

TREE CLIMBING

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Open, not dominant

The adult's body language is supportive and not overpowering - not having the answers or instructions but supporting the child to challenge themselves.

Happy and secure outside

Sam uses her own passion for tree climbing as a child to inspire her practice.

Synergy with nature

Sam encourages the children to listen to nature, feel the elements and take full advantage of the new perspective.

Collaboration

The staff work supportively to ensure they work in areas they feel strong and passionate.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This footage demonstrates three children climbing one of the trees.

The children are all at different points in their own journeys into strength, confidence and managing risks and the adult is careful to change her role depending upon the child she is supporting. The children learn at the beginning of their experiences that the adult is not there to 'catch' them when they fall - but instead teach them the skills needed to climb safely.

The adults are very up front about the risks involved and they discuss quite naturally what will happen if they fall from a

significant height. The child knows they are responsible for their own safety and with that comes an much reduced chance of injury or mistake - the child does not want to get hurt and they will do everything they can to avoid falling from the tree. The adult does not tell the child where to put their feet or which direction to take, they offer advice when the child needs to change direction or push a little higher than they've ever been before.

This necessity for trust in the relationship is paramount to any tree climbing experience, the child knows the adult is always there to advise and support.

See footage Tree Climbing at <https://youtu.be/lkxbm7v1JfE>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

Tree climbing is physical learning for a child at its best, This experience demonstrates the control and strength children can achieve with practice and freedom to explore.

Before they will ever be able to hold a pencil and write with control, a child at this age needs to have full control over their bodies and strength in their core muscles - arms, shoulders, joints and coordination are key if they will ever hold a pen or pencil comfortably - skills for life that will transfer to many other experiences.

"I KNOW HOW TO CLIMB TO THE TOP! WELL NOT RIGHT TO THE TOP, THE SKINNY BRANCHES AREN'T SAFE – JUST FOR BIRDS."

A GROUP OF CHILDREN TEST THEIR STRENGTH, ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER AND REACH NEW HEIGHTS

The footage demonstrates how effective children are in supporting each other.

The adult encourages the children to have control and as a result they are able to teach their friends new skills from their own experiences and feel good about themselves.

The children encounter very different problems as they are each on their own physical and emotional journey, and this is the key role for the adult to support this for each individual - this is not one size fits all. As they work to reach new heights the adult is connected to the surroundings and the amazing wonders that are occurring in nature, listening and feeling like a child does. It would be easy to start an experience like this with one goal - to reach a new place or learn a new skills. But instead, she draws the children's attention

to the smell, sounds and sights going on around them. From feeling the bark and questioning it's lumpy, bumpy texture - to listening to the birdsong in the branches above their heads. The children connect their existing knowledge to this and begin to theorise about how birds climb so well and how they indeed manage it without any arms. It is through this questioning and making connections that the adult supports the children to learn more about nature, comparing their own place in the space to the wildlife or indeed the things growing and changing with the season, It is Spring in England so whilst up the tree you get the best view of new buds exploding into life and birds collecting for their nests.



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Sam Kerr, Senior Educator from Boldon Outdoor Nursery says:

"If as an adult you feel ill at the thought of a child reaching heights above your head and control then supporting this kind of experience is not for you. As an individual, tree climbing is something I did as a child and feel confident to support and encourage, I have an ability to trust the children and not worry that they will fall. And if they do fall, then it was an accident

that they have been taught to manage well. As well as the huge impact it has upon their physical strength, it is so fulfilling to see a child's responses when they reach the top, achieve a new height or notice their increasing skills - that smile is worth one thousand words. Without this experience where will a child gain a new perspective, learn how to respond to the weather and seasons and take risks that will benefit their learning 10 fold?"

The children begin their journey moving across branches on a fallen tree, learning how to manage their bodies and coordinate their movements.

