



# Governors Woodland Classroom Visits 2019



At Downview School we learn and grow together every day

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## INTRODUCTION

Normally every year Governors have a Governors Open Morning in the school but this year we thought we would do something a little different.

As the children now use the Woodland Classroom as a learning area Governors are monitoring the impact this is having on the children and their learning.

Four Governors visited four different year groups over the course of a few weeks in order to see firsthand exactly what the children are experiencing when they have a lesson in the Woodland Classroom.

We have concluded that they all have a wonderful time in there and really enjoy it whilst at the same time learning about a plethora of subjects.

Governors would like to say a huge thank you to all the staff and children we visited and allowed us to join on their fun. We were made to feel very welcome.

## Governor Report - Year 1

Upon my arrival at Apple Class Year 1 at Downview School, I was made very welcome by all the pupils and staff.

Mrs Dewey began the afternoon by presenting a reminder to the Woodland Classroom rules. The rules were very engaging by using characters, make believe and pictures. One example of this would be the rules around not crossing or walking through the fire pit. This is the log seated area with a small hole in the ground to represent the campfire.

The children were extremely excited about going to the Woodland Classroom especially as recently there had been a new area added by students from the university.

To begin with the children was asked to explore the area take in the surroundings, listen out for wildlife and become familiar with the classroom.

After few moments the class retreated to the logged seating area where Mrs Dewey asked the children to clap their names based on how many syllables. Then once everyone had taken part the teacher started to read the book *The Stick Man* to everyone. This was very relevant due to the surroundings of the woodlands but also the task that was then set. The children were asked to get into twos in order to build their very own *Stick Man*. The Children proceeded to collect small twigs that were on the ground to make the body and arms of the character. String was brought to the area from the classroom in order to attach the arms to the body.

Once everyone had the chance to build a *Stick Man*, they all gathered back around the seating area to hear more of the story. Once this had finished the children made their way back to their main classroom to have their picture taken before the end of the day for their learning journals.

The children seemed to thoroughly enjoy their time in the Woodland Classroom, getting hands on building a stick man, story time and the chance to explore. All

the children were beaming with smiles, loving the different surroundings to continue their learning.

Upon return to the main classroom the children were asking when they would next be going back to explore the dragons lair.

Well done everyone at Downview for a beautiful area where children can enjoy the open air and continue their learning.

Thank you, class Apple, for making me feel very welcome and letting me help you build a Stick Man.

*O. Costen*

Parent Governor

## Governor Report - Year 2

For this visit I spent a very enjoyable morning with two Year 2 classes with a special focus on their work in the Woodland Classroom.

The teacher welcomed me to Plum Class and explained how the activities in the Woodland Classroom would be building on their work involving the story of 'The Little Red Hen and the Sly Fox'.

I was able to look round the room before the children arrived and observed lots of learning aids and interesting displays including many Number and Language prompts, Keeping Safe in IT and Child of the Week. One display featured 'Incredible Words' and 'phrases we could use' in connection with 'The Little Red Hen and the Sly Fox' story.

The teacher collected the class and they all quickly settled to their regular morning Number, Spelling and Reading tasks. The children had an opportunity to test each other on their spellings and the teacher also challenged children to volunteer to spell one of their spellings to the whole class. The children then packed away sensibly and quietly and came together on the carpet to prepare for their visit to the Woodland Classroom.

The teacher recapped how the children had been developing 'mini plays' with their 'talk partner' using stick puppets that they had made. The children were encouraged to practise their dialogue with their talk partner while they got ready to go outside.

Once outside, the class stopped on the grass area for a game of Fox and Hen. The children sat in a circle while they took turns to be the fox and chase the hen. They really enjoyed the game and were all keen to join in!

We then made our way through the gate and down the path to the Woodland Classroom. The children all seemed happy and excited to be going there. Once under the trees, the teacher explained that they were going to make little 'stages' on which to perform their mini plays. They could use any of the materials around them and construct the stage wherever they wished. When they were ready, they could collect their stick puppets and practise their play.

The children began to collect materials with great energy and enthusiasm.

Most children worked well with their talk partner to decide where and how to construct their stage. There were some interesting discussions when several children wanted the same piece of wood or space to build their stage, but overall, I was impressed by how well they cooperated with each other and worked together to achieve their goal. It was really interesting to see how many different 'stage' designs the children created and how they made use of all the natural materials. Some children were so busy enjoying the construction that they needed reminding to practise their plays!

The teacher then told the children that they were to take turns to go around performing and watching each other's plays. The children were reminded to try and keep the action going and to speak up using their fox and hen voices. It was great fun to go around and watch the different performances and the children enjoyed watching and performing too!

All too soon it was time to finish. The teacher explained that we must leave the area ready for the next class to make their 'stages'. It was good to observe how well the children deconstructed their stages and returned the various materials to their original locations. The class then returned to school for assembly.

I took the opportunity to attend the KS1 assembly. The children came in quietly and joined in with singing 'It's a Lovely Day'. A number of children received certificates for the house points they had collected. The teacher then told a story entitled 'The Bumble Bear'. Most of the children listened well and were able to answer questions about the story. The teacher reinforced the message that we are all special in some way. The children left the hall with their class teachers while singing the 'Downview School' song. The teacher explained that they have implemented a few changes in response to the recent Ofsted inspection. They now have separate assemblies for giving out certificates and celebrating birthdays so that there is more focus in each of these assemblies. Also, the children now sing as they are leaving the assembly as this encourages a calmer exit.

After break I returned to Year 2 and joined Cherry Class for their visit to the Woodland Classroom. The teacher reminded the children of the Woodland Classroom Rules as they prepared to go outside. These included: -

- Don't use loud voices so as not to disturb the wildlife
- Take care not to disturb any natural habitats
- Do not throw sticks or any other objects
- Don't run as you might trip and hurt yourself

Once outside the class stopped to look at the garden being created by some local students. It is really starting to take shape with the attractive white stone paths and lavender plants. We entered the Woodland Classroom and the children all sat in a circle on the tree stumps. The teacher encouraged the class to sit quietly and listen to the sounds around us. Sounds they noticed included birds singing, the breeze blowing, children playing in the nursery and fresh air! The teacher then explained to the class that they were going to make a stage and perform their mini plays to each other. The teacher and the TA made a simple stage and did a demonstration performance which the children really enjoyed. The children then joined their 'penguin partners' to begin the task.

Once again, the children worked well together to produce some very diverse designs. They enjoyed making use of the natural materials including incorporating trees and bushes into

their 'stages'. One pair even made a large screen TV, as a setting for their story, complete with a wooden remote control! While going around it was easy to see many of the aims for the lesson being demonstrated including working together, retelling a story, use of story language, use of imagination and performing and listening to each other. I asked some of the children what they liked about the Woodland Classroom and they said they really enjoyed working outside and making things together.

The teacher explained that this session was a follow on from last time when the children explored an art theme by using the natural materials to create a scene from their play. The next session will be about making potions which sounds very exciting and interesting!

The children tidied up and went out onto the grass area outside. Here they played some games including 'In and Out the Dusty Bluebells' and 'Fox and Hen'. It was then time to go inside and get ready for lunch.

Thank you, Year 2, for letting me share your time in the Woodland Classroom. It was great to see how the time spent in there was used to enrich and reinforce the class learning. It was also lovely to see the children enjoy being outside and connecting with nature. The Woodland Classroom seems to be an excellent addition to Downview School.

*Hazel Jones*

Co-Opted Governor

## Governor Report - Year 5

My visits were on a somewhat cold morning in June and were with the two Year 5 Classes of Maple and Redwood.

My first visit was Maple class. When I arrived they were all taking part in a Yoga workout. They do this every morning and was introduced by a student teacher who had been on teaching practice at the school. The children had enjoyed it so much it was decided they would continue. Adults and children alike were concentrating very hard on all the movements. I asked some of the children about it afterwards and they all said they really enjoyed doing the Yoga. After the Yoga the children were practicing their spellings. I walked around the classroom looking at some of their spellings and I was very impressed with the words they were learning.

I also looked at some of the work they had done on Turtles. Some of their work was being mounted ready to go on display - again I saw some fantastic creative work.

Before we went out to the Woodland Classroom the teacher explained that they would be combining Geography, Maths (in particular angles), clockwise, anticlockwise and compass directions. At this point every child was given a piece of paper with a number on it.

Once out at the seating area an arrow was made out of sticks to show what was clockwise and then anticlockwise. On the trees nearby were the letters depicting the compass points.

The children placed their numbers around the classroom making sure they would not be blown away by the wind. They then worked in pairs with one child giving another child directions of how to get from one number to another using the wordings as described to them in class. All the children had their Magpie books with them and were writing down these instructions for future use. The children had to guess how many steps or strides to tell their partner to take when giving them directions.

After a while the teacher announced to the great delight of the children, they were going to play Bob the Weasel. Everyone stood in a circle and then one person was nominated to stand in the middle with their eyes closed. A weasel was produced and everyone bounced singing "Bob the Weasel keep it going whilst the weasel was being passed around behind their backs. When instructed to, the person in the middle had to open their eyes and guess where the weasel was. If the person in the middle was looking in a certain direction and someone behind them had the weasel they could show it and those standing opposite could shout that they had seen the weasel thus giving the person a little clue. Once spotted the person holding the weasel and the person in the middle changed places. We all thoroughly enjoyed the game.

Unfortunately, it was then time to go back inside as break was looming. The children had to collect a number and then get themselves into numerical order to walk back to class. The children were very good at doing this.

I had a chat with a few of the children to ask them about the Woodland Classroom and they all said they really enjoyed going in there to do their learning.

After a warming coffee I joined the KS2 assembly. This was due to be a singing assembly led by Mrs Gapper and Mr. Norris but unfortunately, there was something wrong with the piano so assembly had to be changed. Mr Norris told the story of when he was part of the relay team on sports day at his school. The story covered about four years. Children were picked to play the various characters in the story. The underlining theme of the story was resilience and also encouraged the children to take part in the forthcoming Sports Day even if they did not win. It was a great story. I was told afterwards that he tells this story on an annual basis.

Following on from assembly I joined Redwood class. The children spent a few minutes writing comments in their maths books or maybe finishing a question etc.

After leaving the classroom they all stood in a line on the playground practicing turning clockwise, anticlockwise and various degrees such as 45° or 90°.

Once in the Woodland Classroom the children placed the numbers and again were giving each other instructions but this time the person receiving the instructions was also blindfolded. They were told that unless they were given exact instructions using the correct terminology they were not to move. The teacher also emphasised that they needed to be careful so that the safety of the blindfolded person was not compromised.

Again they wrote down the instructions and then they swapped them with another group to see if the instructions were accurate. This session was the next step on from Maple's session.

This time when the session came to an end as it was almost lunch time the children had to collect the numbers and get into numerical order in silence! This did not cause a problem.

Although the children were feeling a little cold this did not stop them getting on with their work and enjoying their lesson.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with year 5 in the Woodland Classroom.

*Sue Hawthorn*

Chair of Governors