

Holistic development at The Willows

Holistic development refers to a philosophy of education, it is a concept that sees each child as a whole person and develops all aspects of the learner: physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually; in preparation for life. The diagram below shows the different aspects that make up the whole learner.

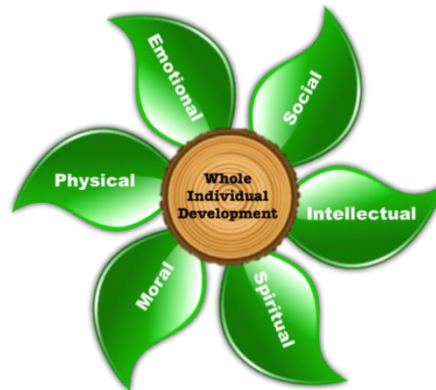


Image taken from Learning in the leaves (online)

Examples of how The Willows Forest School programme covers the different aspects of holistic development

| Element | Definition | Examples |
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| Physical development | The physical growth from birth to adulthood; both gross and fine motor skills of the body. Physical development is the progress of a child's control over his/her body. | Gross motor skills are developed through activities like; moving wood to build dens, balancing on beams, walking across a rope bridge, running/rolling down the mud slide, climbing trees. |
| Physical wellbeing | Physical well-being is about being safe, sheltered and in good health. It is closely connected to mental well-being. | Fine motor skills are developed through; den building, picking up items off the forest floor (scavenger hunts and bug hunting), building fires, using hand tools, tying knots, cooking and making mud pies/potions in the mud kitchen. All these activities and just experiencing the woodland environment develops children's senses, promotes fitness and has many health benefits; which |

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| | | impacts positively on children's physical wellbeing. |
| Social and Emotional wellbeing | Social and emotional wellbeing is essential for our overall health and wellbeing. Being socially and emotionally well means being able to realise your abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to your community. | Lighting fires, building shelters and making woodland crafts encourages children to develop their social and emotional development aspects through; working in groups, persevering and using resilience to have another go, thrive and achieve their goals individually or as a team. This therefore builds on children's self-esteem and their confidence, as they discuss the best way to achieve tasks and judge their skills with others. Fire lighting and the being in a calm woodland environment enables children to be reflective and develop spiritually and intellectually. Reflection time provides opportunities for children to discuss what has been achieved, problems they overcome, rules and fair play. It also encourages children to connect with the world, to respect and to love, this could be achieved through mediation. |
| Self-esteem | The judgement of one's own worth, skills and abilities both emotional and physical. | Working with others to build dens, light fires and complete tasks in teams helps children to develop their emotional intelligence as they learn to recognise, understand and manage their own and others emotions. |
| Confidence | The ability to have faith in oneself and others. | |
| Emotional intelligence | The ability to understand the way people feel and react and to use this skill to make good judgments and to avoid or solve problems. | |
| Resilience | The ability to recover quickly from disappointment, failure and challenges. | |
| Spiritual development | "Spiritual development, particularly in early childhood, often creates an atmosphere of morality that encourages healthy views of ethics and a strong sense of justice that motivates these individuals towards acts of kindness, compassion, and charity" (Robbins, 2017) | |

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| Creativity | The ability to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods and interpretations. | Children have the opportunity at The Willows Forest School to select their activities independently. They develop their creative skills by being able to choose the equipment and resources they need themselves and once they are competent to use hand tools they can develop their skills further by utilising them independently. Learners are given the opportunity to decide what games they wish to play or the type of shelter they wish to erect. Therefore, they source equipment they need |
| Independent learning | The ability to work on your own free from the influence of others. | independently and think creatively about what they can achieve with the resources they have. The Willows Forest School provides opportunities for children to create their own projects or choose open-ended activities that encourage them to explore/investigate/problem solve independently. Children learn from each other, they observe/hear their peers and magpie ideas to become creative; using different methods or interpreting an idea in different forms. |

The Willows Forest School is set in a tranquil setting surrounded by 'real' willow trees, where children have the opportunity to develop all the aspects above. Bishops Wood Centre states it's *"a truly holistic experience not bound by traditional 'school subjects'". Forest School can be seen as a way of integrating all human attributes and to equip individuals to live a fulfilling life and at the same time rise to life's challenges in a thoughtful and 'whole' global way".*