



parenting



North London Forest School Nursery

Tried and tested
 by *The Sunday Times*
 and *Best Bear Childcare*
**"A CARING, INTELLIGENT
 SERVICE"**
The Good Nanny Guide
**LONDON AU PAIR AND
 NANNY AGENCY**
 INCORPORATING
NANNY SEARCH AGENCY
020 7435 3891
www.londonnanny.co.uk

Healthy learning for pupils in the great outdoors

Ekin Karasin investigates how Scandinavian-style forest schools have inspired a new al fresco nursery in Hampstead

Picture a group of young children making mud kitchens, climbing trees and building shelters in acres of woodland.

This isn't the setting of a particularly adventurous play date, but the beginning of a revolutionary kind of outdoor learning where the forest is the classroom.

Luana Munteanu is the brains behind the 'forest school', a trend that originated in Scandinavian countries like Denmark and Germany in the 80s. Now however, she is setting up the North London Forest School Nursery, a new establishment in the open spaces of Hampstead.

The official indoor base is All Hallows' Church, Savernake Road, Hampstead, but Munteanu assures me they're only inside when the weather is "extremely wet and stormy".

Each morning, children aged two to five will be dropped off at the Church before being led to various outdoor areas including Hampstead Heath, Kenwood House, or places further afield such as Epping Forest or Trent Park.

"The environment provides them with many opportunities for creative thinking, taking risks and building up their confidence,"

Munteanu enthuses.

The youngsters, a class of 16 managed by four forest school leaders, are encouraged to engage in activities like making dens, collecting rainwater and making stick people.

"Imaginative play is crucial to this kind of learning," Munteanu says. "So an upturned log they have found becomes a train that they go on a journey with, sticks turn into dogs and cats and a den becomes a dragon castle."

She continues: "They love setting up their own mud kitchen, where they can dig and mix mud and water."

The 38-year-old Highgate resident has a five-year-old daughter who attended local nurseries which she found to be "quite boring, constrained and not very inspiring."

She cites the endless opportunities of the natural world as her inspiration behind setting up her own forest school.

"It has always been fascinating to me how, from a child's point of view, being outdoors is so awe inspiring."

The activities may seem unconventional compared to those of an indoor nursery but Munteanu is quick to point

out the educational benefits of such a diverse outdoor setting.

"A typical day has adventure based activities that reflect the learning goals set out in the Early Years curriculum of science, literacy and mathematical skills.

"For example, the children will learn about mathematical concepts by measuring the lengths and thickness of trees and doing addition with conkers they have collected."

Munteanu, who has been teaching young children for the past 10 years, ran sessions with another forest school, 'Into The Woods', based in Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood for two years, before deciding to set up her own.

As only the second forest school to be set up in London, what lies ahead for Munteanu's vision?

"I want to open up the nursery to be more accessible to different backgrounds and have more of a social mix," she says determinedly.

As word spreads of the tree climbing antics of The North London Forest School Nursery, the future of outdoor learning seems undoubtedly bright.

Visit nfforestschoolnursery.com

Missed the paper?

looking for an older edition
or a specific article



Why not visit our archived
 editions online at
www.hamhigh.co.uk/e-edition