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| Woodland Learning Environment |

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| **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT:**Started in 2011, the woodland project involves students learning in a woodland environment adjacent to the school, where they can develop skills that will support them in adult life. All keys stage 3 students have one lesson per week outdoors: they learn about co-operation and relationships, develop their communication, problem solving, and safe risk taking skills, they are encouraged to work independently and in groups, and to use a range of tools to help manage the environment. One group of KS4 students helps to manage the woodland environment for learning, nature, and accessibility, working towards a Belvue accreditation which encompasses topics such as safe working practices, maintaining footpaths, planting woodland bulbs for biodiversity, and planting trees and shrubs. Other classes and tutor groups use and explore the woods where appropriate to learning topics and student interests. |

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| **THE GOOD PRACTICE IN DETAIL (how it improved outcomes for pupils)**The wood has been set up with a range of different learning environments to promote of learning. More than half of the space is wheelchair accessible although where possible steps have been installed at level changes to support students with gross motor difficulties/ low muscle tone etc. learn to manage them safely. Paths are clearly laid out and are maintained by students to promote their understanding of safety and accessibility, and lanterns are hung as cues to visually mark routes of movement. Temporary covers can be quickly set up with tarpaulins to provide extra cover in poor weather.Outdoor learning environments include:* Wilderness
* A wildlife garden
* Two fire pits
* A meadow

Covered learning environments include:* A yurt
* A roundhouse

Learning is sufficiently structured to ensure safety, but relaxed enough to promote the development of independence and free-choice.An action research project, jointly funded by Belvue School and the Shine Trust, and supported by London Metropolitan University’s School of Education and Social Sciences, is running through the 2016-17 academic year. It seeks to understand why out SLD complex students acquire language quicker, and generalise its use faster, when working in the woods, and will result in a new curriculum for UK wide schools. |

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| **Impact on pupil outcomes:**Students enjoy their time in the woods and are able to say what they want to do there. They are able to contribute towards it management and development as a woodland learning environment.  Whilst clear rules and expectations are continually enforced to help students understand the levels of safety and behaviour that are required, they are encouraged to explore, take risks, and to be as independent as possible. These expectations, now well established, have enabled students to safely work with a range of tools (e.g. augers, axes, draw-knives, loppers) and to learn a range of skills (fire-lighting, moving heavy objects etc.), and in so doing, they have begun to meet their own O.T. needs.We have noticed that learning in the woods enhances students feelings of wellbeing, independence, and self-esteem, and that it aids the development of functional communication. These help those who are likely to seek employment after leaving Belvue to develop work related skills: for our students with more severe learning disabilities, the woods provides a place to learn about independence where independence within their communities may be some years off, or not possible to achieve, and to find pleasure and enjoyment in natural spaces. |