

Nursery 'devastated' after fire attack destroys shed

Staff launch fundraising campaign to replace hut and its contents

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TANGLEWOOD NURSERY has launched a fundraising campaign after a shed in its "forest garden" was destroyed in an arson attack. The blaze happened at Tanglewood Nursery in Melbourn, Chelmsford, on Wednesday 27, while the staff and children were on half-term. Mrs Harmer and staff were saddened and disappointed by the fire," said head teacher Susan Sutton. Staff at the school were alerted to the attack, which police believe happened between 6 and 7.30pm, following a call from a neighbour in the school.

Blow

It was a devastating blow to the school," added deputy head teacher Mrs Harmer.

The site manager came very close to the fire but it was his 50th birthday the next day, so he had to clear the site on his birthday clearing the

only did the shed burn down behind it as well which means we have to make sure that the site is secure before we can use it. The fire was work that



DEVASTATED: Tanglewood Nursery youngsters (l-r) Daisy-Mae Tottman, Amelie-Rose Bass, Ishwin Edward, Poppie Kirk, Oscar Naunton, Billy Hopkins, Irene Mark, Annabelle Taylor and Mikey O'Connor



DESTROYED: The school shed the nursery's children, aged between three and five, had completed during an art project a couple of weeks earlier.

"Our forest garden has only

been there for about three years," Mrs Harmer added.

"Every class gets to use it for one day a week, doing a range of carefully-planned activities, so it is highly valued by the children.

"We had just had an artist in, funded by the Royal Opera House, working with the children on a two-week project.

"It was really imaginative play using the forest garden and when she left, she contributed a lot of resources for the artwork, which were all being stored in the shed, along with lots of other stuff.

"A lot of the stuff that we lost didn't necessarily have monetary value but was important to us, like our traditional nativity equipment which is more than 20 years old," said Mrs Harmer.

Worrying

"We didn't want to frighten the children with the idea of a fire so finding ways to explain it without worrying them has to be handled quite sensitively."

After recovering from the loss, the school community is now setting about raising enough money

to replace the shed, and the items that were being housed inside it.

Mrs Harmer added: "We have been offered a cake stall by the school next door, Parkwood Academy, at their fete on July 11, which will be organised by our current parents."

Essex Police are continuing to search for the suspected arsonist, who they think may have been using a moped.

A police spokesman said anyone with any information should contact PC Andrew Holmes at Chelmsford Police station on 101.