

We're going on an adventure!

Naomi Bartholomew OF ST CATHERINE'S PREP SCHOOL EXPLAINS HOW RESIDENTIAL TRIPS AND OUTDOOR EXCURSIONS NURTURE A CHILD'S RESILIENCE

Young children are naturally curious and resilient; they enjoy watching their Lego tower fall to the ground as toddlers, and observe with joy and anticipation as they remove the bucket from a fragile sandcastle, unsure of whether it will stand tall or not.

As children start school, this curiosity and natural ability to learn through failing can start to ebb away. Even by the age of six, kids are aware of 'results' and compare their achievements with others.

However, if we're able to provide safe, fun spaces for children, and encourage them to continue to be curious and learn through failing, their resilience both inside and outside of the classroom is far more likely to be secure. We all experience knocks in life, and many say that they judge others best by how they respond in a crisis. We don't want to go back to times we may have experienced ourselves, where failure and humiliation went hand in hand, and yet we do need to ensure that we don't remove all of their challenges and obstacles. If we remove risk and challenge, the result is that they don't have a sense of having achieved for themselves.

How, then, can we build resilience and nurture curiosity in primary-aged pupils? Outdoor play is very important, as is making opportunities for kids to play across age groups.

Extracurricular activities are also vital, as these allow children to develop their own talents and interests, which often build different skills from those needed in the classroom. Hobbies require some commitment, too, and a sense of seeing something through to an end result whether that be baking, learning a musical instrument or touch rugby.

However, I feel strongly that



Getting children outdoors provides many opportunities to nurture resilience

educational visits and residential trips are absolutely key to helping children build confidence. We encourage these at St Catherine's, and construct a programme that ensures that children are taking steps to be away from home for one night in year three to four nights away in year six. Such experiences may start with a visit to a local farm, and culminate in children rock climbing and abseiling. Regardless of the nature of the visit, working with peers in a different context and environment, often with different adults too, is a very valuable experience.

It's clear the confidence gained through such opportunities can be transferred into an academic context. We often say to pupils in year six that if they can climb a telegraph pole at a PGL camp, they can take on algebra. It's also the case that we observe leadership in children when outside of the classroom,

and particularly when out of their comfort zone. Again, this can easily then be encouraged back in the classroom when they're working collaboratively to solve a problem.

As parents and teachers, the following behaviours are useful to build resilience both in and out of the classroom: making connections; helping others; maintaining a daily routine and seeing things through; taking a break; asking for help having tried first; moving step by step towards goals; celebrating effort; keeping things in perspective; learning through experimentation; and accepting that change is a part of life.

Armed with these guiding principles, we're well placed to ensure children in our care are resilient, curious and flexible in their outlook and will be in a strong position to respond to challenges and learn from them. **1**