

Developing a whole-school growing programme at Rhyl Primary School

Rhyl Primary School is in Camden Town, London. We are passionate about the power and importance of outdoor learning, despite the fact that we are not blessed with large grounds. In fact, we have created green spaces from the most concrete of spots, including a brilliant garden built in a school car park. We work together as a school to offer a creative curriculum to our children, which includes taking our children outside of the four walls of the classroom whenever possible.

As a school, our big step was to develop a whole-school growing programme rather than a smaller gardening club. This magnified the impact of our work hugely and allowed us to start to develop a scheme of work that allowed for progression of learning as children went through the school.

We are a two-form entry school. Each class is divided into four colour groups, so that each week one colour group from each class spends time in the garden. Every Wednesday we run back to back 30 minute sessions working our way through the year groups. Therefore, each child gets to work in the outdoor classroom at least once per month on top of additional curriculum projects or drop-ins.

We also run an after-school gardening club. The children in this are trained up to teach the younger ones and support the garden with seasonal tasks. We also do lots of one-off curriculum-based projects with teachers. In order to make these work, we have found that the key thing is to talk to teachers at the right point in their planning cycles (typically a week or two before the end of term) so that we can share and incorporate ideas into their medium term planning for the next half term.

Our weekly sessions outdoors are organised into monthly topics (for example Harvest is our topic for September). This topic carries a few key learning objectives (skills and concepts) which we can differentiate up and down and also bolt around some of the more spontaneous and evolving tasks that are needed on the plot that day.

We believe that food growing is an important way of developing food literacy and life skills. In the garden children learn where food comes from which impacts them making choices that are both healthy for the children and for the environment. Spending time in the garden also makes children more sensitive to the world around them, including each other. They learn patience as growing plants takes time. Children begin to appreciate how hard it is to grow food which allows them to appreciate their food more, wasting less.

We recently won a gold medal in both the good growing and curriculum awards in Camden in Bloom. We are an RHS Level 5 school and hold the Food For Life Silver award. We are also working with the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation to develop our topic based approach to gardening further as part of the materials for Jamie Oliver's Kitchen Garden Project. These will complement Jamie's cookery resources and support staff in running lessons on the school plot. These units will include ideas for activities, curriculum links and practical horticultural advice to make sessions on the plot easy to organise and as fun and learning-rich as possible. Our work with Jamie Oliver's Kitchen Garden Project will be available for all schools to access before September this year.



For more information on the outdoor classroom at Rhyl Primary School check out our blog: <http://outdoorclassrooms.wordpress.com> and for more information on Jamie Oliver's Kitchen Garden Project please visit www.jamieoliver.com/kitchen-garden-project.

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