

## **Rocks Park Pond Project**

Over the summer of 2018, a team of parents, led by Will Hunt renovated the school pond and created a mud kitchen for the children.

It took the team a full day of clearance for the pond area, removing old decking, overgrown weeds, emptying the pond and removing the old liner – amazing the amount of pond life we found!

Just after the holidays started, it took a team of 12 parents to give the project a great start – creating a path from the KS1 playground leading to the outdoor classroom then linking to the mud kitchen and pond – lining and filling with play safe woodchip. Machinery was donated for the day by FNR Plant Hire – a parent of the school.

### ***Pond Area***

The pond area was our focus for the project. We started by levelling the 2 ponds so they are at a safe depth for the children to view the pond life, building the bridge, lining the pond – all hands-on deck!

Wood for the bridge was donated by Willows Saw Mill – a new parent to the school in 2018.

We refilled the pond quite quickly once it had settled to ensure we had an environment for the pond life to come back to – within 10 minutes of the water starting in the first pond we had 6 frogs making their way back to the area to then start their new life in a clean pond – frogs of all shapes and sizes, including the babies!

The pond was then lined with terram flooring to stop weed regrowth, covered with play safe woodchip and shingle. Large stones lining the area of the pond to clearly define the area in which the children can stand or access the pond.

Fence was repaired with replacement pickets and painted to give a bright and welcoming feel along with the bridge, this was painted a light colour with an anti-slip deck stain flooring for use in all weathers.

Trees were removed to improve the health and safety of the area and longevity of the pond to help the plants and pond life thrive.

Plants were added to the pond to help oxygenate the water and provide habitats for the pond life.

### ***Mud Kitchen for EYFS***

The mud kitchen was constructed from the fencing removed from the KS1 playground when the new school fencing was installed. This provided a suitably sized area for the children to have the mud kitchen requirements.

One half of the kitchen is for role play while the other half sensory.

Role play area has live edge wood for the mud kitchen surfaces also donated by Willows Saw Mill. This allows the children to have workspace to play, sinks donated by a parent's grandmother, a TA at the school and kitchen accessories donated by parents.

The sensory area has a range of herbs for touch and smell to awaken the children's senses, a shingle play pit, compost tubs and rocks for additional sensory play.

More aspects will be added to the mud kitchen as it progresses through the years and children – it's a great feature for EYFS learning.

In the area, we added Lavender in old tyres found on the school grounds to increase insect activity, a Buddleia at the top of the path to attract butterflies and plants outside the pond entrance.

### ***Additional Work***

Additional work covered over the summer was to help brighten the school play equipment and plants. The train and boat were painted with anti-slip desk paint to ensure safe play throughout the seasons, benches, flower pots and the play train were given a touch of paint. Planters at the front gates, reception, KS1 playground and mud kitchen were all given a revamp with new plants added for the school year.

Clearing of the area by the pond to ensure safe access and exploring. Some overhanging branches were removed to improve health and safety of the area.

### ***Thank you***

We were supported by SLM Toyota for this project. We couldn't have done it without their support. The kind and generous grant has improved the outdoor learning for children of all ages at the school and expanded the options of teaching for the staff.

The children now have an outdoor area to further learning, adding a fun aspect to the curriculum and breaking up the school day. The school's outdoor learning will expand in the future, SLM Toyota has allowed the school to take a huge step forward and for this we are extremely grateful.

Hopefully we will have the opportunity to work together in the future and further the school's environmental footprint for the children and their learning.

*On a personal point, as the project lead, as a family we had a fantastic summer doing this project. Thank you for this opportunity.*