

# OUTDOOR LEARNING THAT GROWS WITH THE CHILD

A case study with Our Pride Our Joy Nursery Group

Part of Fierte Multi Academy Trust



THE  
**OUTDOOR**  
TEACHER 

  
Our Pride  
Our Joy

# ABOUT OUR PRIDE OUR JOY NURSERY GROUP

Our Pride Our Joy Nursery Group operates across multiple nursery settings within Fierte Multi Academy Trust. Each setting is located on a school site, giving access to varied outdoor environments, from established woodland areas to newly developing green spaces.

The group operates a free-flow approach, allowing children to move naturally between indoor and outdoor environments. Practitioners focus strongly on high-quality adult interaction, observation and responsive support rather than rigid timetables.

Outdoor learning has always been part of their ethos. However, with multiple settings at different stages of development, leadership recognised the need to strengthen consistency, deepen practitioner confidence and expand the range of purposeful outdoor experiences across the group.



## THE DECISION TO INVEST

In September, the group invested in seven licences of The Outdoor Teacher's Forest School Activities Online Training.

The intention was clear:

- Build confidence across staff teams
- Extend existing outdoor provision
- Introduce fresh ideas that were practical and achievable
- Support practitioners leading outdoor learning
- Create greater consistency across multiple sites

Importantly, this was not about introducing outdoor learning from scratch. It was about strengthening what was already valued and embedding it more deeply across the organisation.

Sharon Shilling, Regional Manager, explains that each setting was at a different stage in its outdoor journey. Some had well-developed forest areas, while others were still establishing their spaces.

The training offered a flexible way to support all settings simultaneously, regardless of starting point.

## A SCALABLE APPROACH ACROSS SEVEN SETTINGS

One of the strengths of the training was its adaptability.

With seven settings accessing the course, practitioners were able to engage at their own pace and apply ideas appropriate to their environment.

Across the group:

- One nursery operates across three distinct outdoor areas, including a dedicated forest space.
- Another setting benefits from large green areas on a former golf course site.
- A newer school site is still developing its woodland, with trees still maturing.
- Some nurseries have access to wider school grounds and farm areas.

Despite these differences, the training provided a shared framework and common language around outdoor learning.

This supported consistency without forcing uniformity.

## STRENGTHENING PRACTITIONER CONFIDENCE

A clear outcome from the feedback was increased practitioner confidence.

One practitioner reflected:

“

We have always used forest school, but with my Outdoor Teacher Forest School Activities Online Training I feel more confident to lead activities.

”



Another shared:

“I feel confident in some areas from this course such as trying to make dens and outdoor shelters as well as exploring mark making with foraged materials and creating structures with sticks and clay.”

This confidence translated into action.

Staff reported:

- Trying new ideas
- Leading structured sessions such as Wild Wednesday
- Introducing rope and knot work
- Exploring den building more intentionally
- Developing mark making using natural materials
- Using clay, sticks and loose parts to create structures

For leadership, this confidence was critical. It meant outdoor learning was no longer dependent on one or two individuals, but embedded more widely across teams.

As one practitioner noted:



“

The help and guidance has helped us to carry out the activities.

”

## TANGIBLE CHANGES TO OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

The training also prompted practical improvements.

Across settings, nurseries reported:

- Expanding woodland play areas
- Introducing rope work and hand drills
- Adding seating stumps for gathering
- Improving layout and use of outdoor zones
- Moving from unstructured woodland access to more purposeful sessions

One setting described being:

“

One step further into woodland play and activities rather than just running around the woods.

”

This shift from passive access to intentional outdoor learning marked an important development.

Even in settings where resources were still growing, staff felt equipped to work creatively with what was available.

## IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The strongest evidence of impact came through practitioner observations of children.

Confidence was a recurring theme:

“

The children are becoming more confident exploring the woodlands, the equipment and building their listening skills when around the campfire.

”

Teamwork and communication improved:

**“While making dens we had fantastic team work and great communication.”**

**“The children are more willing to try to work together to achieve tasks as a team.”**

Curiosity deepened:

**“The children are now more naturally curious to find out how to do things and how things work.”**

Children returned repeatedly to favourite activities, particularly den building and loose parts play.

**“Children love building with branches, fabric and twigs.”**

In some cases, children reminded each other of woodland rules, demonstrating shared ownership and understanding.

Outdoor learning was becoming embedded in their behaviour and culture.



## EXTENDING BEYOND THE SESSION

The influence of outdoor learning extended into home life.

One practitioner shared:

**“A parent commented that their child went home full of excitement that we had built a big worm trap in the forest.”**

Children were reported to look forward to forest sessions and speak enthusiastically about their experiences.

**“The children are always keen to have forest school and look forward to it.”**

Parents responded positively to the visibility of outdoor learning within the nursery offer.

**“Parents are always happy to see their children learning and having fun in the forest area.”**

In some settings, families were invited to participate in sessions, generating strong engagement and requests for further opportunities.





## **SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE AWARENESS**

Outdoor learning within the group also aligns with the Trust's climate action mandate.

Each nursery has practitioners leading specific areas of development, including outdoor learning and sustainability.

Practical sustainability experiences include:

- Recycling discussions
- Reusing materials within play
- Mud kitchens stocked with reclaimed items
- Litter picking
- Creating bird feeders

These experiences support children's early understanding of caring for the natural environment in age-appropriate ways.

For leadership, this alignment strengthens both educational and organisational priorities.

## A FOUNDATION FOR CONTINUED GROWTH

The Forest School Activities Online Training provided a shared foundation across seven settings.

It supported:

- Scalable professional development
- Practical implementation
- Confidence building
- Consistency without uniformity
- Adaptability to different environments

Outdoor learning continues to evolve across the group, with plans to expand woodland areas, enhance resources and deepen immersive experiences.

The training did not replace what was already valued. It strengthened it.

For Our Pride Our Joy Nursery Group, the result has been deeper engagement, growing confidence and outdoor learning that continues to develop across multiple sites.

## SUPPORTING CONFIDENT OUTDOOR LEARNING

The Outdoor Teacher's Forest School Activities Online Training supports early years settings to build practitioner confidence, extend outdoor provision and introduce purposeful, structured activities that can be used every day.

Designed for real settings, it enables teams to develop their approach at their own pace, working with the spaces and resources they already have.

Across multiple sites, it provides a shared foundation that supports consistency, while allowing each setting to grow in its own way.

Outdoor learning is no longer an add-on - it is becoming a core part of how these settings support confident, capable and curious children.

Find out more at: [www.theoutdoorteacher.com](http://www.theoutdoorteacher.com)