

# Manifesto

*Our vision for the future*

## The need

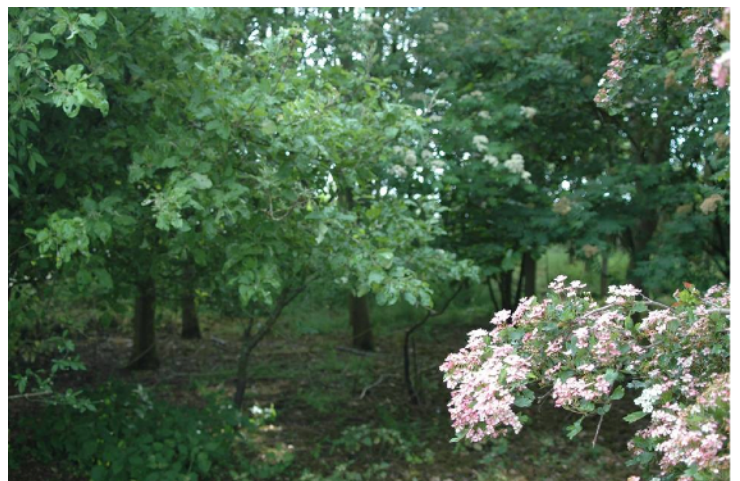
According to recent statistics published by the National Trust:

- On average, Britain's children watch more than 17 hours of television a week and spend more than 20 hours a week online
- Fewer than a quarter of children regularly use their local 'patch of nature', compared to over half of all adults when they were children
- Children spend so little time outdoors that they are unfamiliar with some of our commonest wild creatures. According to a 2008 National Trust survey, one in three could not identify a magpie; half could not tell the difference between a bee and a wasp; yet nine out of ten could recognise a Dalek.

Research has proven that there are innumerable benefits of spending time outdoors. Country Days gives children in Bedfordshire the opportunity to explore the wonders of nature, reconnect with the wild and discover the world around them — it's time to find out what we can learn from a worm!

## The gain

1. Health
2. Education
3. Environment



# 1

# health benefits

***Spending time outdoors promotes physical, mental and emotional well-being.  
What are the consequences for children who don't spend enough time outside?***

- Physical

NHS Digital states that 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school. Poor diet and low levels of physical activity are the primary causal factors to excess weight, exacerbated by increased sedentary behaviours. Data shows only 18% of children and young people reported taking part in physical activity for at least an hour a day.

- Mental

Over the last 50 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of children suffering from conduct, behavioural and emotional problems; today one in ten children aged between five and 16 have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder.

- Emotional

Emotional problems include declining resilience and ability to assess risk, both of which are vital life-skills. If children spend less time playing outdoors, they will have less opportunity to try new things in a safe space and are unprepared to cope with the challenges of adult life.

resilience

self-awareness

focus

self-esteem



motor skills

adaptability

confidence

fitness

# 2

# educational development

## *Learning to learn in new ways*

We believe that not everything can be taught from a textbook, in a classroom - some ideas are better absorbed outside in the natural environment. There are many educational benefits to learning outdoors: it supports cognitive development, promotes independent thought and encourages creativity.

problem-solving

teamwork

communication

inquisitive thinking

leadership

## *The curriculum*

Our curriculum is carefully planned and designed to incorporate a range of activities to support learning including:

- \* pond-dipping
- \* bushcraft and campfire cooking
- \* art, creative recycling and poetry
- \* botany
- \* sport and orienteering





# 3

# environmental impacts

## *Time for change*

Scientists now say that 1 million species are at risk of extinction; that's 25% of all plants and animals. The need is urgent: it is fundamental that young people feel empowered to take ownership of their environment and its future by battling against climate change. Through a diverse range of activities, we hope to foster an understanding of why our world matters, what it can provide and what role we can each individually play in protecting it.



- \*6 acres
- \* 1/3rd woodland with 33 native varieties of trees
- \* a pond with great crested newts
- \* science shed
- \* open field play area
- \* compost toilets
- \* a rain shelter with natural sedum roof
- \* hedges and plants specifically designed to attract bees, birds and insects and let nature flourish.

Country Days is the brainchild of the late Ann Hadfield who, in 2010, was awarded an MBE for services to the community in Bedford including founding and developing F4YP, a charity aimed at helping to support young people through after-school activities and holiday courses. Subsequently, Ann turned her attention to the importance of the role of the natural environment in the lives of young people since she felt that both appreciation and understanding is key not only to their education but also to their future. We believe that feeling connected with the natural world creates a sense of wonder and these stimulating moments provide life enhancing and long-lasting memories. There is no digital animation that can truly capture the magic of discovering frogspawn in winter, finding the first flowers of spring, running through summer meadows or seeing the leaves turning gold in autumn.



*“High-quality outdoor learning experiences are proven to develop reflective and inquisitive thinking along with problem-solving approaches in ‘real’ situations. Children also develop resilience and adaptability in occasionally adverse circumstances. It allows them to become more able to identify hazards and risks. Being outside can reduce a child’s stress levels as well as improving their physical well-being and help them to develop a love, appreciation and respect for nature and all that is living. Whilst being outside children develop an understanding of how we can look after our environment which is incredibly important. Children will gain higher levels of self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem, leading to more productive collaborative-working and communication skills.”*

— Victoria Hayward, Deputy Head at Sharnbrook Primary School

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