of board members who are very keen and actively involved in the development of the outdoors, offering support, links to specialists and raising funds for the project.

Resources

We have high hopes for our outdoor area to be full of natural equipment that the children can change, build and use creatively. We have been very fortunate to have had some very kind donations from Cosy including items to make our mud kitchen and lots of natural wooden items.



Parents, staff and trustees have also been very generous with pots and pans, ribbon, blankets and cushions. A visit to the Play and Recycling centre has added lots of other objects including carpet, fabric, ribbon, plastic tubes and pieces of wood to make bird boxes, bug dens and hopefully a hedgehog house.

What else we have been doing

We have made friends with Juliet Robertson who is passionate about outdoor learning and the author of various books on the subject including 'Dirty Teaching - a beginners guide to learning outdoors'. Juliet came into Derwent Stepping Stones and helped us look at what we wanted to achieve and gave us some invaluable advice about how to start and where to go next. Juliet has a very informative website (www.creativestartlearning.co.uk) where we have gathered resources to help us with the project.



YMCA volunteer garden project are working with us to help with the forest school area which is a real bonus and great partnership working.

Pennine Healthcare are supporting us lots, they have put an outside tap on to allow us access to water outdoors, they are currently cleaning all of our outdoor rubber surface and are committed to helping repair the wooden gazebo and bandstand.



A group of us visited the forest school provision at Alfreton Nursery School and we were blown away by the amazing outdoor space they have created. They have spent the last 10 years developing the space and tell us their children are healthier and absolutely love learning in the outdoor environment. We came away with lots of ideas for areas we want in our garden however, it helped us realise this will take time.



What is next:

- The project team will be visiting Alfreton Nursery School and hopefully other forest schools locally
- YMCA will be looking at the garden area to see what they can do
- We will be applying for funding to help us purchase the items we need and pay for larger work
- Training for the project team to help us make the most of opportunities available
- Completing consultation with our children to see what they want available outdoors using a resource called 'Going out to play with Fred the Ted'
- Buying waterproof clothing and footwear for staff and children to keep them warm and dry so they enjoy the outdoor experiences
- Consulting with a landscape gardener to check what is possible

If you want to get involved with the project please get in touch, we value your



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