

Alma Forest School

Autumn Newsletter - October 2022

Our new students are loving the chance to explore their interests, try out ideas and discover new passions during our self-directed Personal Project Mondays.

The First of Its Kind

Alma Forest is a growing school going from strength to strength and we thought it is time to have a school-wide newsletter to celebrate all that is happening at Alma Forest, to share our ideas on education and update you on our development and plans. This will be a quarterly newsletter published in October, January, April and June.

It will be a platform to share what happens at the school with a public that is not on social media as this newsletter will be accessible on our website and anyone can subscribe to it. We also welcome parent testimonials, recommendations and anecdotes to include in the future.

Enjoy this first edition and please let us know if there is something you would like to see in the next newsletter.



Follow Us

If you don't already do so. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for regular updates, photos and reading suggestions.

  @almaforestschool

In This Edition

- School News
- Updates from the Escuela Bosque and the Primary School
- Curriculum terminology explained
- Ideas from the World of Education
- Staff & Students Picks
- Things We Like
- Photo Roundup

School News

Three New Staff Join Our Team

We are fortunate to be joined by three experienced and enthusiastic new members of staff this year. Nina has joined as the Grade 3/4 teacher, Luna is supporting the teaching in Grade 1 and Clare joined the Escuela Bosque team. Have a look at our [website to read their bios](#). Only two months into the school year and we can confidently say that they are great additions to the Alma Forest tribe.



left to right: Nina, Luna & Clare

Destination School

One of the greatest compliments has been that Alma Forest is becoming a destination school with families from around the world relocating to the area so that their children can attend our school. We have recently had families relocate from Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, the USA, and Costa Rica.

Our progressive approach to education, shared by many other schools around the world but with a unique Alma Forest twist, is in high demand and where better to enjoy this type of education than in the beautiful south of Spain?

As new families join us, they are welcomed by a supportive and committed parent community growing around the school.

Eco Schools Network

We recently joined the global [Eco Schools](#) programme. Through this programme we will work on improving our organisational impact on the environment and on better educating our students about how to live more sustainable lives. Julia will be leading this effort and has kindly taken on tasks such as running an Eco Student Council and creating a school-wide action plan. Through this initiative, we will also establish links with local organisations and other schools around the world.

Music in Spanish

Starting this week, our Primary students will have weekly Music lessons. These will be taught in Spanish to ensure that our students have more exposure to the language and are able to learn it in enjoyable ways. The lessons will be taught by Carmelo, whom many of you in the community know and who already teaches a few of our students after school. Our Escuela Bosque students continue to enjoy Music lessons with Bea.



Primary students enjoying time in their forest classroom.

Forest School Trainer

Jose, our Escuela Bosque team leader, is in the process of finalizing his Level 4 Forest School Training course. This high-level course run by Cambium Sustainable will enable Jose to train Forest School Leaders at Alma Forest making us the first Cambium-certified training location outside of the UK. Having highly qualified staff on our team ensures that our outdoor/beach/forest school curriculum is well-planned and meaningful. It is not just a tokenistic tag-on but an elemental part of life and learning at Alma Forest.

Parent Engagement Group

Our recently created Parent Engagement Group is busy planning the Halloween Party at the moment and will start to support our school in a myriad of ways going forward. Our parent community has much to offer and we look forward to many productive collaborations. If you are interested in joining or have specific skills to offer, please get in touch.

School News - Escuela Bosque

Learning about Ourselves

In Escuela Bosque we have been lucky to welcome new faces to our community, and in the forefront of our minds is getting to know each other! We believe that building relationships is a very individual thing for each child. We always respect the children and follow their process. We like to welcome them on equal terms, offer a hand and smile, with hugs coming later!

As well as getting to know each other, this term, we have been focusing on learning about ourselves, our families, and then the wider world. Offering children a concept of the world, their place in it, its continents, cultures, and diversity.



Starting Small but Dreaming BIG!

Project 'Green Fingers' is underway, and although the first seedlings have only just started appearing we have big ambitions for the future of the Alma Forest allotment. We have experienced much excitement from the children, taking us by the hand and showing us that the radishes are growing! Through this, children are experiencing powerful concepts; how a seed grows, that we need to look after them, that it is not something that can be rushed, and then the reward when we can eventually harvest them. Watch this space!



Open Ended Art

We believe that creative projects, using a wide range of materials, should be available for children to express themselves. We like to offer resources that allow children to feel free to create, rather than copy an example presented to them. Our students enjoy the freedom to be creative without the restrictions you would normally find in a traditional classroom. To be able to paint, collage, use tools and sculpt in this environment is truly rewarding - always keeping in mind that we are more interested in the process than the product! No one is better than anyone else when it comes to art! Just do what you love!

School News - Primary

The Universe & Black Holes

At the core of what we do are our Explorations. At the end of last year, we asked our students what they would like to learn about at the beginning of this year. There was an overwhelming consensus that they wanted to find out about the universe and black holes. So that is what we have been doing for the first two months of school.



Universe & Black Holes Exploration

So Far we looked at life on the ISS, experimented with gravity, made models of Earth's interior, learned about meteors, conducted experiments to illustrate Earth's atmosphere, designed our own golden records with messages for aliens, built a model to explain heliocentrism, investigated the formation of craters using flour and cocoa powder, looked at the planets that make up our solar system, learned about the history of constellations, investigated telescopes and lightwaves, thought about life on mars, learned about nebulae and the life of stars, observed moon phases and plotted galaxies. We are off to the planetarium soon.

Beach School

Beach School Fridays are always a student and staff favourite. The beach location inspires questions and curiosity and every rock pool exploration is sure to bring forth a new discovery. As the weather is slowly starting to change and mornings begin to get chilly, we will finish Beach School at the beginning of November and spend more time in the woods. Before that happens we do hope to get a bit more snorkeling in and encounter some octopuses.



Mixed Age Groups

While we have separate classes for different age groups in the Primary School, most of our time is spent in mixed-age groups. This is true for the Personal Project Mondays, Morning Circles and Exploration activities. We want to ensure that every student has a chance to work with pupils older and younger than themselves. It also allows for relationships to form across age groups and fosters a family atmosphere at the school.



Sleepover

We recently had our first school sleepover of the year. These happen regularly and encourage a sense of independence and resilience in our students. They are a great opportunity to make friends, become more confident and eat smores. It is always fascinating to see how our youngest students, some of them having never slept away from home, enjoy the sleepovers and take them as an opportunity for personal growth.

Curriculum Spotlight

TERMS EXPLAINED

Unhurried Childhood

At Alma Forest, we believe that children should experience an unhurried childhood. This means that their education should be developmentally appropriate and tailored to their emotional and intellectual maturity. We acknowledge that young people develop at vastly different speeds and acquire certain skills at different ages.

We recognize when a student is not yet developmentally or emotionally ready to work on certain academic skills. In these cases hurrying students will only lead to a sense of failure and resentment towards school.

We eschew comparing our students to an 'average child' of a certain age since this average child is a fiction created to measure achievement in traditional and coercive educational settings.

An unhurried approach to schooling is a long-term approach to education that enables young people to follow their own trajectory and maintain a positive attitude towards school and learning.

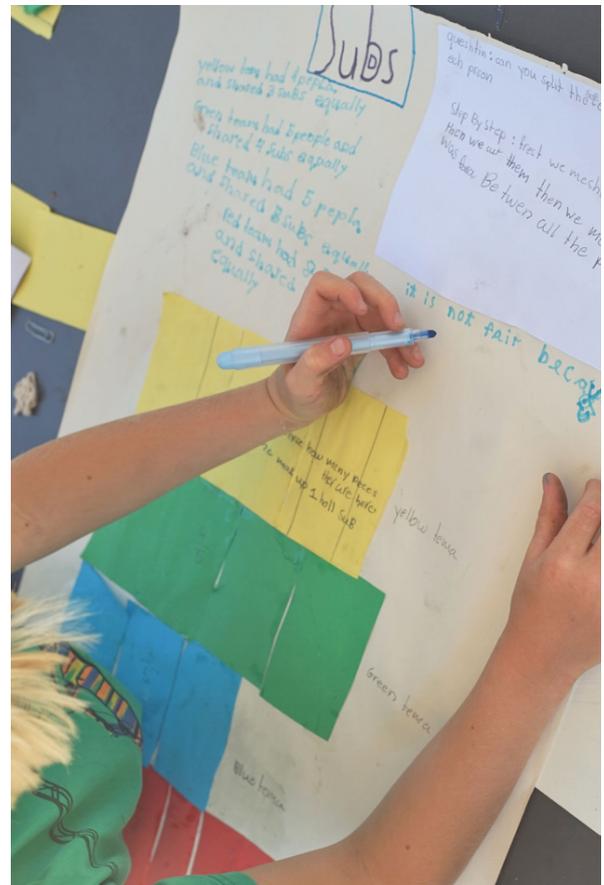


A student in the Escuela Bosque engaging with a provocation.

Learning Provocations

Especially in the Escuela Bosque, children have a lot of opportunities to explore via learning provocations. They are designed to provoke learning and encourage children to experience the world for themselves through open-ended activities. There is always a variety of these available throughout the day.

Discovery is always more meaningful than direct instruction and these provocation stations also allow children to formulate their own questions while discovering concepts and making meaning of the world.



A student working on an open-ended maths investigation.

Number Sense

Number sense is important for young math learners because it promotes confidence and encourages flexible thinking. It allows your children to create a relationship with numbers and be able to talk about math as a language. As seen in the photo above, sometimes solving a mathematical problem does not involve many numbers but a lot of explanation.

Number sense involves being able to visualize problems, take numbers apart, compute mentally and apply skills to real-world problems. In this, it is different from following an algorithm to find an abstract answer.

At Alma Forest, we foster number sense by using maths investigations that are open-ended and based on real-world scenarios. Our students are exposed to different strategies and encouraged to discuss their thinking. Maths becomes a dialogue focusing on the process rather than the solution.

The World of Education

THOUGHTS AND INSPIRATION

The Future of Smart

Ulcca Joshi Hansen explains her idea of 'smart' and how schools can foster it.

She suggests that young people should walk away from school knowing what they are good at rather than only being aware of all the things they are bad at. In order to achieve this, education needs to include the full range of human experiences and embrace the unique passions of each student and teacher.

This vision of human-scale education is at the core of what we do at Alma Forest.

[Please take the time to watch the full video here shorturl.at/eDY01](https://shorturl.at/eDY01)



Alma Forest is all about building relationships.

In Favour of Ambiguity

Boaz Tsabar argues that ambiguity in educational settings is necessary for children to learn how to overcome challenges and deal with an ambiguous world. Ambiguity in this case comes in the form of differing opinions, contradictory evidence and tension. He suggests that trying to create a utopian space of clarity and simple truths is counterproductive.

In order for a child to navigate these ambiguities their "development in school—their mental wholeness, moral sensitivity and motivation to act and learn, are seen as dependent first and foremost, on the capacity to gain a sense of meaning and confidence in the world and to build relations of kinship, dialogue, and love with the significant adults in their lives."

At Alma Forest, the relationships our students form with their teachers, and their peers, are the foundation for exploring a complex and ambiguous world.

[We recommend reading the full paper which can be found here for free https://bit.ly/3fVY1xj](https://bit.ly/3fVY1xj)



Students juicing grapes from the Finca to make their own vinegar.

Learning to Become *With* the World

The Common Worlds Research Collective, of which we are a member, recently contributed their vision of education for a sustainable future to the UNESCO Futures of Education report. We fully support this vision and we are sure you will recognize our school in these aims. Below are the key points but we encourage you to read the full report.

- critically reassess and reconfigure the relationship between education and humanism
- fully acknowledge that humans are embedded within ecosystems and that we are ecological, not just social, beings
- stop using education as a vehicle for promulgating human exceptionalism
- instead of championing individualism, foster collective dispositions and convivial, reparative human and more-than-human relations
- no longer position the world as 'out-there' so that learning is to become with the world
- the goal of education is to prioritize an ethics of collective recuperation on this damaged Earth

"We are convinced that the most profound challenge to making these shifts is extracting education from the Cartesian divides that structure its established humanist knowledge traditions and pedagogies. These divides—for example, mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object—ensure that we only ever learn about the world from a safe and privileged transcendent distance."

[The full report can be read and downloaded from the UNESCO Futures of Education website here https://bit.ly/3ThTVhk](https://bit.ly/3ThTVhk)

Student & Staff Picks

My Favourite Spot

We asked Louisa (5) what her favourite spot in the school was.

"My favourite spot is the art area in the Escuela Bosque. I want to get better at drawing because soon I will go to art class. I come here when I finish my lunch because there is peace and quiet."



Staff Project Highlight - Tumbabuey

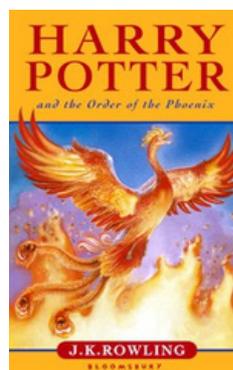
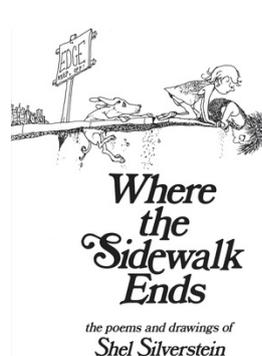
Alma Forest educators are passionate about many things and are involved in great projects in addition to working at Alma Forest. Often, the aims of these projects overlap with those of the school and great collaborations are formed. Bea, an avid birdwatcher, works with Tumbabuey and they now regularly hold workshops at the school.

Tumbabuey is a conservationist charity in Cadiz run by volunteers. Their team has more than 30 years of experience in the study and monitoring of avifauna. Currently, they have two main conservation projects focused on protecting the Montagu's harrier and the lesser kestrel.



Wild birds being ringed and statistically recorded during a workshop held at the school.

Books on our Horizon



We asked our staff and students about the books they are currently reading or would recommend.

Philipp (age 41) - I always love introducing my students to Shel Silverstein's poetry and seeing his books quickly become a student favourite.

Erik (age 8) - AniMalcolm is about a boy who does not like animals because every time he touches their fur it feels like his hand is going to come off. My favourite part is when he turns into an animal himself. I like reading books that are the opposite of me and this book is like that.

Noelia (age 32) - In Hijo a parent shares the journey of life with their son. Beautifully illustrated and written in wonderful prose.

Phoenix (age 7) - I like Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix because I like magic and how they do their spells. Also, there was a Phoenix bird in the book.

Please support your local bookshops or consider buying second-hand books at Iberlibro.

Noteworthy

A Place to Visit - Rio Chillar in Nerja

Now that the summer crowds have gone, take the time to visit this beautiful spot in Nerja. You will be able to hike along the river and swim in various locations. There are waterfalls and pools to relax and cool off in. The weather is still warm enough and now you can enjoy your hike and swim without the crowds. And if you are an Alma student, you already have your water shoes.

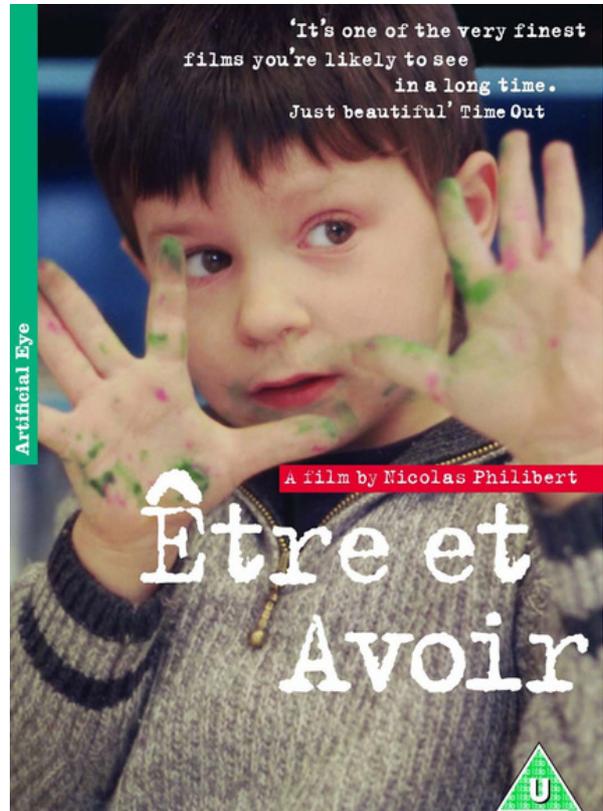


brains on!

A podcast for kids (fun for adults too)

There is Netflix, and then there are really cool podcasts. Listen with your kids and have some great discussions or let them enjoy these inspiring ideas on their own. A podcast makes a car journey fly by. This is a podcast narrated by adults and children full of big questions and fun knowledge. What better way to get inspiration for future Personal Projects or our school Explorations?

[Click Here to Visit Their Website](#)



Film Recommendation - Être et Avoir

Now celebrating its 20th anniversary, this documentary is a beautiful snapshot of life in a tiny school with just one teacher, his students and their families. A must-see for educators and parents alike.

[Watch the trailer here.](#)

A Magazine for Young Minds

Looking to expand your home library? Check out this great magazine for kids (7+) that brings new facts, fiction and fun to your house every month. And we have to admit, our teachers are discovering new things in every issue as well.

[Check out their website to take a peek at their issue.](#)

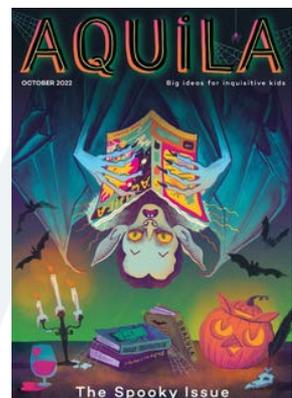


Photo Roundup



Sensory fun and greeting Polonu in the morning.



Forest classroom



Gravity experiments and a helpful hand.



Fun with supernovas



Who are we?



Picasso



Building geometry cities



"Education must be not only a transmission of culture
but also a provider of alternative views of the world
and a strengthener of the will to explore them."

Jerome Bruner