

Education and Outreach Coordinator - 1st 3 month Update

An initial busy three months where I've been out and about getting to know the Woods, the local residents and making contact with all the schools, academies and youth groups in our area.

Visits to all the schools in the Evanton Wood catchment has meant that educational professionals can now make the link between outdoor learning and Evanton wood, this in turn can help support the delivery of the curriculum for excellence. Plans are now afoot to offer support to schools using the woods by running teacher training sessions, delivery of visits and follow on visits to schools and academies.

We have already run a pilot forest school programme with P7's from Kiltarn and Dingwall, the aims of this project was to create and develop an area known as 'the Dell' for use by toddler groups. The Dell is easily accessible for wee ones and the installations of rustic seating some *lean to* shelters (for hide and seek games) and the removal of obvious hazards has meant using the woods on a weekly basis can now be achieved. It was great to see the P7's helping to create a space for use by others and they also gained some practical woodland skills along the way.

We have also been working with local artist Lizzie McDougall who has met Simon and classes from Kiltarn Primary in the woods to check out the fantastic autumn colours this year. The aim of this project is to create an autumn banner, where all the P5, 6 & 7's will have played a part in creating. This will then be used at events to promote the work in the woods and as its all weather you may even see it hanging from one of the majestic trees in the woods soon!

Staff from St Clements school and Dingwall academy have been visiting the woods with the view of setting up long term project with young people, we have walked the woods, looked at the different habitats within and how these can be used to support their learning objectives.

All the educational establishments that have been contacted or have visited are excited about the range of learning possibilities Evanton offers. I have also been busy running outdoor learning training for school staff and even Evanton Wood board of directors were out tying knots, making clay faces and hearing about the different aspects of outdoor learning. CALA (care and learning alliance) staff have also spent a day in the woods learning how the outdoors can help support the development of toddlers learning, confidence and self esteem.

Mountain biking sessions have been run with great success, Evanton definitely has some future Bradley Wiggins in the making; I just wish these old legs could keep up!

For the new year we will be running a programme of events and activities, more mountain biking and Bushcraft a Junior Rangers club, more conservation workdays, school links, John Muir awards, Go-Mtb awards, easter egg hunts to name but a few.

I think 2013 is going to be a busy year.

If you like more information on any of the activities or how Evanton woods can support outdoor learning, please contact Simon on 07947772066 or email at simon.harry@forest-education.co.uk

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