

Forest View: Sowing New Seeds in Residential Care – Video Transcript

Speaker	Transcript
Executive Director Audrey Baird	When we designed Forest View, we very much worked towards creating an environment that was therapeutic so the colour schemes, the light and the space within Forest View is deliberate in terms of a trauma-informed approach.
Clinical Director Dan Johnson	<p>So, Forest View is essentially a campus that has been designed for children from the age of five – twelve, who frankly haven't had the experiences that we would wish children to have. So, high levels of adversity and trauma.</p> <p>The question we tried to answer was 'what environment would be best for these children to give them what they need'. And what has come out of that is an environment that utilises lots of nature, animals, a rural community, outdoors, but also tries to create connections and positive ways of working indoors as well.</p>
Executive Director Audrey Baird	Outdoor education is a huge part of learning at Forest View. The kids can put on their wellies, they've got a boot room, they can put on their wetsuits and they can go outside and get mucky, splashing in puddles, climbing trees, playing with the animals, feeding the animals, reading to the animals. It is a place they can have lots of fun and feel safe and where they can take risks in their play.
Depute Head Teacher Angela Pilkington	<p>This campus is in the heart of Lochwinnoch. We are surrounded by forest, trees, and it's really quite a therapeutic setting.</p> <p>Forest View Primary school specialises in working with children from the age of five up to twelve years of age. We specialise in working with children who have possibly experienced trauma in their lives or adversity, or they may have another wide range such as ASD or ADHD.</p>
Clinical Director Dan Johnson	From its inception it has been designed to be therapeutic and trauma-informed, and attachment informed from the start. So, from the location to the way the space is, to the way classrooms are organised, even to which staff we have there, has all been designed to meet the needs of children with these experiences, and to respond to them.
Child and Youth Care Worker Jim Waddell	We have created a home away from home for the children and it's very nurturing and it's very safe. It's everything that these children need.

<p>Depute Head Teacher Angela Pilkington</p>	<p>As well as providing the full curriculum for our children in terms of the Broad General Education, the children also have access to weekly or twice weekly one-to-one, or small group sessions with their Child and Adolescent Youth Care Worker.</p>
<p>Clinical Director Dan Johnson</p>	<p>We've got care, education and the therapy teams working very closely, and we focus on having a shared understanding that's rooted in the trauma-attachment of those children and each child has a therapeutic plan based on that understanding.</p>
<p>Depute Head Teacher Angela Pilkington</p>	<p>What makes Forest View a special place is the fact that every one of our pupils come in with a smile on their face every single morning.</p> <p>The children regularly tell us how happy they are to be here and that's shown by their engagement in the learning.</p>
<p>Child and Youth Care Worker Jim Waddell</p>	<p>I help the children engage with their learning as a keyworker. This is both directly within the class to support them through their work and also to help them develop strategies that help them cope in the classroom. This helps them maintain their education, helps them stay in the classroom longer. I also link in with the teachers and we develop plans and coping strategies for the children.</p>
<p>Depute Head Teacher Angela Pilkington</p>	<p>Our environment is very much set up in order to remove those types of barriers. It is very different for every single child, so we work very closely with those children in order to support what they feel that they need in order to access learning here.</p> <p>Everyone of our pupils is accessing the Broad General Education as part of Curriculum for Excellence. When a pupil starts with us we do a full base-line assessment, taking into account their previous learning experiences, as well as monitoring and tracking information passed over from their previous school.</p> <p>We then put in place their personal learning plan which has got clear targets for that pupil across every single area of the curriculum.</p> <p>The pupils also do outdoor education, which is where they specifically learn about the outdoors, and how to keep themselves safe out there. We also do a programme called Rock and Water which helps the children to learn about how their different emotions look like and feel like in their bodies. This helps them to moderate their physical reactions whenever they're faced with difficult situations. The children are absolutely loving that.</p>
<p>Child and Youth Care Worker Jim Waddell</p>	<p>This term I got a new pupil to key work and at a recent conversation the dad had said to me that "he was able to be a dad now" because we were able to deal with the difficulties at school and are able to help him grow socially and emotionally.</p>

<p>Depute Head Teacher Angela Pilkington</p>	<p>Just seeing the children walking around here happy, engaging with their learning and then themselves saying “I just did that”.</p>
<p>Principal Teacher Lorna Yee</p>	<p>A typical day for children at Forest View Primary, they usually come in the morning and we offer them breakfast in the morning – whether they have had it at home or not. Some of children come in and maybe not had the best start to the morning, they may have got up a bit tired, they have been up the night before and it is a bit of a rush, so we offer all of our children the option of having breakfast when they arrive to help settle them. Some of our children can have a long taxi journey so breakfast helps with that transition into the school in the morning.</p> <p>All our children participate in PE. We do PE every day and the children really enjoy this, being outdoors and having the chance to run around. A couple of classes do this early in the morning and they find it really helps to settle them for later on. Some of the classes do the opposite and they do PE later on in the day when sometimes the children are maybe starting to get a bit fed up of being indoors, if they have been indoors for a while and they find that going outside and having run around time. Out with break and lunch, PE gives them the opportunity to let off some steam as well as to learn basketball skills or football skills or what the particular PE focus is.</p> <p>Q. Do pupils enjoy the outdoors?</p> <p>All our children have outdoor education every day for an hour with our outdoor education specialist, where they go out into the forest and find mud slides. They learn about the trees and the leaves and the environment and where they can find the dock leaf if they have a nettle sting, how to build fires safely, how to cross difficult terrain safely, checking if there is a big puddle of water in front of them – finding a stick and checking the depth of that water. Risk managing all the time while they are outdoors within set perimeters by the adults that are with them.</p> <p>Q. Has there been any challenges?</p> <p>Some of the challenges at Forest View is that we can have children who have got some very different needs all within the same class. It is the adults who are working in that class that need to be flexible and adaptable in their approaches with the different children. A lot of the onus goes onto those adults, who know the children inside and out, as they need to time manage and split their time between the children in order to meet the quite difficult challenging needs that these children bring to the school.</p> <p>Q. Have you seen any positive outcomes so far?</p> <p>We have seen incredible achievements from the children who are with us. We have children who have previously only attended school for an</p>

	<p>hour a day – if they have been going as often as that. These children are now attending with us full time, full days, full timetables, fully participating in every activity we have on offer. I think that is partly due to our class sizes as well, we only have six children in a class, which allows us to give the children who are in our care a lot more attention than they would be able to receive in a mainstream school.</p> <p>The children themselves, and also their parents and carers, are starting to tell us once they have been with us for a wee while tell us, “they actually like school now.” Some of our children have had such negative experiences of school before they come to us. We have to do a lot of work to begin with to change their mindset that school can be fun and they can really enjoy going to school and that is what we want all of our children to do - to actually want to come to us, then the learning takes place after that, once they are safe and they are happy and they feel like they belong with us, that is when the formal learning then takes place.</p>
STV Presenter, John MacKay	A new residential facility for children who have experienced trauma is preparing to take its first resident. The design of the homes has been carefully planned as Louise Scott reports.
Journalist, Louise Scott	For most children, a home is a safe place. Unfortunately for too many it can be the scene of trauma. These two residential units are hoping to provide the safe place that some children need.
Operations Manager Natalie Connell	We can provide them with strategies, we can make them feel safe, we can make them feel connected and we can help them cope a bit better with the experiences that they have had. We are hoping that if we can get in earlier the kids go on to have more positive futures.
Journalist, Louise Scott	The homes are located in a forested area of Lochwinnoch next to a specialist primary school. The colours and layout of the homes are designed to maintain a calm therapeutic environment for the children, and they will also have some special visitors.
Outdoor Engagement Coordinator Rhona Dorrington	Right away, as soon as you bring in the animals into that equation the kids just chill and it is a completely magical moment that you will get. The child will totally focus on the animal and they have forgotten their worries.
Journalist, Louise Scott	Children as young as five will be referred to the home, staying there until they are ready to move on. By creating this all-encompassing environment, it is hoped early intervention will be much more achievable.
Clinical Director Dan Johnson	The whole way it all fits together as well hopefully it becomes more than its parts – it is not separate services; it is one integrated environment for the kids.
Journalist, Louise Scott	The second house is due to be complete in the next week so it is hoped the children can be in their new home by Christmas.
	Louise Scott STV News.
Operations Manager Natalie Connell	Hello, I am Natalie Connell, the Operations Manager for early years in Kibble.
	Question: Can you describe the interiors at Forest View?

	<p>Inside Forest View House, the interior is organic in style, drawing in nature to help the children feel grounded. The glass entrance has been designed to let the outdoor nature scene flow through within the house. Across all rooms there are splashes of joyful colour, children’s paintings on display, toys, reading books, arts and crafts and children’s games.</p> <p>Children are encouraged to bring their own style and character to their bedrooms in order to create a safe and comfortable haven to relax and feel safe.</p> <p>The house also has a sensory room, which helps children regulate at times of crisis and when they may need. This has an array of tactile sensory equipment including weighted blankets to help children feel safe, vibrating cushions and an interactive wall made of colourful Lego.</p>
<p>Operations Manager Claire McCartney</p>	<p>Hello everyone, Claire McCartney here from the therapy room at Forest View. Hope everyone is doing well.</p> <p>I have been invited here today to tell you a little bit about what the Specialist Intervention Services do within Forest View school.</p> <p>Q. What do Kibble’s Specialist Intervention Services (SIS) do at Forest View?</p> <p>The first thing we actually do is, the psychologist from our team would chair a formulation or a shared understanding meeting. Really all that means is that everyone important in the young person’s life comes together to try to get a better understanding of that young person so we can identify how we best support them while they are with us here at Forest View. This can be family members, education psychologists, teachers, social workers – anyone important to the young person can be invited along to that.</p> <p>What we do at that meeting is really quite simple. We sit down together, and we look at the strengths of the young people – the things that we love about them. We spend time looking at the challenges and difficulties that have possibly brought them to this placement. We look at any adverse childhood experience they may have had and, probably more importantly, how it has impacted on their life? How has it impacted how they see the world? If we do not understand how they see the world, how are we going to be able to support them and help them the way we need to?</p> <p>We spend time looking at that, then we decide from there, what are the best ways to support this young person while they are here. We do that by structuring around the three pillars that are involved in our model – How do we keep them safe? How do we build better relationships for them? How do we give them better coping skills? That is about a better quality of life for them and fundamentally how to be involved in education better. That is the purpose of those meetings.</p>

From that, we would have a regular review of those. At least twice a term we would have another therapeutic meeting to see how the young person is progressing with them and to make any changes to the plan – because as we all know, we quite often don't get it right. We need to take some time and say, "ok, why is that not working?" What do we, and most importantly "we", what do we need to do differently to make sure we really understand this kid's needs and how we best meet them? A lot of that is about how we change things within that, and for us it is important to involve the families in that process as well.

That is the therapeutic meeting aspect. The other thing we do is provide direct therapies. Any child who attends Forest View has the opportunity to attend weekly or twice weekly therapy sessions.

Q. What therapies are provided at Forest View?

The types of therapy we provide are art therapy, play therapy, integrated therapy, and counselling. These are all provided by people registered with the relevant bodies.

Our experience is that the kids have engaged brilliantly in this process. I think every kid who attends Forest View attends one therapy or another. I think there is only one kid who does not because he has CAMHS input, that is the reason he does not attend.

The kids really look forward to their sessions because they are so creative and integrative and they get to use lots of materials and make lots of mess, which they absolute love. It's a 45-minute session with an hour clearing up after them. They all absolutely love it. They all use the space really well to explore their emotions, fundamentally that is what they look at mostly. They try to make sense of that and make sense of, for them, why they act out the way they do. A lot of the kids have a lot of shame or a lot of guilt and they don't understand sometimes why they act the way they do. It is to try and help them process that and kind of understand some of that and look at different ways of managing that.

Q. Do you support families?

One of the other areas we look at is family therapy. That has been really well-received, we have received positive feedback from the families in that it is allowing them to be able to help the kids better at home. It has helped improve their relationships as they are understanding the behaviours more. It has been really heart-warming to see some of the feedback that is coming back from the families within that.

Q. Has there been any challenges?

I have been asked to speak about the challenges. I think it is fitting everything in. When we looked at it in the beginning, we wanted to work

with all the kids, we wanted to work with all the families, have all the therapeutic meetings. It can be quite challenging, there is a lot to fit in because the kids have also got education reviews, there are holidays to fit in. There are all these things and it can be challenging to fit it in.

Initially, we were going to have monthly therapeutic meetings for all the kids, but that it is now 15 kids so if we are doing that monthly there is no way we could manage that. What we do now, we do one nearer the beginning of the term then nearer the end. If we need to do any extra ones – if the young person is really struggling, or if the families are struggling – we will have additional ones within that.

Q. Have you seen any achievements?

So, is it actually effective? If you look at the kids, I would say yes. I am one of these people who likes to look around me and say, what do I see in front of me? I see young people who previously were not engaging in education. When I look back at some of the records, some of these kids – from a very young age – had either been attending school but not actually in the class. They had been sat in another room with a teacher trying to support them because behaviour had been so extreme when they were in the main class. Or kids who were not going to school.

For me, first and foremost, it is great to see kids going to school, but also staying in classes and actually enjoying classes and enjoying their learning. It is fantastic to see. They are happy. They love the school and love coming to the school. It is brilliant to actually see that.

On the more “statistical” route. Obviously, part of the stuff that we do as part of therapy, we gather stats, which maps our progress. We use the strengths and difficulties questionnaire.

I have some issues with psychometrics, especially with some of our kids who have been really quite traumatised. Their behaviours are sometimes quite extreme, sometimes it can be hard to see changes because the norms are done against the mainstream population, so I am always wary of that. Some of the stuff we actually have done, we have been able to see through strengths and difficulties questionnaire that there actually has been improvement in the children’s scores in relation to emotional regulation – we’ve seen an improvement within that. We have also seen, (hate this expression), but pro social behaviours. We have seen improvements in pro social behaviours and how they are interacting with their peers. So, we are seeing some progress from a “measurable” point of view but for me, how you measure that is looking at the kids and seeing how much they enjoy the space, the education, the outdoor space that is there. I think it is fantastic, it is a great opportunity for them.

Q. What is Forest View’s greatest strength?

	<p>I would like to say, thanks to the education staff at Forest View because we could not do our job if they did not do theirs. They have to spend time with the kids after the sessions because sometimes the kids might be quite upset or maybe quite hyper-aroused and they need to spend some time just coming down after the sessions. They have worked brilliantly with us – it is the first time I have really seen education, therapies, care and families working together closely to get the best out of the kids. I think it is really nice to see and you really can see a difference. Thank you to everyone involved, but also thanks to the kids – you are absolutely brilliant.</p>
<p>Clinical Director Dan Johnson</p>	<p>Q. Can you describe trauma-informed care?</p> <p>Trauma-informed care – I could talk for hours about it. What it essentially comes down to is we’re asking those people who are looking after the children to think repeatedly and regularly ‘what have these children experienced?’ How is that affecting them in the here and now? How is that explaining the behaviour we are concerned about? What does that mean “we” as those carers, as their teachers, as their psychologists, as their care workers need to do as best as we can.</p> <p>We do not just do that at the start, we do that throughout all the time we look after them.</p> <p>Q. How do the staff at Forest View work in a trauma-informed way?</p> <p>We have a model, a framework that is designed to make sure we are authentically and legitimately delivering therapeutic trauma-informed care.</p> <p>It has seven elements to it (which usually means people get bored after the first couple). But if I had to boil it down to the briefest I could, what we are doing is we are asking all those people around the child to have the same shared understanding of the child; to get together regularly; to ask those questions – why is the child doing this? What are we doing to either help or hinder them? And to come away with a shared plan. It is really easy to say in a sentence, but it is extremely difficult to do in practice because these behaviours are so challenging to us as adults sometimes – we want to be able to help, but we often struggle to be able to do that. And, we have different perspectives around why children are doing what they are doing.</p> <p>But, by getting those people regularly together and asking those questions, for me, is the key mechanism to get people to practice in a therapeutic, trauma-informed way and to gradually improve the process over time.</p> <p>Q. Has there been any challenges at Forest View?</p> <p>There are always going to be challenges to this, and rightly so. One of the ways that I try to explain to people is this - when trauma-informed is not</p>

	<p>needed it is easy right? When children have had lovely lives. But, when you're at the other end of the scale and children's experiences are expressed in really concerning behaviour that puts themselves or others at risk, it gets difficult. This is because, even if children are trying their best, they still can put themselves at risk. Safety is a real concern. And yet, we want to create safety for them, we want to empower them and help them live these good lives. There is a real tension there and that doesn't mean you give up, it means you have to work really hard to understand why the child is doing what they're doing, and it's trying to find a response that helps them and doesn't create further difficult experiences. That is a real challenge.</p> <p>Q. Overall, is Forest View working well?</p> <p>In terms of what's working well, I don't think you can get much better than having a group of competent, qualified adults that all have a child's best interests at heart and are all dedicated to that child. They are all working from the same, shared understanding, the same explanation, the same formulation if you like, and therefore all trying to do the same thing to look after them. That to me is what we're all trying to achieve and if we can do that, then that's when good things happen.</p>
<p>Operations Manager Claire McCartney</p>	<p>Here's wee Charlie (puppet) to say cheerio. Bye hope to see you soon!</p> <p>{laughs} Bye</p>