

Braidburn School
Explores the Woods

A Woodland Walk in the Braidburn Woods

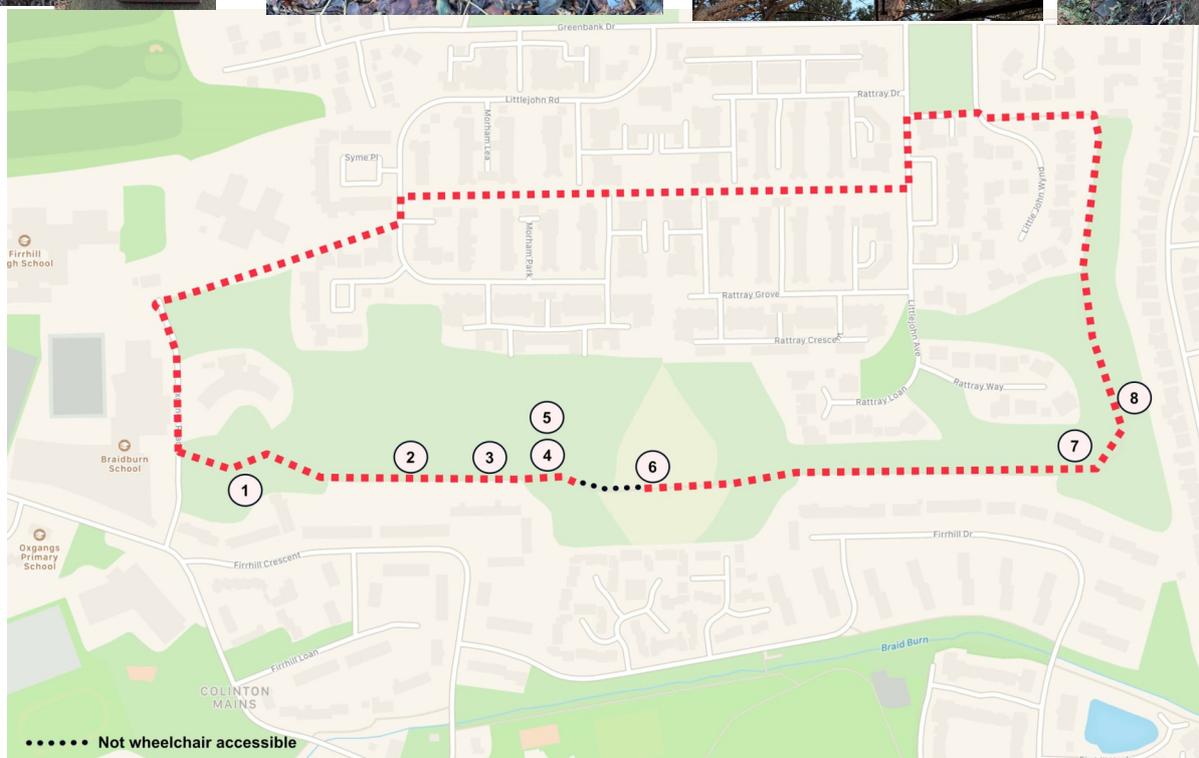
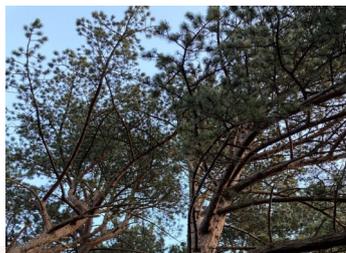
Access available from front of school and from Littlejohn Wynd. Route linear rather than a loop due to inaccessible area for wheelchairs. Could spend 10 minutes or 2 hours on walk, depending on what you find to do.

1) Braidburn pupils painted two beautiful bird boxes. One is *camouflaged* so it is well hidden and the other is very, very bright. Can you find it? If you were a bird, which bird box would you choose to nest in, and why?

2) Can you find any rotten wood on the woodland floor? Pick it up. What does it feel like? Is it wet or dry? Soft or hard? Compare with wood that is not rotten yet. The soft and wet wood is home to lots of animals. Can you find any if you pull it apart? Remember to put it back where you found it.

3) Look up at the pine trees. Listen to the wind blowing through them. Can you make this sound? Hold out your arms like a pine tree. Look under the trees for pine cones. Hold them in your hands. Are they rough or smooth?

4) Look out for the fallen tree. Why do you think the tree has fallen over? Have a closer look at the roots. Lift the bark and ivy to look for any signs of life living on the tree.



5) If it is dry, the wheelchairs can take this path off to the left. Stand under the branches of the pine trees. Stand in the clearing. Where was darker? Where was lighter? Was one area warmer than another? Which did you like best?

6) The meadow. Feel the long grasses in summer and look at the seed heads in autumn. What sounds can you hear? What direction are the clouds moving in? Wet your finger and put it above you head. What side feels the coldest? The cold side is the direction the wind is coming from.

7) Look out for felled trees. Explore the age of the tree by counting the number of rings. How can you tell the difference between a tree that has died naturally and a tree that has been sawn down?

8) This amazing tree is hidden behind other trees on the right of the path, but well worth seeking out! How is this tree different from the others around it? Feel the bark. How do you think the tree got its knobby shape? Could you make up a story about it?



A Walk Along the Braid Burn.

This walk follows Oxgangs Road North down to the burn. The walk is fully accessible for wheelchairs but crosses Colinton Mains Drive at traffic lights. This is a 35 minute walk at normal adult walking speed. Bring a supply of pencils or use sticks as music makers! There are also opportunities for bug hunting, bark rubbing and river dipping.

1) Here we are at Braid Burn. Can you hear the sound of flowing water? Is it moving fast or slow? What has the weather been like recently and how would that affect the flow?



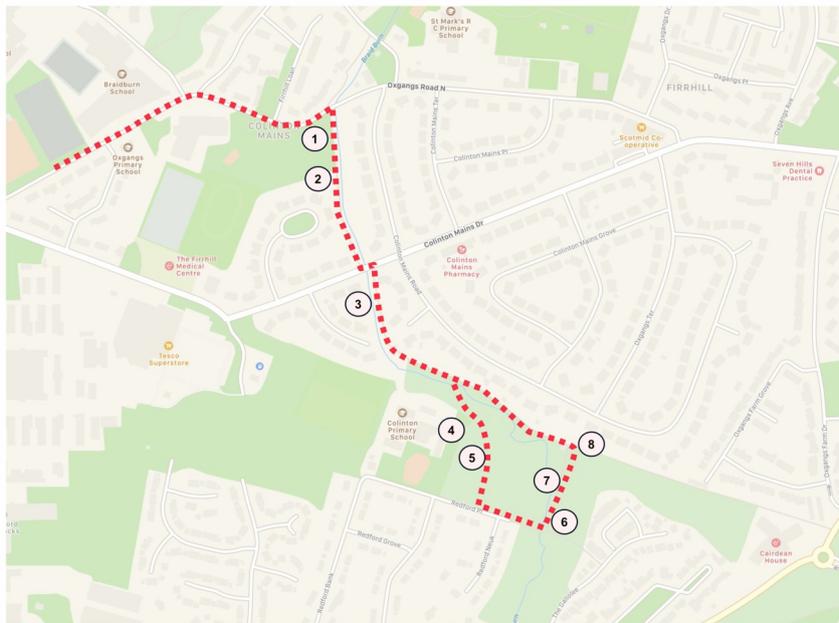
2) Feel the fence with your hand as you walk or wheel along it. Run a pencil along the fence. What kind of noise do you make? Later in the walk you will find a black metal fence. You can run your pencil along that too.



3) Brambles! Visit this bush when there are berries in September. Bring them back to school where you can wash them and eat them. Why does the bramble produce berries? Why does it put its seeds in the fruit? Who eats the fruit?



4) Now we are in the woods. Who do you think lives here? Listen to the birdsong around you. Can you make the same sound? What would your bird song be like? Make a list of all the other noises you can hear.



5) Touching trees. Some barks are smooth and some are rough. Put a small piece of paper against the bark and rub a fat crayon backwards and forwards. Try different barks. Pick up leaves. How do they differ in shape and in feel? Are they furry or smooth?



6) Bug hunting! Look for little bugs under logs and stones. If you bring a small tray with you then you can put some bugs on the tray and bring them to the wheelchair users to look at closely. Are there any nibbled leaves? Bugs are important because they help break down the old wood into healthy new soil.



7) Look at the burn on your left. In dry weather this area is accessible to wheelchairs. You could measure the speed of the river using an orange or a cork or do some river dipping for invertebrates. Great pebbly beach for building stone towers.



8) Gurggle, gurggle, gurggle. Can you hear the noise of the water as you go over this metal plate? This is the noise of water moving along a pipe under the ground.



There's always lots to do outside with your class, whatever the time of year. Here are just a few sensory learning ideas for different seasons.

Spring is a great time to see dramatic changes taking place. Cut off small young branches from different species of trees and bushes. Feel the different buds. Some may be paired, others alternate. Horse chestnut trees have big sticky buds which squirrels love to eat in spring. Bring your buds inside and put in water. Look at the tight buds unfurl and become leaves. Which buds unfurl first? Listen to the sounds of the woods. Birds sing a lot in spring as male birds are trying to attract females and to defend their territory. Can you sing a song like the birds?

When we go into the woods we are often very noisy and most wild animals hide. But they leave their tracks behind and this is a good way to find out more about what wild animals are living around you. Before you go on your walk, see what tracks you can make in the playground. Put some chalk on wheelchair wheels, put some paper under the wheels and ride over the paper. Draw a chalk line around your feet or hands. Look in the mud for animal tracks. Which tracks are left by people and which are left by dogs and other animals?

In **summer**, the woodland floor is drier and harder, so you can take wheelchairs off the main route. Find shade under evergreen trees, find darker and lighter places in the woodlands. Is one place cooler than the other?

Build a fire and toast marshmallows. Make a map of your route and attach leaves and flowers with doublesided tape to mark your journey.

Collect pinecones, feel the different surfaces and take them back to the classroom. How do they change inside? Pinecones close when it is wet and open when it is dry. Use them for counting and multiplication. Make a natural objects bingo.

Look under stones and rotten wood for different bugs. Bring a tray with you and some spoons so you bring the bugs to the wheelchairs. Tie leaves and flowers to sticks with wool to make magic wands. What might you wish for?

These walks were developed by Ruth Prince, outdoor learning officer at the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, with Water of Leith volunteer Andrew Dickson and Amy Craigen and her P7 class at Oxfangs Primary School. We hope you enjoy exploring these lovely greenspaces in the heart of Edinburgh.



Winter is a wonderful time to look at trees. You can see so much more with fewer leaves. Look for nests in the high branches, squirrels scampering from branch to branch. Stand like a tree with your arms outstretched like branches. Feel the bark of the tree with your fingers, take fat crayons and paper outside to do some bark rubbings. How do tree barks differ in different species and different ages of tree? Look for overwintering snails huddled in the cracks of bark and run your fingers over their shells.

Take empty cereal boxes outside with you and a screwdriver to poke holes in the box. Choose sticks to poke into the sides and bottom to make a wood monster. What could you use for eyes? Or teeth?

Take clay balls and make clay faces in the bark. Use seeds and sticks for eyes but be careful not to let learners put berries into their mouths. Some berries like holly and yew are toxic.

In **autumn** the woods get ready for winter.

Look for squirrels gathering and hiding food.

Collect brambles and wash them and eat them when you get back to school. Or you could mash them up, mix with water and use as paint

Collect different kinds of seeds and explain that although plants can't move they find different ways to spread their seeds.

Collect pine cones and take turns to leave a trail behind you for the rest of the group to find.

Take tupperware boxes with you and collect small objects like pebbles, pine cones and seeds. Put some of each in the boxes and then close and put the a rubber band around them to ensure they don't open. Shake the boxes. Which boxes make the loudest sounds? Which make the softest?

Make up a song of the woods and shake your boxes.