

## NEWS

## ROWLANDS CASTLE

CONTRIBUTED PICTURE



The 'classroom in the sky' treehouse at St John's Primary School is the project's centrepiece.

# 'Classroom in the sky' shortlisted for county award

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**AN AMBITIOUS scheme at a Rowlands Castle school to bring the classroom into the great outdoors could win a major award.**

The Outdoor Learning Project at St John's Primary School has been shortlisted for a Hampshire Countryside Award.

The nomination follows the completion of a five-year project between the school and Ruth Butler Architects that transformed the grounds into a place suitable for forest school activities.

The centrepiece of the £36,000 project was a 'classroom in the sky' treehouse with two pods capable of accommodating 15 pupils.

A woodland trail, peace garden, climbing wall and

outdoor musical instruments were also created during the last five years.

"The school had a lot of ground that wasn't being accessed," said the Emsworth architect behind the plans. "One of the first things we did was the woodland trail because that opened it up.

"All the things we've done connect into the national forest schools curriculum by taking teaching out of the classroom and into outdoor spaces.

"This was a project that focused entirely on the outdoors and one of the nice things about it was getting the chance to redefine their outdoor spaces."

The awards will be handed out by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) Hampshire on September 19 at Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall.

The St John's project is one of three nominated for the Young People award in the South Hampshire section with the Food Discovery and Putting the Fare into Fareham initiatives at Bassett Green Primary School and Wicor Primary School, Portchester, respectively, also vying for the title.

Forest Schools teacher, Jayne May, was instrumental in pushing the project forward while the majority of the cash was raised through school events and a fundraising partnership.

School supporters, governors, the Diocese of Portsmouth, Barclays, Waitrose and local councillors were among the many who stumped up funds.

Mrs Butler's own home, the Hampshire Passivhaus, has also been nominated for a Sustainable Building award.