



Welcome to
Mansfield SEND!
Your newsletter for
parents and carers of
children and young



Inside this issue:

Focus on Mansfield Down Syndrome Support Group

Nature and Nurture

- * Using nature to support regulation
- * Outdoor communication
- * Nature based play and activity ideas

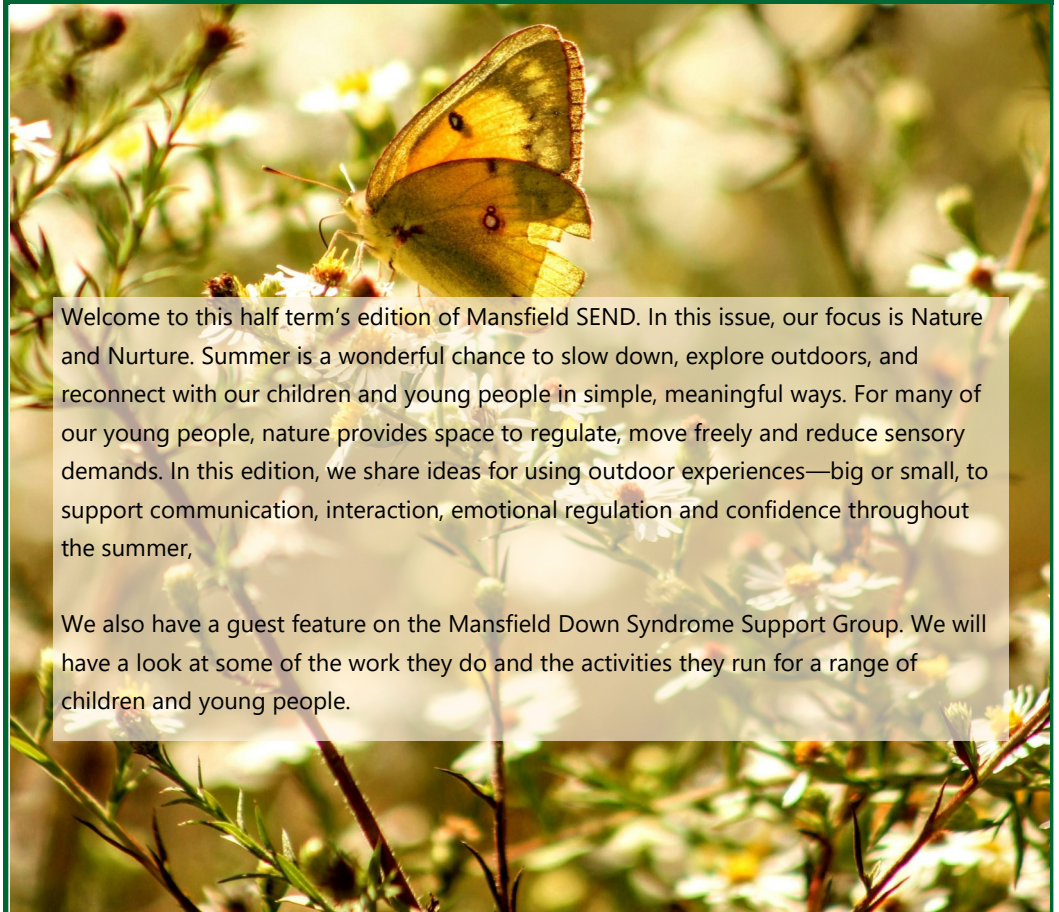
On the back page

Sensory friendly nature spots around Mansfield

Mansfield Send

Summer Term A

May 2026



Welcome to this half term's edition of Mansfield SEND. In this issue, our focus is Nature and Nurture. Summer is a wonderful chance to slow down, explore outdoors, and reconnect with our children and young people in simple, meaningful ways. For many of our young people, nature provides space to regulate, move freely and reduce sensory demands. In this edition, we share ideas for using outdoor experiences—big or small, to support communication, interaction, emotional regulation and confidence throughout the summer,

We also have a guest feature on the Mansfield Down Syndrome Support Group. We will have a look at some of the work they do and the activities they run for a range of children and young people.

Simple nature moments to try at home...

You don't need lots of time, equipment or energy — small moments count.

- **Five-minute reset:** Step outside together and notice three things you can see, two you can hear and one you can feel.
- **Nature walk:** Could be the walk home from school. Let your child lead. Stop when they stop. Look closely at stones, leaves or insects.
- **After-school outside time:** A short walk, trampoline time, swinging or sitting on a bench can help children 'reset' after a busy day.
- **Messy play outdoors:** Mud, water, sand or bubbles give calming sensory input without worrying about mess.
- **Side-by-side chats:** Walk or sit next to your child rather than face-to-face — many children find this easier for sharing thoughts.
- **Bring nature inside:** If going out feels hard, try an open window, houseplants, shells, leaves or nature sounds.

Remember, there's no "right" way to do nature time. Calm moments often come after time outside — and that's okay too.

GUEST
FEATURE

Mansfield Down Syndrome Support Group

Thanks to Ann Marie from the Mansfield Down Syndrome Support Group for sharing the work they do to support families, children and young people.



We are, Mansfield Downs Syndrome Support group, we are a completely free group, and we come under the roof of Nottinghamshire, Downs Syndrome Support group (NDSSG) We are a lovely group of parents and children with down syndrome of all ages, along with sibling's and sometimes even grandparents.

We meet up on the 3rd Saturday of each month, at the Calvary Chapel, on Eakring Road in Mansfield, NG18 3FS, from 10.30am until 12.30pm.

At our meetings we offer tea and coffee, along with biscuits and healthy snacks. Our sessions include crafts; this can include painting, glueing, clay modelling, making windchimes, window decorations or cake decorating, plus lots more. We also have a range of games and toys to suit all ages, and we love to get outside for activities whenever possible.



But I think most of all, our group provides a support network for parents who may be struggling, or have questions about their children's health and development, that they sometimes don't feel like they can ask their GP or paediatrician. Or for those who just want to talk to other families who are all on the same journey, sharing both positive and sometimes negative experiences, as well as achievements.



As parents of children with ds, all at different ages, there is always someone to advise using their past experiences, and to lift each other up, advise and encourage. Since starting our journey, we have met some incredible families, and over time we have all become one big family. We have new families joining all the time, and there are now about 25 families who attend the group.

Most of our Families are under the same paediatrician (Dr Walker at Kingsmill hospital), who sign posts families to us, and also hands out baby bags, made by NDSSG, to all new babies born with down syndrome at King's Mill. These include, a blanket, some treats for mum and a book written by NDSSG featuring a lot of our families from across Nottinghamshire. There is also information that gives directions to our Facebook pages and other support groups.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE DOWN'S SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP

SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME. BUT PEOPLE WITH OTHER LEARNING DIFFICULTIES CAN ALSO ATTEND.

WARRIORS UNITED F.C.

Football sessions for players of all footballing abilities, 5 years +

TUESDAYS, term-time
5-12 years, 6.00-7.00pm
13+ years, 7.00-8.00pm

SAMWORTH CHURCH ACADEMY
SHERWOOD HALL ROAD
MANSFIELD
NG18 2DY

£3.50 per session
FIRST SESSION - FREE!

WARRIORS UNITED MANSFIELD

In addition to our support group, we also have Mansfield Warriors United. These sessions, run by NDSSG, are open to children and young adults with down syndrome or other additional needs. They are run by our coach Colin, a coach from Notts Forest, and a handful of volunteers including myself and my partner Jamie. These sessions are becoming more popular and are enjoyed by all who attend them. All abilities come together and have lots of fun.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE DOWN'S SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP

DANCE WARRIORS

Dance sessions for dancers of all dancing abilities, 5 years +

WEDNESDAYS, term-time
5-13 years, 6.30-7.15pm
14+ years, 7.15-8.15pm

NEWSTART THEATRE
PORTLAND COLLEGE
NOTTINGHAM ROAD
MANSFIELD
NG18 4TJ

£3.50 for juniors
£4.50 for seniors
FIRST SESSION - FREE!

For more information text Helen on 07743862035 or email info@ndssg.org.uk

We then have The Dance Warriors. These sessions are run by NDSSG in 2 age groups, for children and young adults with down syndrome or other additional needs. They are run by Lianne Worth aka Miss Sparkle and a group of lovely volunteers including myself. Sessions are very popular, lots of fun and definitely keep everyone moving!

Both the football and dance sessions are only £3.50 per week and siblings are also welcome to join for free.

If anyone is interested in joining any of the groups they can contact me via email at annemarie_111@hotmail.co.uk or by ringing me on 0777 3224028, Ann-Marie Limer. Or feel free to just drop into one of our sessions, with the first session being free.



Why Nature Helps...

Many parents tell us that their child seems calmer after being outside — even if nothing “special” has happened. That’s not a coincidence. Time in nature can play a really powerful role in helping children regulate their emotions, especially for children with SEND.

Emotional regulation is the ability to notice, manage and recover from big feelings like excitement, anxiety, frustration or overload. For some children this can be a real daily challenge. Nature can sometimes provide gentle, built-in support.



Nature slows the body down

Natural environments tend to be quieter, more predictable and less demanding than indoor or busy spaces. There are fewer sudden noises, bright lights and social pressures. This gives the nervous system a chance to move out of “fight or flight” mode and into a calmer state. When a child’s body feels safer and more settled, their emotions are much easier to manage.



Sensory input that feels ‘just right’

Nature offers rich sensory experiences — the feel of mud or grass, the rhythm of walking, the sound of birds, the sight of moving clouds. These sensations are often more soothing and regulating than artificial sensory input. For children who seek sensory input, outdoor play can meet those needs naturally. For sensory-sensitive children, nature often feels less overwhelming and more forgiving.

There’s no pressure to perform

Outdoors, children don’t have to “sit still,” make constant eye contact, or follow complex social rules. They can move, explore, notice things at their own pace and take breaks when needed. This reduction in expectations lowers stress levels and can help children feel more emotionally balanced.

Movement helps emotions move too

Walking, climbing, digging, or even just swinging their legs while sitting on a log supports regulation through movement. Physical activity helps release built-up tension and gives big feelings somewhere to go. Many children find it easier to talk, reflect or calm down after they’ve had a chance to move their bodies outside.



Nature encourages connection

Spending time outdoors together can feel more relaxed and less intense than sitting face-to-face. Side-by-side experiences — walking the dog, spotting insects, throwing stones into water — can support communication and emotional connection without pressure.

It doesn’t have to be perfect

Nature time doesn’t need to mean long country walks or expensive trips. A local park, garden, patch of grass, or even standing under a tree can help. Five minutes noticing leaves or listening to birds can be just as valuable as an afternoon adventure.



SENSORY FRIENDLY NATURE SPOTS IN AND AROUND MANSFIELD

Shared Attention' Moments:
Point out something interesting
"Look — a tiny yellow flower!"

Things to consider...

- Quieter areas of parks - think about doing early morning or later evening trips, or move off the main trail into quieter areas with less people.
- Woodland walks that offer natural shade and sound-buffering
- Accessible trails for wheelchairs and pushchairs
- Spaces with a mix of open areas and cosy corners

Photo Prompts

Let your child take photos and talk about them later.

Vicar Water Country Park

Just to the south of Clipstone Village, this country park has lots of facilities, including a large fishing lake, footpaths and cycle routes, a café, children's play area, a small pond and the Golden Hand sculpture. The play area includes a zipwire, climbing frames, swings (including an accessible swing seat) and roundabouts—so lots of opportunity to get movement in. The park is known for its calm lake and scenic views, and provides a peaceful, open landscape with lots of space.



It is one of the busier areas though, and so you may want to go early in the morning, or later afternoon to avoid the busiest times.

Texture Hunt

Touch tree bark, grass, stones; choose "what feels nice today."



The Carrs

The Carrs in Warsop is a large open space, which includes a nature reserve, play areas, a mill pond and the River Meden. There is lots of wildlife, and there are a wide variety of birds to spot. For those living in Warsop, it is easy to access and has flat, predictable paths and gentle sensory input.

Cloud Watching
Regulates breathing without being "mindfulness" in name



Maun Valley Nature Reserve

is the largest reserve in the district, with various habitats along the River Maun. It features a range of ancient oak woodland, grasslands, water meadows, riverside areas and wetland habitats. You are able to choose quieter sections away from main paths — a good place if you are wanting to avoid crowds.

The Meden Trail

Built along a disused railway track, the trail runs through woodland, grassland and alongside the River Meden. There are lots of paths, including circular trails, and it is generally peaceful and not too busy. There is lots of wildlife, and you can also see the Peasley Vale Caves, that are located along the trail.



Quiet 5 Minutes:
Sit together and notice sounds (birds, wind, leaves).

Object of Interest
Choose a leaf/stone/stick and explore - "What do you notice?"