



Nature School - One day School by Nature School NZ

To whom it may concern,

Nature School NZ Trust are a local Educational Trust offering the Nature School programme. This is a weekly, long-range (School term) program with the mission of enabling as many as possible NZ children to learn from and through nature. Nature School is influenced by the Forest School philosophy, which is becoming recognised and hugely popular in NZ and worldwide as Schools embrace play based learning. Research shows us that children are missing out on opportunities to play the way generations before them have, and that children are lacking social skills, physical literacy (hauora) and the ability to solve their own problems; having increased levels of anxiety and health problems, simply from missing out on the opportunity to play. As children experience nature throughout the seasons, they are gifted with innumerable opportunities for memorable, authentic learning.

Nature School is run on Wednesdays at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park in Pauahatanui, from 9-3pm. Children will have the opportunity to make their own choices and follow their own interests and curiosities within a framework of respect for those around them and the environment. Our educators observe the children closely, document their learning through photos and extend their thinking through authentic conversation, the provision of resources, and offering of skill building in areas such as navigation, animal/plant biology, pest animal eradication, crafting, rongoā Maori/plant uses, shelter building, or fire building.

Providing opportunity to learn in a mixed-age setting is another key aspect of our programmes. Children learn by observing and interacting with others who are more experienced than they are. Benefits for younger children include opportunities to engage in and learn from activities that would be too difficult for them to do alone, learning from and being inspired by older children, and receiving care and emotional support. Benefits for older children include opportunities to practice and develop their nurturing and leadership skill and capacities, and to extend their own learning through teaching others. Age mixing also works as an antidote to competitiveness and bullying.

A DAY AT NATURE SCHOOL

Every day at Nature School will be different, as although we visit the same area with the same people, nature constantly offers changing seasons, new ideas and new learning.

The group of (maximum) 12 children will begin each day at 9am with a safety circle hui (meeting), talking about our two keeping safe rules. We do a brief dynamic risk assessment at the start of each day, and upon entering an area new to anyone in the group. This is a brief conversation about the hazards present in the areas we use, what we need to be aware of and to avoid. This might have children thinking about tree climbing choices, fire safety, knife safety, good choices around water, areas slippery when wet, previous injuries children have that might mean everyone needs to take extra care of them that day, checking pest traps safely (not touching them), and sharing past learning from the area/activity. These conversations will be more in-depth in the beginning, but as children become experienced risk-assessors, they might just need reminders where necessary.

Next we will hear from everyone what their plans are for the day. Children will sometimes be all together, and sometimes form smaller groups based on their interests at that time. Options will be influenced by the weather, what others are choosing and what they might have been working on or planning from the week before. Some activities that might be chosen are fire lighting, cooking on the fire, making dens, stream studying, make-believe play, missions up or down-stream, bum sliding, running, rope swinging, whittling or creating something out of wood and other materials, climbing up and jumping off things, searching for bugs or eels, feeding the eels, checking pest traps, geocaching, navigational skills, reading, drawing, group games, climbing trees, racing sticks or boats in the stream.....the list can go on for ever and we never really know what children will come up with when they have the freedom of choice and no perceived limits!

At Nature School, children will gain:

- ♦ Self confidence
- ♦ Leadership opportunities and skills
- ♦ Risk assessing skills and confidence in challenging themselves
- ♦ Fitness, balance and healthy body
- ♦ Social competence skills
- ♦ Problem solving skills
- ♦ Knowledge of and love for the environment ...and much more



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WHAT WE HOPE FOR FROM YOUR SCHOOL

We hope to form a reciprocal relationship with each child's School, so that their learning from Nature School and in their normal School can complement each other. The New Zealand Curriculum sets out a vision for young people to be "confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners," and "connected to the land and environment." We are pleased to work alongside our NZ schools to grow the learners of the future.

We are not required to register through MOE as we are not a school. We are a small educational trust running a programme for kids, there are similar programmes to ours in Auckland and in the Hutt Valley. We are happy to provide our health and safety, risk assessment, and insurance policies upon request, and you are more than welcome to come observe one of our sessions in action, please let us know if you would like to arrange a visit. We will provide your school with attendance records for children enrolled at your school at the end of each school term.

We have been advised that our programme falls under the New Zealand Education Act section 25B Release from school: The principal of a State school may, if satisfied that a student will receive outside the school tuition acceptable to the principal, release the student from attendance at the school, for a period or periods agreed with a parent of that student, to receive the tuition. In regards to marking students absent or present the school will determine how to proceed. You may decide to mark 'explained absence'. You may choose to use the same protocol as when students go overseas for a holiday, or attend a gifted and talented programme once a week, most Schools choose to use the "Q" code.

Please visit our facebook page or website or get in touch for more information, we would love to hear from you.

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