

Outdoor Learning



Karen Wydler leads outdoor learning programmes in a variety of settings including schools, parks, community settings, museums and housing estates. Below are some examples:

Ashley Primary School

How can a whole school food growing project empower young people to be leaders in sustainability?’

This project was part of The Creative Partnership’s Enquiry Schools programme and the work provided opportunity to develop skills in designing and making artworks, the creation of outdoor learning spaces, as well as skills in food growing and cooking outside. The building of the earth oven was a highlight with one child saying, ‘That was my best day, ever’ and another Year 5 boy saying, ‘We were working, but it felt like playing!’



The child led sessions allowed for an exploration of the space in relation to themselves, which uncovered lots of creative opportunities that are now employed during breaks and lunchtimes.

Karen says: ‘I feel like we gave a whole new value to making things from natural materials, from

◀ mud pies to log piles, from dens to flower shrines, experiential learning makes memorable lessons. The main successes of the project for me were broadening of the scope of work already taking place in the grounds and the establishment of positive group, child led work. We had lessons where the children were asked to initiate activities and organise working together, which they did successfully. This brought about interesting dynamics between children and staff and helped

us to explore the inter relationships between each other, and of eco systems and their interactions.'



www.creative-partnerships.com

www.creativejunction.org.uk

Cogges Manor Farm Museum, Witney, Oxfordshire



A client's perspective – Cogges on Karen's involvement in their learning programme for 2011:

'The Learning Programme at Cogges has continued to thrive despite the site being closed to the public over the last two years. Lots of new projects have emerged through partnership with other Oxfordshire organisations and our Schools programme was again very popular with local schools.

We've been delighted to welcome nearly 500 children and teachers to take part in our Learning Programme this year, thanks to the generous support of the Cogges Agricultural Museum Trust. The themed days centred on outdoor learning, making the most of the wonderful setting of Cogges.

For 'Building & Baking' days each child made their own bread, baked in the woodfired oven and helped to construct our new earth ovens in the woodland area. Children with special needs from Springfield School really enjoyed all the sensory stimulation of kneading dough, the smell of bread baking and getting messy with clay and straw. Springfield were keen to integrate with a visit from Kingham Primary year 2's and the feedback was that "Both schools thought the day was great, with good integration – the activities were fantastic and all worked well."

Throughout the programme children have been helping to develop an inspiring Garden for Learning with Karen Wydler in the walled garden, creating hazel structures, signs and wind-chimes, and learning to plant and grow vegetables.

Over the summer we have also been running a project with families in the home education community with funding from Creative Junction. The 'What's Outside' project includes outdoor learning, gardening and creative arts as well as Philosophy for Children.'

Looking ahead

Future projects include 'Hidden' a project in partnership with OYAP (Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership) funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to connect young people aged 18-25 in the Witney area with local museums and heritage. Starting at the end of July we are recruiting young people to join the project now – no experience necessary!



www.cogges.org.uk

Weir Garden

A community garden will be created by Touchwood Trees this summer in Balham.

Here, an abandoned corner of a south London estate will be transformed into a beautiful communal garden, where people will learn about growing food and a wide variety of herbs, also creating a place to meet, eat and share the care of the plants.

Wooden features including seats, raised beds and sculptural forms will give the space a warm, organic aspect and mosaics and paintings will give a vibrant backdrop to the edible garden.

Weir Estate Residents Association say 'We are aiming to transform the area into a wonderful place for residents and local people to enjoy... ..as well as offering surgeries where residents and local people can get advice and skills in gardening. We also aim to be able to welcome local schools into the space.'

www.wera.org.uk/community-garden



Chalgrove Community Primary School

The setting for this project was Frogmore, a piece of land, 2.5 acres in size, adjacent to the school. The aim was to facilitate the children in making links with the local community to enhance and increase use of the field.

We created signs to name places, give direction and identify species. We conducted a habitat survey, mapped the area, made herb gardens and 2 willow domes and tunnels.

The children are now going out regularly for lessons and there are more plans for habitat improvement and study.

One member of staff, describing the creative partners: 'They were all fantastic with the children – not condescending – they pitch it at the right level and got the children excited and motivated straight away. Anything they do to enhance the relationship between the school and the community is really important' and 'They're not molded as teachers so don't think the same way as us, you become

constricted in your thinking and risks – outside people are just doing things and not worrying about that – it liberates you, its freer.'

www.permaculture.co.uk



Karen's Contact Info

Karen Wydler 07867683169
 touchwoodtrees@yahoo.com
 59 Clayton Road, Brighton BN2 9ZP
www.touchwoodtrees.co.uk

