



ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

KSI-2

SEND

WILD CHILD SENSORY TRAIL

Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens

This trail is designed to improve access for students who benefit from outdoor, sensory approaches to learning. Through the senses, engage with the colours, sounds, smells and textures found in the gardens. Learn together in the great outdoors and support students' social, emotional and mental wellbeing.



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SELF-LED ACTIVITY

WILD CHILD

SENSORY TRAIL



KSI-2

SEND

Recommended for

KSI-2 & SEND (Social, Emotional and Mental Health)

Learning objectives

- Use the senses to engage with different outdoor environments.
- Interact with the natural world.
- Develop communication and observation skills.

Time to complete

60–90 minutes



Students can explore the gardens with their senses, like touching the giant leaves of the gunnera in the quarry.

SUMMARY

This self-guided trail around Belsay Gardens has been designed to highlight learning opportunities for students who respond well to outdoor, sensory approaches. The trail uses the mischievous Wildman character as inspiration for sensory exploration. Print the map and key (on pages 7–8), enough for each of the adults guiding the activities. The students do not need any resources to complete this trail, except their senses!

To prepare for your visit, search the English Heritage website for 'Belsay Accessibility'.

Please contact the Education Bookings Team to discuss any specific access requirements you may have.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

The Teachers' Notes on the following pages provide more information on the following approach:

- Familiarise students with the site. You could use the orientation photos to create a social story to prepare students for the trip.
- During your visit, gather students outside and set the scene, using the poem on page 6.
- Follow the trail, stopping at each location to try some of the sensory activities.
- Reflect on which sensory experiences students found most memorable and why.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Find inspiration for sensory learning opportunities on our website, by searching for 'English Heritage Sensory Learning Ideas: The Great Outdoors'.

For more cross-curricular outdoor learning ideas you can use with different key stages, download the specialist Outdoor Learning Kit from the Belsay Schools webpage.

WILD CHILD SENSORY TRAIL

TEACHERS' NOTES

FAMILIARISATION

To help you plan your trip, we can offer you a free advance visit. Simply print off your visit permit (sent to you when you make a booking) and take it along to the site; your permit allows you one-time free family entry. Permit entry is not accepted on event days.

We've also provided some orientation photos here, which you may wish to turn into a social story to share with students.

Special thanks to our volunteer photographer Nigel Hooper for capturing most of these:



This is where cars and coaches park.



This is the route from the car park to the toilets.



This is the toilet block, where you can stop before you check in.



This is the first English Heritage sign you will see, before you enter the shop.



This is the shop, where the group leader can check in. On busy days we also open the admissions point.



This is the admissions point, which we open on busy days.



English Heritage staff wear black, white or beige tops with this logo, and they are always happy to help you.



There are two cafes at Belsay, one near the hall and one near the castle. These can get noisy when it's busy.



You may see English Heritage staff working in the gardens.



You may see other visitors and their dogs on the day of your trip.



There is a big hall that used to be a family home. The rooms inside don't have furniture in them anymore.



There is a ruined castle. There are different sized rooms and staircases inside.



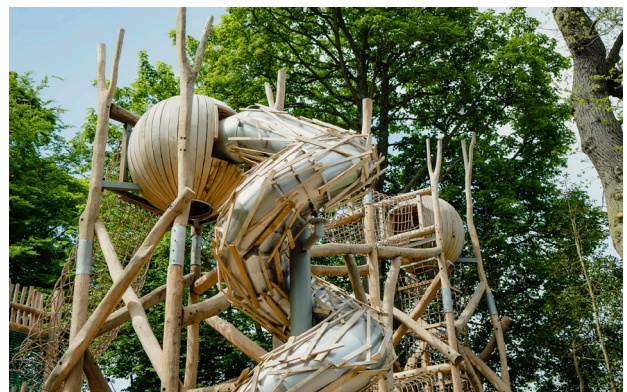
There are some wide open, green spaces.



There is a garden in a quarry. It is shady, has high walls, unusual plants, and sometimes feels cooler than the rest of the garden.



Signs like these will help you find your way around the site.



There is a big playground near the castle. This is a safe place for running and climbing.

SETTING THE SCENE

The Wildman is an elusive, playful, mischief-maker. He loves wild, scruffy, colourful, textured, unusual places. The Wildman has been part of the Middleton family story for hundreds of years. He even features on the family crest above the entrance to the castle.

Embrace your inner wild child and follow in his footsteps, exploring the gardens by looking, touching, sniffing, hiding, climbing, running, hearing, thinking and feeling.

Use this poem to stimulate students' imagination before they go on the trail.

Introductory Poem

Search for the Wildman
Wherever he goes.
Look with your eyes
And follow your nose.

Crunch fallen leaves,
Touch winter snows,
Hear sounds of spring,
Smell summer rose.

Where is he hiding?
Nobody knows.
Explore with your fingers
And even your toes!

Wild is the garden,
Watch as it grows.
Search for the Wildman
Wherever he goes.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL SAFELY

The site map on page 7 is labelled with ten stopping points. At each stop, we have recommended two or three sensory learning opportunities to explore, as detailed on page 8. Select the activities that are best suited to the needs of your group, and the time of year you are visiting.

Please do these activities safely, and only run/climb in recommended areas. You are welcome to gently look, touch and sniff the things you find but please do not lick or pick anything! This keeps you safe and protects the site.

Please be aware of plants with toxic sap such as euphorbia and hogweed and do not sniff things like bracken, which has toxic spores August–September.

Please refrain from touching things like yew leaves if you are working with students who will struggle to avoid hand to mouth contact before reaching hand-washing facilities.

Please also be considerate of the wildlife and other visitors around you.

REFLECTING TOGETHER

Once you have completed the trail, ask students to discuss what they found most memorable about the sensory trail.

They could tell the Wildman:

- Something intriguing they discovered.
- The most exciting thing they did.
- A question they have about the natural world.

They could also find a gift they think the Wildman would like (such as a pine cone, leaf, stick or conker). Please only collect things that have already fallen to the ground.

WILD CHILD SENSORY TRAIL



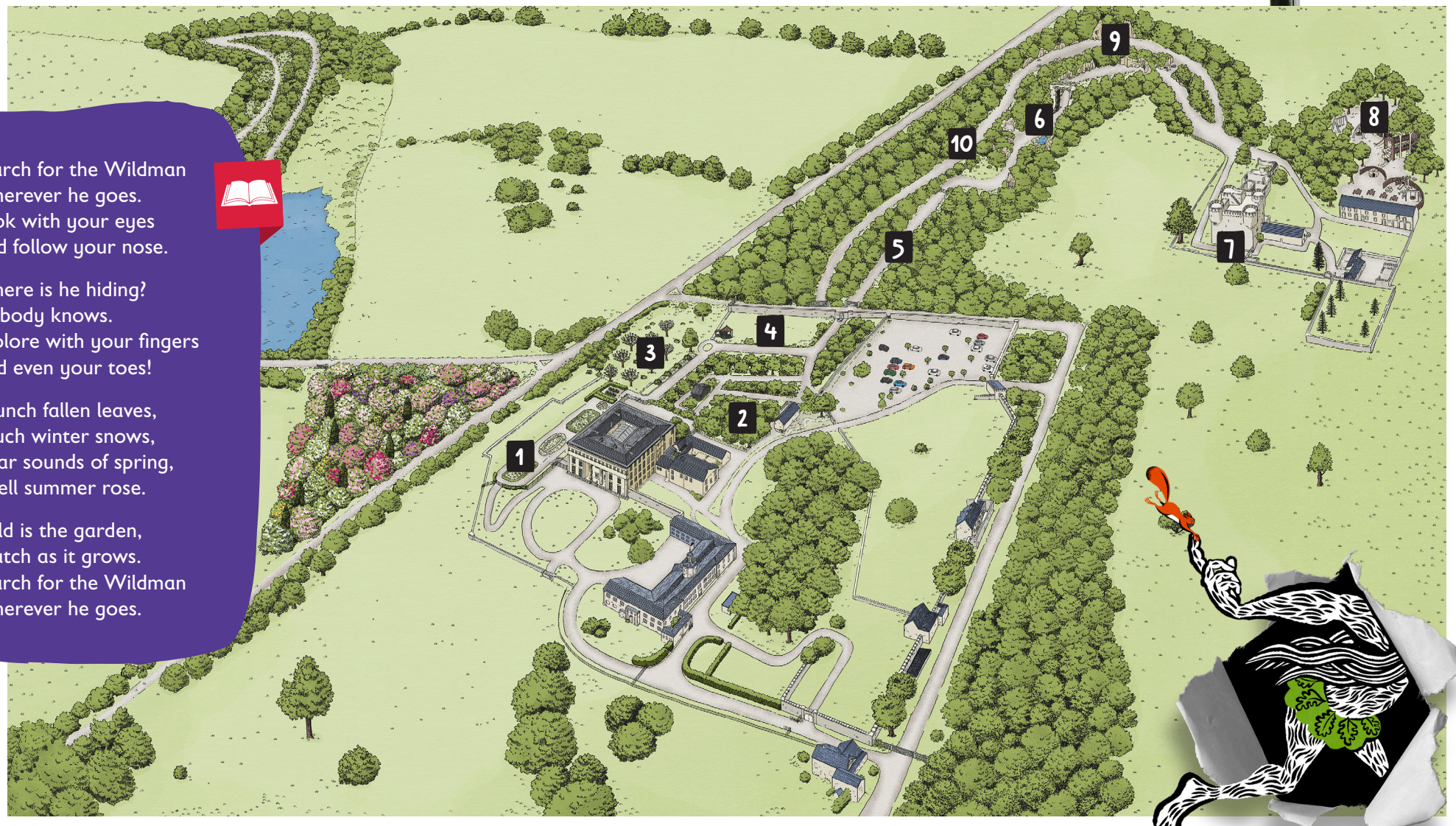
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SENSORY TRAIL ACTIVITIES



1 TERRACES


 **Look** at the view; **spot** three different colours.


 **Listen** for insect noises.

 **Sniff** a flower.


2 HALL WOOD


 **Listen** for birdsong.


 **Pick** up a pine or fir cone.

 **Rub** some fallen pine needles between your fingers then **sniff** them.


3 MAGNOLIA TERRACE


 **Find** a bright place and a shady place.

 **Lie** on your back and watch the sky.

 Take your shoes and socks off and **feel** the grass between your toes.


4 CROQUET LAWN


 Close your eyes and **notice** three different sounds.

 **Take** a deep breath through your nose – what do you **smell**?


5 PATH TO QUARRY


 **Listen** to your footsteps.

 **Describe** the difference between this and the croquet lawn.

 **Spot** something yellow.


6 QUARRY GARDEN


 **Discuss**: has the temperature changed?


 **Touch** three different leaf textures: smooth, rough and furry.

 **Listen** for water.


7 CASTLE


 **Look** for masons' marks on the walls.

 **Touch** a stone and describe it.

 **Climb** – or call 'hello!' – up the spiral staircase.

8 PLAYGROUND


 **Choose** what to play on first.


 **Go** up something and down something.

 **Play** hide and seek.


9 BACK INTO THE QUARRY


 **Touch** the stone walls.


 **Listen** to the birds singing or the trees moving in the wind.

 **Look** up. What can you see?

10 WOODLAND PATH

 **Touch** the spongy bark of the giant redwood.

 **Find** an interesting stick.

 **Sniff** animal smells carried on the air.