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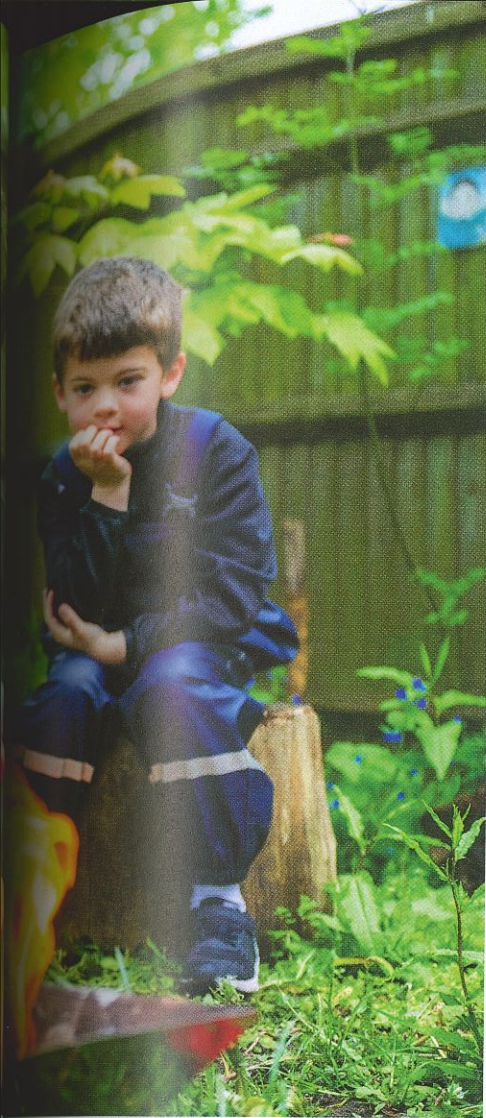
BREADTH OF
OPPORTUNITY IN
THE HEART OF THE
COTSWOLDS

SUPER SCIENCE

WHY SMART SCHOOLS TAKE SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

PLUS

RESILIENT MINDS *Helping children to develop the strength to try, try again*
TOMORROW'S CAREERS *Expert insights into helping young people find their path*



essential to helping children push beyond their perceived limits. Positive feedback, house points, and awards celebrate not only top achievements but also the effort it takes to overcome hurdles. With problem-solving, sports, and mindfulness embedded within the curriculum, pupils have the tools needed to be resilient and confident learners.

THE KING ALFRED SCHOOL

At The King Alfred School (KAS) in North London, Head of Lower School Karen Thomas says we adults need to resist our natural tendency to protect the children in our care at all costs as it's not in their best interests. "It does little to equip them with the tools and strategies they need to live healthy, happy lives," she says. "Understanding what to do when faced with adversity is woven into the fabric of our educational provision," she adds. "We place as much value on how we learn as what we learn."

The KAS approach is that a shared language and an expectation for children to review themselves as learners is key to developing effective learning dispositions, including resilience. "By helping children identify, understand and expect the feelings we get when something challenges us, we start to dispense the mystery of the



BELOW
Christ Church
Cathedral School
pupils explore
outdoors

"CLASSROOM TALK OFTEN REFERENCES 'BOUNCE-ABILITY' - HOW DO WE GET BACK UP AFTER SOMETHING IS TOO DIFFICULT?"

learning process, allowing children to be curious and brave rather than afraid when they are not immediately successful."

The concept of "productive struggle" is introduced to the youngest children as an important indicator that learning is happening. In the Early Years, for instance, resilience is also addressed through books – KAS favourites include *Tilda Tries Again*, *After the Fall* and *Yes You Can, Cow*. Together, teachers and children analyse characters' emotions and actions from the safety of the story corner and this helps pupils to make links to their own learning experiences.

"Classroom talk often references 'bounce-ability' – how do we get back up after something is too difficult? We teach the children the science of learning – how their brain can grow and strengthen when

they take risks, learn new skills, solve problems, and make mistakes," says Karen Thomas. "We talk with children about having a growth mindset, scaffolding their approach to challenge with a positive mental attitude."

Above all else, helping children become resilient relies on teachers and caregivers really knowing each child. "When we know their different strengths, experiences and levels of confidence, we are able to provide the right level of challenge at school in terms of the learning experiences we design," says Karen Thomas "We help children to identify when something is too easy, too hard or just right, so that they can exercise their 'resilience muscle' safe in the knowledge that that we will be there to champion their efforts, to cheer them on or to offer a helping hand."

BICKLEY PARK SCHOOL

“Perseverance is a key School value here at Bickley Park,” says Headmaster Tom Quilter. “We aim to model and promote the benefits of a growth mindset, embracing the concept that failure is a key part of success. Imagine, if as babies, we gave up the first time we fell? We would never learn to walk. Some of my favourite assemblies, centre on the theme of learning to pick ourselves back up.”

The Bromley prep and pre-prep loves to remind children that it’s not that they can’t do it, they just can’t do it yet. “We are determined to make sure that we identify, nurture and celebrate every child’s strengths and talents. By finding that spark – ensuring efforts are rewarded and then celebrating achievement – we see self-esteem snowball,” adds Tom Quilter.

The curriculum is framed around what are known as the Four Quadrants of Learning – Academics, Sport & Outdoor, Arts plus Community. “Together they arm our pupils with skills for life – a love of learning; the ability to communicate confidently; the desire to contribute meaningfully to society and to show initiative; resilience, teamwork and the confidence to take risks.”

Sport & Outdoor is especially key to developing resilience and confidence, with sport sitting alongside a Forest and Adventure School programme. “We aim to foster teamwork and leadership skills, whilst developing independence and the ability to manage risk,” adds the Head. “And we believe in sport for all – for example, ensuring that all pupils are exposed to healthy competition and can represent the school throughout their time with us.”

The Adventure School programme builds on forest school sessions and sees all children in Years 3-8 taking part in residential trips which focus on progressively demanding skills and challenges – from camping in the Peak District and the South Downs to a kayaking adventure along the Cornish coast.



ABOVE
Pupils at The King Alfred School are taught to see failure as part of the learning journey

In all of these adventures, Tom Quilter believes it’s important to foster a culture where pupils recognise the importance of supporting and looking out for others. “We foster kindness, inclusion and respect in everything that we do,” he says. “We pride ourselves in being a kind school that celebrates and embraces diversity.”

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

At CCCS in Oxford, the boys are encouraged to ‘give things a go’, says Deputy Head (Pastoral) Nick Harrison. “From a young age through lessons, assemblies and play times we try to instil the belief that giving things a go and getting them wrong is much better than shying away from difficult situations. Our teaching staff are careful not to discourage our pupils from raising their hands during lesson time, even if they think they are wrong.”

There’s a new enrichment programme at the prep, which helps to reinforce this by giving boys the chance to take part in activities they wouldn’t normally do. “Our hope is that, through this programme, we can continue to

increase our boys’ resilience and increase their opportunities to explore activities they might enjoy and find challenging.”

Alongside enrichment, PHSE is used to help guide pupils to understand their strengths and weaknesses. “We find this an invaluable process that enables them to enjoy the experience of being good at something alongside the challenge of improving at something else,” says Nick Harrison.

Sport and wellbeing are a big part of school life, despite the school’s city central location. “We make sure our pupils know that they are in a privileged position to be able to play on such wonderful playing fields (Christ Church Meadows) and take part in woodland activities whilst still being in the heart of Oxford.” Pre-Prep pupils have dedicated Woodland School lessons, now being introduced through to Year 8 as part of enrichment. “We are able to reinforce key messages that help to build resilience and help with their general wellbeing,” adds Nick Harrison.

In common with many schools, there’s a focus on effort-based praise. “We firmly believe that if our pupils focus on trying their best, rather than achieving the best mark, there is no ceiling to their learning. We find this attitude often leads to more resilient children and ultimately excellent results when testing in a more formal manner.”

CCCS is also a small school, with a family feel, so children are known. And it has a linear pastoral system, where older children visit younger classes, especially during Form time. “We find this ‘buddy system’ gives boys the opportunity to speak to a range of ages and helps them to feel included and nurtured at every level.”

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