

DISCOVERY MAT, SHARING GOOD PRACTICE IN OUTDOOR LEARNING

On Wednesday 22nd January, Mrs Evans, Head of School at beechwood and Karen Rust, Team Leader at Weston Mill; previously English Lead at Beechwood, presented at the Outdoor Learning Conference at Plymouth's Marjon University, for PRinOL - Peninsula Research in Outdoor Learning.

Beechwood Primary Academy, part of Discovery MAT, was involved with the **Natural Connections Demonstration Project** for five years and through this has demonstrated that children articulate their feelings better when they are outdoors. We have a **STEM linked curriculum**, which focuses on 'The Discovery list' activities for each year group and uses the outdoor environment to provide enhanced learning contexts.

We believe that the outdoor environment is the early intervention we all need to solve the mental health issues for our children. There is no doubt about it, nature heals the soul! Our vulnerable children have access to **'The Hut'** a therapy-based centre which uses animals as a means to settle anxiety, and free access to outdoor space which allows them to unload the pressures in their lives. We also want all our children to engage with and love their natural environment to ensure that in future they will value it and join the fight to protect it.

Karen Rust shared the **'Lost words' project** in the session, which promotes the vocabulary of nature for our children through a poetry-based project, many of our parents at Beechwood attended the lost words assembly in the Summer



where we shared the children's work. The presentations were well received (see below) and some of the professionals will be supporting events at our schools in the near future.

'The event was amazing in terms of exploring outdoor learning in the capacity to engage children and promote learning across the curriculum. The examples from the schools this afternoon were truly awesome!...

The speakers who presented to teachers and outdoor specialists from across the South West included:

Udeskole: education outside the classroom in a Danish context, Professor Justin Dillon, University of Exeter Common factors in successful school-based learning experiences in natural environments, Dr Sarah MacQuarrie, University of Manchester Everyday teaching and outdoor learning: recognising the role of the teacher, Dr Jane Waters, University of Wales, Trinity St David Learning outside: flexible loose parts and a responsive pedagogy, Dr Frances Harris, University of Hertfordshire Exploring Forest School, Professor Michelle Jones Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Plymouth Marjon, Outdoor learning: Bridging disciplinary boundaries to respond to the child inactivity crisis?, **Stephen Lee, HMI Outdoor learning and the Education Inspection Framework and schools:** Liskeard Hillfort Primary, Sparkwell All Saints Primary School and Yealmpstone Farm Primary School.