

Lenzie Moss Primary

Woodland play

Local authority

East Dunbartonshire

Roll and type

321 – Primary

Timescale

1 year

“the
playground can
be fun... but not
as fun as the
woods”





"You can see it on the children's faces – they are not walking to the woodland, they're running. They are desperate to come here and play" is how staff describe the enthusiasm for play in the newly opened woodland on the edge of the football pitch.

It is formed of two very distinct areas - one thin strip of millennium woodland and a dense patch of mature trees – both very different from the rest of the grounds.

At the start of the project all parents, staff and pupils were consulted and they trialled free play during class time. This enabled parents and staff to observe children and discuss concerns – especially over behaviour if children couldn't be seen at all times.

Having practical experience allayed many of their fears as the woods seemed to provide a 'release' from the classroom and traditional playground. Children who found the classroom restrictive and have difficulty interacting with others were able to relax and cooperate and those "who don't shine academically are leaders outside". This allowed both the staff and their peers to see them in a different light and gave them a "wonderful opportunity for them to take on a different role".

**It gives them
an
"opportunity
to take on a
new role"**

**"there is no
arguing like
there is in
the
playground"**

A wide range of people were involved in the project including staff, parents, pupils, local businesses, rangers and the local Authority. This involvement was vital to the success of the project as it encouraged a sense of ownership and the range of expertise helped overcome many concerns or barriers – ranging from worries about mud and supervision to technical properties of path structures and native hedges as people donated resources, time and expertise:

The Health and Safety officer from the council visited to address concerns regarding supervision and liability and helped write their risk benefit assessment in conjunction with staff, parents and pupils. Large thorns and thick broken branches at eye height were removed but smaller brambles or branches were left as they added to the atmosphere. Boundaries were erected where the wood met a public space but these kept natural - bushes, logs or an artist's fence. Concerns about supervision and liability were discussed and supervisors helped create systems to combat this – including radios linked to the office, portable first aid kits and altering where they stand at break.

A ranger from the local nature reserve offered ideas to encourage wildlife and practical advice for path and fence building as well as helping to source wood, tree stumps and native seeds

Local businesses provided many resources – a sail maker created a shelter, a wood work project created signs and a fence, a construction firm donated materials, labour and expertise for an all weather path, Antonine walls and bridge. A shed at the bottom of the path stores wet weather clothing.



Ask for donations of time as well as resources.

Top Tip:
get as many people involved as you can

The woodland is used every lunchtime as every class has access to it for a whole week at a time. This allows games and dens to develop and supervisors to see a range of play in the woods. This has begun to change perceptions and where initially staff were anxious if they were not able to see every child they now understand the importance of “giving them the freedom to play and not be overlooked by an adult”

The woodland was officially opened through a celebration day that allowed the school to recognise and thank everyone involved and strengthen links with people who may be able to help it in the future. “Get as many people involved as you can because although it is hard work to do that everyone has a sense of ownership and everyone can go away and think how they can make it better and come back with more ideas so that this will not just end here but the project will go on and on”

“beneath the
trees where
nobody sees...

they'll hide and
seek as long as
they please”

