



Outdoor Learning

What a fantastic summer term of outdoor learning at Connor Downs Academy. Once again, our children have been truly inspired by getting closer to nature. The children have experienced the diverse opportunities that Cultivating Futures offers, which can't be replicated indoors. Furthermore, outdoor learning has engaged our children in practical sciences allowing them to explore, discover, observe, analyse and record real-life data. The positive impact that Cultivating Futures and learning outdoors has had on our children has been clearly visible.

Children in EYFS have been exploring Cultivating Futures, observing the changes in the seasons, discovering what lives around them and getting close to nature. They have also been participating in team games, scavenger hunts and den building.

During our sensory walk around Cultivating Futures the children enjoyed discovering the variety of herbs and flowers. The children used their senses to compare the herbs and vegetables that we eat regularly including mint, thyme, rosemary and lavender.



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They have also been learning about how plant seeds disperse and enjoyed helping the dandelion seeds float away. We discussed pollination and the importance of insects as they watched the visit the brightly coloured flowers.



While exploring our vegetable planters, the children learned more about the importance of plants and the parts of them that we eat. They identified the different parts of a flower, harvested some vegetables and sowed some seeds.

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All children in EYFS have been learning about the animal kingdom, how they are grouped and why. They particularly enjoyed visiting our chickens, collecting their eggs and feeding them corn. They have also helped to care for our rabbits and guinea pigs, while describing their features.



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Children in EYFS have thoroughly enjoyed helping to build dens



They have constructed rooms within the dens and played team games including an around the world animal quiz, guess zoo and top trumps.



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During the summer term our children enjoyed harvesting vegetables. They collected some radishes and different varieties of lettuce before washing and tasting them. As you can see the radishes were not to everyone's liking. The children also collected mint and helped make some mint tea.

Many of the children were brave enough to hold our stick insects and learn more about these amazing creatures.



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More pictures from the EYFS outdoor learners, engaging with nature this summer.



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Children in Year 1 have been exploring Cultivating Futures, learning about living things and the importance of plants. They have been identifying the variety of plants that grow around us including everyday foods that can easily be grown. They watched their tomatoes grow and transplanted them ready to sell at the summer fair.



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Year 1 children have also enjoyed some memorable experiences learning about the variety of animals and the habitats they live in. They have explored our pond area, taken part in pond dipping sessions and observed the creatures closely using a variety of magnifying equipment. They were fascinated by what they saw when they compared different things closely.



The children discovered dragonfly nymphs, diving beetle larvae, pond skaters, ramshorn snails, leeches and other tiny creatures that they identified on a chart. They have developed a deeper understanding of nature and the importance of the pond habitat that supports the wider ecosystem.

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Our children have been learning how to care for the rabbits and guinea pigs, identifying the correct food they need and the responsibilities of a pet owner. They collected carrot tops, dandelions and mint for them to enjoy. All our year children have shown great care and respect for our rabbits.

The children have also been participating in animal scavenger hunts and working in teams to discover the animals, while completing the spelling grid correctly. They have help create a den area, collected herbs, washed them and help prepare a herbal tea.



Year one children enjoyed sampling their herbal teas.

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More pictures from a summer of outdoor learning in year one



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Year 1 children have been sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings, weeding, digging, removing waste with the wheelbarrow and harvesting produce.



They have also been using flowers, herbs, leaves and other natural objects to create pictures and 3D art.



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All children in Year 2 have been learning about Importance of plants in our diet. We embarked on a sensory tour around Cultivating Futures, identifying the different plants that were growing, and identifying the parts of the plant that we eat. The children harvested potatoes, beetroot, radishes, and different types of lettuce.



The lettuce was really tasty.



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More pictures of the year 2 children learning about the importance of plants.



After harvesting the vegetables, they prepared the planters and sowed more seeds and transplanted seedlings. They enjoyed comparing the taste of some of the vegetables they had harvested. We completed the afternoon with a test to see if they could remember the different parts of the plant we eat.

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The pond habitat has been explored by all children in Year 2. They have enjoyed learning about the variety of vertebrates and invertebrates that live around us, exploring different habitats and observing the different creatures that live in our pond.



They were amazed at the diverse range of creatures discovered. These included pond snails, ramshorn snails, caddisfly in their cases, newts, leeches and dragonfly nymphs.

The children identified the creatures using the ID charts and observed them closely using different lenses. They particularly enjoyed playing a game of pond bingo.

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'Look deep in nature and then you will understand everything better' – Albert Einstein.



Year 2 children exploring and discovering what lives in our pond.

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The children used microscopes to observe a bee, wasp and a dragonfly's exoskeleton closely. They were in awe and wonder as they observed the different parts of these creatures in so much detail.



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Year 2 children have been learning about food chains in different habitats. They have also been learning about the five basic needs of an animal, while caring for our animals here at Connor Downs Academy. They have enjoyed getting close to the rabbits, guinea pigs and chickens, caring for them and ensuring they had everything they required to stay healthy. The children also help care for our stick insects.



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Meanwhile, children in Year 3 have been learning about compass points and directions. They participated in an orienteering session, beginning by getting familiar with the scaled map of the school grounds, and using the compass. Their task was to locate the ten control points around the grounds in the correct order.



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Y3 children have been helping plants grow well.



They have been learning about the different types of plants that we grow and why they are important. The children sowed a variety of seeds, potted herbs and helped our plants grow in the poly tunnel. They have taken part in the RHS 'I can grow' campaign, and they can now use a variety of garden tools safely.

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Year 3 children have been developing their pond dipping and close observation skills.



The children have continued to compare the animals that live in the pond habitat. They have been identifying and observing a variety of pond creatures including, pond skaters, water boatmen, damselfly and dragonfly nymphs. They have used various lenses and microscopes to compare some of the creatures found. They have developed scientific vocabulary and most importantly developed a greater appreciation for biodiversity and care for the natural environment.

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Pond life – creating a sense of awe and wonder.



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All children in year 3 have been helping to care for our rabbits, guinea pigs and chickens. They have thoroughly enjoyed learning about how to care for our animal and show them respect.



Being directly involved with our animals has definitely benefited the health and wellbeing of the children.

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Year 3 children have been building dens, learning about fire safety, and creating a spark. They collected kindling sticks and helped to light the fire.



The children took part in other team building tasks while building their dens. They used a manual pump to inflate an airbed. Finally, we toasted marshmallows around the fire



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Year 3 children have had an amazing summer getting close to nature. They have enjoyed getting their hands dirty while helping out with the RHS 'Big Seed Sow'. They prepared planters, sowed lettuce, cauliflower and beetroot seeds and very carefully transplanted seedlings into new pots. They transplanted tomato plants too and helped care for the plants in our polytunnel.



Some children collected herbs, washed them and carefully created their own herbal teas, which were sampled and enjoyed. They enjoyed this activity so much that they intend to create their own tea club. Children

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Some more pictures of Year 3 enjoying the great outdoors.



Year 3 have had a summer of fun learning outdoors.

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Year 4 children began the summer term with a visit to Upton Towans, Hayle.



They had an afternoon of exploration and discovery using binoculars, a compass and a map to get a sense of direction before heading into a sand dune 'blow out' to learn about how the dunes form.



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They continued on their journey observing rabbit warrens, badger setts and learning more about the creatures that live here. From a high point they also measured the wind speed using an anemometer.



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The children had silent time while relaxing in the marram grass, listening for Sky Larks and other birds. Their task was to remain silent for 5 minutes, and listen.



They used lenses and magnifiers to observe nature closely.



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Year 4 have continued learning about the animal kingdom, this term focusing on invertebrates (animals without a backbone). They explored our pond area, identifying and observing a vast array of creatures including dragonfly nymphs, diving beetle larvae, leeches, snails and water boatmen.



They also discovered creatures with a backbone including many newts that were about to leave the pond along with some froglets. Exploring our pond has helped them understand the classification system of the animal kingdom.

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'Let nature be your teacher' – William Wordsworth



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Children in Year 4 have been learning how to use the microscopes correctly. They observed a variety of creatures using the microscope and compared this to other magnifying equipment. They also compared the leaves and petals of different plants.



The children have worked outside the classroom, creating animal fact files and learning more about the creatures in the pond while observing them.

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Anyone for tea? The children compared the taste of different herbal teas that they produced, including mint, sage and nettle. They collected the different herbs, before washing, crushing and brewing the leaves. They also sowed some herb seeds.



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Year 4 have been participating in the RHS 'I can grow' campaign.



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Year 4 have been learning about fire safety, collecting kindling and creating sparks.



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They enjoyed toasting marshmallows around the campfire.



The children have been taking part in a flag fact finding mission and making tools from willow. They have also been learning about the effects of ocean pollution on wildlife and what we can all do to help protect this important habitat. Beach safety and the flags were also discussed to help them remember the importance of respecting the water.

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4 children have been caring for our animals while taking part in the RSPCA's compassionate class programme. They have learnt about the welfare needs of animals and what different animals need to stay happy and healthy.



The children care for our stick insects too.

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More pictures from our Year 4 children enjoying the great outdoors this summer.



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Our Year 5 children have had an exciting summer term of outdoor learning. They have been learning about the animal kingdom, invertebrates and their life cycles. They explored the school grounds, built dens, created sparks, participated in team games and explored the dunes. They have been animal cadets and garden cadets.



All our Year 5 children have enjoyed exploring the pond habitat, observing many creatures using magnifying glasses and microscopes. They discovered a vast array of creatures, identifying them using the charts, including newts, diving beetle larvae, leeches, ramshorn snails, dragonfly nymphs, caddisfly in their cases and more.

They used microscopes to observe the creatures more closely.



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Year 5 children have been working scientifically, using a variety of equipment to observe objects and living things closely while taking accurate measurements. They were surprised at how much detail was visible using the microscopes accurately.



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Year 5 children have been working as a team to build dens.



They competed in teams to build the strongest den and made tools from willow.

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They discovered the benefits and dangers of fire while learning about fire safety.



The children separated the strands of hemp to create tinder, collected thin sticks for the kindling before lighting the fire using a flint. They continued collecting slightly larger sticks to keep the fire going. The children enjoyed playing games of Top Trumps around the fire.

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Our Year 5 gardening team have been looking after Cultivating Futures on a regular basis, completing essential gardening tasks including, weeding, sowing seeds, harvesting and caring for our tomatoes.



Our early morning gardening team have been looking after the garden all year. They have been sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings and harvesting the produce.



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They have used gardening tools safely to complete gardening projects and prepared our polytunnel for the tomato plants.



They have been cutting back our willow and caring for our vegetable planters.

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Year 5 animal cadets have been caring for caring for our guinea pigs, rabbits and chickens each day and looking out for signs of illness.



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Registered Office: Aspire Academy Trust, Unit 20, St Austell Business Park, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 4FD



Year 5 have been participating in team games including obstacle courses, relays and head-to-head challenges. They embraced the challenges, persevered and displayed a never give up attitude.



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Year 5 have been exploring our local sand dunes once again and recently discovered the history behind the dynamite towans and the National Explosives Factory that existed here before and during the Great War.



A rare pink cricket was discovered during our towans visit



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Well, it has certainly been a busy summer term of outdoor learning for our year 5 children. They have explored, observed, discovered, and recorded. They have also been fantastic animal and garden cadets, nurturing, sowing and growing.



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Our Year 6 children have had a busy, final half term of outdoor learning. They have been caring for our animals, using their previous skills to health check our animals and record the information. They have also enjoyed exploring the pond, where they discovered a huge range of pond creatures including newts, dragonfly nymphs, caddisfly in their cases, water boatmen, pond skaters and diving beetle.



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Year 6 have been connecting with nature, observing, discovering, identifying and using microscopes to look at the creatures with much closer detail.



They were amazed when they observed the detail on the newts and dragonfly exoskeleton.

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A group of year 6 children explored Gwithian Towans, where they discovered many plant and animal species that inhabit this important area. They teamed up with the Friends of the Towans and continued our scrub management work, cutting back vegetation, digging out large trenches and caring for the landscape.

The children all worked hard to complete the tasks, persevered and never gave up. They displayed a positive attitude throughout and thoroughly enjoyed using a variety of tools to create the reptile homes.



Working as a team to clear the sand.

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Finally, the children moved the large branches and logs and created reptile hibernaculum (shelters for the winter). I am extremely proud of all the Y6 children that have helped care for the Towans this past academic year. They have shown a great attitude to learning, enthusiasm to work hard and determination to succeed.



The children succeeded in creating two reptile hibernacula's, which transformed this area of the dunes. The children have really connected with nature in our local environments this academic year, highlighting the importance and responsibilities of managing these important landscapes. I am confident they will remember these experiences and continue to value these amazing places.

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More pictures from our year 6 dune explorers



The children discovered the cinnabar moth and the caterpillar that only feeds on the Ragwort plant. They were also amazed to discover this beautiful slow worm on the sandy coast path. They observed it closely before releasing it back to its home. Following on from this visit they used their inspiration to create art using natural paint.

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Some of our Year 6 children have been working as a team, learning to use tools safely and creating better places for our animals to live.



More teamwork was displayed when they worked together to help assemble the tents.



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Since the beginning of Year 6, all our Year 6 children have been receiving first aid training as part of our 'Mini Medics' course. Thanks to Miss Pedley, a first responder from Southwest Ambulance Service, who has delivered this important training and carried out the assessments. The children demonstrated their ability to perform CPR on a resuscitation dummy device, how to use a defibrillator and place the patient in the recovery position. They were also assessed on their ability to respond to a patient who is choking. We are convinced the children will remember this training and carry this knowledge forward with them into the next stage of their education.



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Here are some memories from previous years of outdoor learning



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