

Pinner Wood School: A Young Tree Champion Beacon School

At a glance

Location: Pinner, London

Project theme: Trees and health and wellbeing

Number of students: 700

Free School Meals: 17%

English as an Additional Language (EAL): 67%

Nature connectedness progression 14.5% to 60.9%



Summary

Through its YTC project, Pinner Wood Primary developed its outdoor learning area and embedded this into the curriculum, developing opportunities for children to connect, learn and care for trees and nature in a beautiful outdoor space. Children, staff and the community use the space to improve their wellbeing after a challenging 18 months and grow a really strong connection with nature.

“Nature makes me calm and have a peaceful mind.” Young Tree Champion

Project background

Pinner Wood School’s project aim was to convert its previously unused outdoor space to create a forest school area and develop its outdoor curriculum centred around ‘Head, hearts and hands’ to support the children’s, teachers’ and communities’ wellbeing during the pandemic. The school completed the Force for Nature calculator and recorded a nature connection baseline average of 14.9% (nature as part of self).

Young Tree Champion activities

The class took part in a workshop with activities that enabled them to connect, learn and share their passion for trees and nature. One activity, ‘Finding your senses’, developed teamwork and trust and allowed the children to connect with nature in a different way. In pairs, with one child blindfolded, the children explored their outdoor area, ‘seeing’ nature in a different way and using their senses to make a deeper connection with the natural world around them.

“Hug the tree – such a good friend.” Young Tree Champion

“Trees listen. Trees are always there when you’re down. They don’t judge you.”
Young Tree Champion



Discussions about the nature and climate crises developed speaking and listening skills and helped children to process their emotions and articulate how the crises are affecting their mental wellbeing. This led to a reflective plenary session focusing on approaches to relieving their anxieties and concerns through taking action as individuals and as a group to be a force for nature. These discussions inspired the children to '[Speak Up for Trees and Nature](#)'.

Whole school outcomes

The pupil's nature connectedness recording progressed from 14.9% to 60.9% (nature as part of self). The teachers reported that children really enjoyed the workshop day, and it was the

"Highlight of their year." Jo Bretayne – Deputy Head

"Being close to nature feels magical and wonderous as there are extraordinary things which animals and plants can do when you're outside, immersed in it." Young Tree Champion

The school reported that children have gained in knowledge about growing, trees, planting and nature through structured and unstructured times in the garden and forest school. The children have reported feeling calm and happy when outside and are constantly requesting that lessons and assemblies be held outside where possible.

"Staff have a garden timetable each week that quickly fills up - the garden space is in demand...!" Sophy, Year 5 teacher.

The school have developed their grounds, planting the 5 trees to contribute to their outdoor classroom area and building a fire pit made from stones each decorated with individual messages from the school community.

"I felt that I was close to nature where I planted a bulb at the end of the school grounds." Young Tree Champion.

The school shared their activities with the wider community through school newsletters, their website, [Twitter](#) and the local press, as well as posting on the YTC Club Space. The garden area is used regularly by all children, including for school council meetings, staff meetings and weekly key stage assemblies. It is also used by families, some who otherwise do not have access to outdoor space, at a Saturday Gardening Club where families can enjoy being outside together.

Pinner Wood School submitted their self-assessment and has achieved Beacon School status.



