

Nature area for outdoor learning



In March 2021 Bishopston Primary School received £4,955 from Swansea RDP Local Area Group to develop a nature area for outdoor learning, which could be used every day as a study area for the children.

The school had identified that when children are at home, they are increasingly spending time inside, television, playing computer games and spending time on phones, etc.

The school believes in the importance of connecting children with the outdoors and want their children to love and care for the environment and this project aimed to make the best use of existing space by developing a unique education experience to children.

The project has sought to promote long-term and lasting impact on

environment, reducing the carbon footprint of the local area and to secure and build upon the natural resources and biodiversity available.

A great deal has been achieved during a difficult few years of COVID restrictions.

During the past 15 months pupils, teachers, community volunteers and parents have combined skills and resources to create a wildlife haven with native wildflowers, raised beds of heritage vegetables, bug hotels and bird boxes, and water harvesting facilities.

Volunteers and staff planted hedges and trees, laid paths to make the area accessible, constructed raised beds for the pupils to use and created a water harvesting system that saves over 1,000 litres

Each year.

During the warm spring of 2022, pupils from the Foundation Phase have already been busy in the nature area, sowing seeds and seedlings. Enthusiastic young gardeners from the pupil gardening clubs are nurturing beetroot, carrots, rainbow carrots and sunflowers. Pupils were also in the area learning about teamwork, problem solving and habitats.

Foundation pupils are now carrying out regular surveys to assess the biodiversity in the area. The space offers a purposeful outdoor learning area where the children learn about how to look after the world and develop an understanding of nature and sustainability.

Headteacher John Owen says:
"The nature area has been a

wonderful way to develop the school grounds. It's brought the community together after some very difficult times. It's supported our outdoor learning lessons in school, it's given opportunity for exciting and real learning to take place. If education is going to have a positive impact on teaching the next generation to care for the environment and the stunning creation we are a part of, then we need to get children to connect to it in a meaningful way.

The nature area is used most days by groups of children. It is a pleasure to see them interacting with it; caring for the smallest seedling, searching for mini-beasts, learning of the importance of pollinators - and of course having lots of fun.

We hope to keep developing our beautiful corner of biodiversity!"

Pupils are enthusiastic:

"I love that the nature area is now really exciting. We can do loads of cool new stuff. I always help to water and look after the new plants. We have vegetables and fruit growing."
(Tanny)

"We collect the water from the roof on the shed, it comes into our water butt. We put the water into our watering cans then we water the plants."
(Oli)

"In our nature area the flowers and trees we have are beautiful. I love playing in it as it is super fun and colourful.

I enjoy listening to stories around the log fire and toasting marshmallows."
(Flo)

"I love digging in the nature area, I can dig deep down when we need to plant trees. I hope we can help the animals to have a safe place to live"(George)

Parent comment:

"It has been a pleasure to watch the area change so much over the last year. Lots of trees, plants and flowers have been added to create a lovely wild area. As a space it is to much more beneficial for the wildlife, and for the children to learn from. I feel lucky to have been involved in helping this area to grow. It feels like the beginning of which can develop - there is so much more that can be done. I am looking forward to seeing apples on trees, bird surveys, homemade jam" (Karen, a mum from school).

Looking forward, the school will continue to develop the nature area to the benefit of the local flora and fauna, and future pupils. Small steps can save the planet...

