



RHS CASE STUDY

Oxspring Primary School



YORKSHIRE

There has historically been a school garden at Oxspring since the school was first built in 1880 and was a considerable size, well utilised and much needed, the garden was also larger than our present garden at least double the size.

We have gone through many transitions since 1880, the garden having its highs and lows, through two world wars, economic recession, changes in attitudes and a recent fresh interest in organic sustainability.

The present core of the garden was created through a grant, volunteers and students in 2008 and has evolved enormously since then to be the garden you see today.

Considerable changes started in the garden five years ago, the original garden was lovely, well used but basic, in that five years we have made many additions and improvements through fundraising and applying for grants, we have installed a new Rhino greenhouse through a grant, we have won other grants to create a sensory/fairy wood, a cob oven for our outdoor kitchen, living willow structures, a pond and bug hotel all created to enhance and inspire our young horticulturists/environmentalists.

We have incredible students who are passionate, creative, proud and enthusiastic about their retreat and outdoor classroom, they are supported and inspired by our small but committed garden volunteers who give so much, with the support of an amazing, open school staff team.

The garden is a valuable resource, not only do we run a weekly garden club but we participate in RHS challenges/experiments, run Outdoor classroom days, outdoor cooking days, bio diversity study days, nature walks and outdoor history days, we recently ran an Anglo Saxon day in the garden..... making dyes from the plants the children grow, open fire cooking, making vessels from clay and a spot of wattle and daubing.

Our fantastic teachers always support and immerse themselves in the outdoor classroom days and use the garden to teach maths, history, science and often come up to the garden to engage the pupil's imaginations through storytelling and creative play.

I think we have achieved a great deal in the last five years we have secured many grants for developing our space, maintaining what we already have to a high standard but always looking forward thinking of ways to help the garden, environment and the pupils grow, we have plans for an outdoor kitchen work area to prepare the crops they grow for cooking, we have plans for a yurt so we can establish a forest school and all weather wild classroom

The children make their own compost, fertilizers, organic natural plant based insecticides, pesticides and weed suppressors, they also harvest the majority of their own seeds, use a crop rotation system and as much as possible we use a no dig principal to enhance their understanding of soil science and sustainable growing.

Our garden club students are so understandably proud of attaining an RHS Gold award for the fourth year in a row, winning best small community and triply excited after winning best in category for the whole of Yorkshire 2018, this award is such an achievement which has given the children so much confidence in their knowledge and abilities as individuals and as a team.

Our school garden has always been heavily involved in the wider community, the garden club have a plant stall at the annual Duck race, the pupils plant and maintain the " Help yourself Oxspring "planters within the village, which is a project funded by the RHS three years ago to encourage inhabitants of the village to



help themselves to seasonal crops, we also organise a biannual Oxspring open gardens using the school garden as the hub, we normally have ten other gardens open around the village for paying visitors and we raise the funds to support the Bluebell Wood children's hospice. We run regular community work days around the village which brings together various generations to dig, plant, litter pick and prune, it is a great vehicle to get the villagers to work together, connect and share their experiences/ knowledge.

We have a fabulous community who support the garden wholeheartedly through teaching the children how to create natural habitats, giving up their time to come and give assemblies on various environmental issues, running Creative writing outdoors and environmental art workshops.

Every year our garden becomes an increasingly valuable resource for teachers and pupils alike, both educationally and spiritually.

'We have an unwavering passion, pride and love for our little haven.'



Members of Oxspring School Garden Club are welcomed to the Parlour of Barnsley's Mayor, Cllr Steve Green after being awarded the Harrogate Flower Show Young People's Award for 2018. The pupils are accompanied by Headteacher Mrs Irwin, and School Garden Co-ordinator Emily-Rose Gratton-Rayson.



Learn, Endeavour, Aspire, Respect, Nurture.