**Arley Primary School**

**Governors Report - School Trip**

**Name:** Lexie Gardner – Parent Governor

**Location:** Brandon Marsh Nature Centre

**Date:** Tuesday 18th September 2018

**Class:** Year 3 and 4

Today I had the pleasure of accompanying Year 3 and 4 to Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve based in Coventry. The purpose of this visit being to support the children’s learning this term covering a variety of subjects such as Science and Geography.

Brandon Marsh is the headquarters of the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, set in 220 acres, the Reserve consisting of large pools, grasslands, meadows and woodlands to name but a few and is a Site of Special Specific Interest.

The children excitedly boarded the coach, dressed for fun indoor and outdoor workshops coupled with the possibility of inclement weather. We arrived at Brandon Marsh to be greeted by bright skies and our dedicated Rangers at the ready where we we’re led to its own purpose-built classroom in the Education Centre.

It was here we we’re introduced to the Rangers and given the outline of what the day would consist of. We also received a tour of the classroom, informing the children of the various displays, mini beasts and other interesting creatures, which the children could freely explore at lunchtime.

The children sat politely listening and participating when required to do so, engaging at appropriate times, whilst keen to get going.

With the day consisting of a number of activities, the entire trip was split into 3 groups. I joined Mrs Christie who was leading one of the Year 3 groups. We remained in the classroom to start the first activity about Food Chains. The Ranger had lots of props and flash cards to explain the process of the Food Chain. The children put their hands up to volunteer to assist with the props, made conscious efforts to answer questions and quickly picked up on how the Food Chain worked and its requirements to be successful. Their knowledge was tested by getting into smaller groups, each child having some examples of things contained in a possible Food Chain and having to put them in the right order, which they all executed correctly, showing they had listened, understood and recalled the information given to them. One child was particularly impressive with his knowledge in answering some questions relating to this topic.

For our second activity, we gathered in the courtyard to walk down to a woodland area where the children we’re tasked with Mini Beast hunting. Each child was given a small clear pot and a brush to see what animals and /or insects they could collect. The aim of this was to identify ‘dry’ and ‘wet’ animals, collect them accordingly and gently empty them into either the dry box or the wet tray. During the briefing the Ranger used flash card examples of what potentially the children might find when exploring. The children managed to correctly recognise each of the mini beasts presented to them. Tools at the ready, off they went exploring, the children discovered that if they went to the very edges of the plants where the softer damp ground was located and stamped their feet, this would loosen the earth and encourage the worms, slugs and alike to surface. Likewise, on tree bark, logs and in the leafier areas they found beetles, spiders, moths plus a rare ladybird. Eagerly they would rush back to present their creatures to the Ranger and place them in the relevant tray or box according to what they had found. They accomplished this task well and worked together, helping one another when other children we’re struggling to find creatures in the first instance. It was amazing to see when we all re-grouped to see that each child had found something interesting with the array of mini beasts displayed in the trays. The children recognised the importance of returning these creatures back to their natural habitat so as the activity drew to a close, the Ranger allowed two of the children to delicately empty the tray and box back into the soil, which they carried out superbly, showing due care and attention.

With lunchtime fast approaching, the children had certainly worked up an appetite especially with all the fresh air. During lunchtime, the children we’re given the opportunity to explore the items in the classroom. These consisted of a snake skin recently found onsite, rabbit skulls, a stuffed woodpecker, actually from the Reserve, a functioning bee hive and many more items. The children intriguingly gravitated to the table displaying the snake skin, which they found very interesting to touch and feel aswell as the bee hive. Here they saw the home of hundreds of bees and at the beginning of the morning we’re informed that the queen bee had a spot on her back. I was impressed to see the children had remembered the Rangers earlier instructions of only having 4 people around the table at any one time and took it in turns to see if they could spot the queen bee, which they did, despite it being full of busy identical bees!!

The final activities of the afternoon consisted of Den Building followed by Mapping! We we’re led across the meadow into a small woodland area where our Ranger gave the children their next task. Before this commenced they were given some key information in relation to what key skills were required to execute this well.

This included some of the following:

* Work as a team
* Listen; concentrate on what your hearing and not thinking about what you want to say
* Be positive and encourage one another
* Allow others to express their way of how they would carry out the task

As the task unfolded the children really came to life and fully engaged in the activity, each group came up with a varied version of their den, which had to consist of key elements; a roof, walls, door and a fire. The worked together carrying logs, exchanging ideas of how they envisioned the walls, worked quickly and effectively against the clock to produce a shelter suitable to survive in the wild. More importantly, they incorporated the skills of listening, working together cohesively whilst supporting one another to complete the finished article. The children we’re extremely proud of their achievements!!

To end such a fantastic day, Year 3 took to learning how to use a compass and how this skill will enable them to navigate on a hike or even follow a map; highlighting the importance of having the knowledge and understanding of telling direction. The children experienced handling a compass and setting a bearing. The next challenge was to see if they could navigate their way to some set locations using the compass and instructions given. North was set and off they headed – putting their geographical skills to the test, I am pleased to report they successfully arrived at each location. To complete this activity the children we’re assigned with a mapping exercise and had to correctly identify certain land marks and where they were positioned on the grid. Each child took this in turns and really got to grips with this brilliantly, easily plotting the co-ordinates.

The overall perception of this trip was one of fun, great team work with engaging activities where each child will have gone away having learnt and taken something valuable from today’s visit. Their behaviour, manners and listening skills were reflected in their ability to complete each task and rise to challenges and activities set before them to the best of their ability.

Not only will it reinforce and support their learning, but it will remind them of key skills as they go through a variety of stages in life, equipping them accordingly.