

IBSTOCK PLACE SCHOOL

NATURE STUDY SYLLABUS

The main object in the Nature Study of this school is to educate the children's innate curiosity regarding their natural environment and to foster their love of Nature.

When children are engaged in a process of observation in search of something that has previously excited their curiosity, each stage will have meaning and purpose, stimulating interest. This will develop the powers of reasoning from facts and the whole process will approach scientific enquiry.

Seasonal study of nature readily stimulates the children's curiosity and much of the work with younger children is based on these lines. The younger children have, with living things, a kinship of which they are only dimly aware, which makes the study of creatures and plants, which are alive, a provocative one.

Since the life of plants and animals cannot be rightly understood apart from the relationship of each to the other, and of both to the physical environment, some work is done with the older children on the effects of the physical environment of living things.

It is incompatible with a true conception of Nature Study that schemes of work should be made which demand a detailed course for each week or month of the year. Below are suggested topics for study which have arisen from time to time out of the children's interests. They are given now as a guide to the ages at which different types of living things will be of particular interest, so that varying approaches may be made to this study, thus the whole will become a progressive approach to the level of scientific study of the laboratory.

Nursery and Kindergarten
up to 6 years

Nature Study for the younger children will be largely incidental and will centre round:-

- 1 The Nature table with contributions from children and teacher.
- 2 Expeditions to the lake and grounds and to Richmond Park.
- 3 Indoor and outdoor gardening.
- 4 Visits to the children's Nature Room at College.

The 6 year olds will be able to contribute drawings and written records to a Nature Diary kept each term.

Transition
6-7 years

The lessons are usually dictated by the interest of the children who have brought in specimens or asked about special things. The following have been studied during a year:-

Tracks in the snow; winter habits of different animals; trees in winter and spring; flowers of trees; frogs and toads as spawn; tadpoles and adults; newts; caddis; water beetles; pond snails; moor hen; water crowfoot; pond weeds; a common shrew; the garden snail; wild flowers and grasses; spiders and their nests.

Form I
7-8 years

Seasonal changes: Weather study and movements of the sun.
Leaf fall and fungi.

Garden work: Keeping of a form garden.
Fruit and seed dispersal.
Garden spiders, snails and earthworms.

Seed planting and germination.
Bird residents in the garden in Spring.
Setting up and keeping an aquarium.

Throughout the year a Nature table is kept with appropriate records and diaries.

Forms II and III
8-10 years

Two series of B.B.C. lessons are followed in these forms; "How Things Began" regularly in Form II and the Nature course sometimes in Form III. Much work arises out of these lessons during the discussion following the broadcasts, the trend this takes varying considerably according to the interests of groups of children.

As well as this it is found that the following work proves to be particularly valuable at this stage:-

- 1 A complete record for the whole year with bark rubbings, leaf prints, uses of wood, etc. of the following trees:- beech, plane, sycamore, oak, horse-chestnut and lime.
- 2 Identification of wild flowers, with particular reference to the school garden, and records kept.
- 3 Bird residents in Autumn, Spring and Summer, with particular stress on migration and nesting localities.

Form Lower IV
10-11 years

A year's course in physiology. The study of the human body and its relationship to the bodies of other animals. Digestion, breathing, circulation, the nervous system, reproduction. The children should learn to make neat and clear diagrams, to tabulate their findings in good note form and to glean knowledge from books. Each child has a copy of Bibb's "An Experimental Biology".

Forms Upper IVB and IVA

During these last two years greater stress is laid upon accuracy and clear statement in written work.

Evolution, with particular reference to horse and bird.

Detailed mammal study.

Parts of a flower, pollination in connection with farm gardens.

Life history of insects.

Detailed study of adaptation of birds to flight.