

New 'Forest School' built by volunteers from Balfour Beatty VINCI and HS2 in Birmingham

3 years ago



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- The Forest School "helps the children's confidence, self-esteem, independence, and communication"

Pupils at Paget Primary School in Birmingham have spent the Autumn term enjoying a new educational 'Forest School' thanks to volunteers from Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV) and HS2.

A team of volunteers, including apprentices, from BBV's nearby Bromford Tunnel Shaft construction site have created the new outdoor area in the school premises.

Forest School is an educational model that encourages children to learn and develop, both physically and emotionally, through play, activities and exploration in an outdoor environment.

Over four days, the volunteers levelled the area and laid tree bark, before installing tables, chairs, a fire pit, a 1000 litre water butt, two mud kitchens, a bug hotel, bird tables, bird boxes, and area to practice country fence weaving.

They also installed a stretch tent, laid a concrete path for wheelchair access from the Forest School to the main school building, and installed a 50 metre garden hose. BBV donated timber, the stretch tent and other materials needed to create the new area.

In addition, BBV's supply chain companies stepped in to help, with SIG PLC donating £3,000 worth of hand

tools, including shovels, spades and plastic utensils for pupils to use. Murphy also donated 30 tonnes of bark chippings for the Forest School floor.

Stephen Quinn, Works Manager at Balfour Beatty VINCI, who leads the team helping to deliver the Bromford Tunnel Intermediate Shaft said: “As HS2’s construction partner for the West Midlands, our responsibility extends beyond delivering 90km of railway. We’re passionate about supporting local communities too, making sure they benefit from the work that’s going on around them.

“That’s why I’m so proud of the work we’ve done recently to support Paget Primary School, which is just on our doorstep. It’s incredibly rewarding for my team and me to know that children for years to come will be able to learn and develop in this wonderful outdoor environment.”

Lucy Holmes, Forest School Lead at Paget Primary School said: “Paget Primary School would like to say a huge thank you to all involved. Forest School is a fantastic way of helping children learn in a hands-on experience. In Forest School we learn the importance of looking after nature and exploring the Forest area, which helps the children’s confidence, self-esteem, independence, and communication.

“The children will learn how to use different tools, light fires and cook on an open fire safely. It’s important to explore the natural environment around us and learn from it. The children learn to problem solve and manage risk.

“Since starting the sessions it’s amazing to see the difference in the children and I’m very lucky as I get to teach them in class and see the benefits Forest School has on our children. We love the outdoors and thanks to the generosity of all involved, this has made sure we can access our site all year round.”

Balfour Beatty VINCI is HS2’s main works contractor in the West Midlands, who are constructing 90km of railway between Long Itchington in Warwickshire to the centre of Birmingham and on to Staffordshire.

A team of 450 people are currently building the 3.5 mile Bromford Tunnel which will take high speed trains from Warwickshire into Birmingham as they approach Curzon Street Station in the heart of the city. Around 9,750 people in the West Midlands are currently working on the HS2 project.