

*Magic Spots* is the name given to the activity embedded in the Earthkeepers'™ Programme of The Institute for Earth Education. Magic Spots are times of solitude in the natural world, sharpening nonverbal skills like watching and waiting, silencing and stilling, opening and receiving and reflecting on and articulating silence and interconnectedness. As part of their residential experience at Ringsfield EcoCentre each child chooses a special place where they are comfortable and are not distracted by the sight of others. They will return to this spot for at least two organised times during their stay, but also, of course, at any other time during their 'free time'. This is their 'Magic Spot'. It is part of their experience of the natural world; it is also an introduction to solitude. The time spent alone is usually about ten minutes for the first experience and lengthens to perhaps twenty minutes, or more, by the end of the week. They are to go to their magic spots in silence and maintain silence until the group reconvenes for some reflective feed-back. They are to sit, look, listen, smell, think, watch and, if they want to, write in their diaries at the time or later. No instruction is given about being still, meditation or spirituality.

Here are two responses:

*Since I got back from Ringsfield I feel that when I'm here [Holloway] with all the noise and pollution I feel that my thoughts are in prison, they are all a blur, but when I was there, sitting in all that silence with all the space, all my thoughts came flowing out of my brain, like I couldn't stop them.*

(Girl, 10 years old, Magic Spots described, p.6)

*Waves patter as I sit there and relax. When I look around I see birds flying free in the sky and rocks seem to be talking to each other in a kind way. Although people talk to me I take no notice. I am too involved in watching and listening to the earth speak. After listening to the earth I try to listen to my friends, but all I can hear is nature calling me to listen.*

(Pupil aged 10, 1997)

A seven year old wrote:

*Words to describe my magic spot: Bumpy, Soil, Twigs, Stinging Nettles, Bugs, Trees, Quiets.*

This inspired the following poem.

## **Quiets**

You taught us how to be

motivated by how much you would sell.

We loved what you offered:

your digital war, collaborating

with the entrepreneurs of cash,

carrying your marketing of two for one;

your virtual living through sophisticated screens,

your fantasies of small horizons.

You taught us how to live this way,

we learnt there was no other way.

It is the only way the world works

you said.

But you never told us about the quiet,  
the epiphanies of connection  
about discovering the secret  
that is only heard in silence.  
Why?  
It would have made so much difference.

**Chris Walton**