



**Yorkshire
Wildlife Trust**



#TeamWilder Educators in Action

CASE STUDY: New Pasture Lane Primary School

Tell us about your school and the local area where you're based?

We are New Pasture Lane Primary School, based in the coastal town of Bridlington, East Riding of Yorkshire. Currently we have 250 children on roll ranging from 2 to 11 years old. Over 50% of our pupils are eligible for free school meals.

When did your outdoor learning journey begin, and what prompted staff to make this a focus within the school?

Five years ago, we recognised the huge social, emotional and educational benefits to our pupils of being connected to nature and learning outdoors. This was through becoming an established 'Beach School', which involves termly visits for all classes to undertake curriculum-based activities using our local marine environment. We also started a gardening club around this time.

It was even more apparent during Covid, where taking part in outdoor learning activities and increasing nature connectivity became an important means of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff, that we needed to be outside as much as possible in order to stay safe. In doing so, we started to find that when we nurtured nature, it nurtured us in return, in so many ways.



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Following Covid, we began to look at our school grounds in a different light; as a habitat for nature, as an outdoor classroom where quality learning experiences could take place, and as a place for our school community to work, play, and come together with each other and with nature. However, whilst we recognised that we wanted to maximise our outdoor learning experiences at school and expand what we had, we didn't know how best to do this.

Our outdoor learning journey then really took off in 2021, when we had the amazing opportunity to team up with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to look at ways to develop our school grounds for wildlife and integrate more nature-focused learning into our day-to-day lessons and extra-curricular activities. Drawing on their expertise has allowed us to develop areas of our school grounds for nature and for learning in ways that we otherwise wouldn't have dreamed of. Our partnership work with them has also been invaluable in the way we have integrated outdoor learning into our school curriculum.

How does nature play a role within your academic curriculum and/or as part of the school's pastoral care?

We have adopted the term "Nature Friendly NPL" and embedded it very firmly in our School Development Plan, with the full support and backing of the Headteacher and Governing Body.



TOTAL NUMBER OF POTATOES	TOTAL WEIGHT (G / Kg)	HIGH VIBES SINGLE POTATO (Kg)	LARGEST SINGLE POTATO (Kg)
Y6 90	P2 2300g	Y1 230g	Y1 230g
Y6 84	Y1 210g	Y1 110g	Y1 150g
Y6 61	Y1 110g	P2 1750g	Y1 100g
Y1 57	Y1 100g	Y1 230g	Y1 100g
P2 50	Y1 100g	Y1 100g	Y1 100g
Y1 42	Y1 100g	Y1 100g	Y1 100g
Y1 31	Y1 100g	Y1 100g	Y1 100g



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The key to its success had been a whole school approach, with an expectation for everyone to be involved at some level, with pathways for anyone who wants to get involved in more depth to do so – both staff and pupils.

We have implemented this whole-school approach in the following ways:

- Working with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust we designed and developed dedicated ‘Nature Learning Areas’ for each class. Staff and pupils fed into the vision and design for these areas and, following their development, each class now takes responsibility for maintaining and nurturing their space to encourage biodiversity across the school. Each space is different but offers value, both in terms of outdoor learning and in providing food/habitat for nature – e.g. vegetable beds, a bug hotel, a meadow, a small pond and a fairy garden. Pupils then go on a ‘nature journey’ as they progress through the school, experiencing stewardship of each of these natural environments as they move through the year groups.

- We have created an ‘outdoor classroom’ in the form of picnic benches to seat around 30 pupils and a whiteboard so that classes and clubs can easily and comfortably take place outside.

- We offer weekly Gardening Club and Golden Time Gardening (part of our pupil reward scheme) for KS1 & KS2 pupils.

- We run regular whole-school projects and competitions with a link to nature or outdoor learning, for example we recently chose to make ‘bees and pollination’ the main topic of our reading week and we are now gearing up for the third year of our annual ‘NPL Great Potato Grow-Off’!

- Class teachers are required to deliver at least one curriculum-linked outdoor lesson per term. To support staff confidence and enthusiasm with this we made sure, working in partnership with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, that all staff had access to Outdoor Learning training and collated and signposted resources that could be used.



Do staff and/or pupils have particular roles within the school in terms of developing and maintaining your outdoor spaces, and/or embedding nature into your day-to-day activities?

- Each teacher and their class takes responsibility for nurturing and developing the ‘Nature Learning Area’ outside their classrooms.

- Outdoor Learning is part of performance development for certain members of staff so that they can devote time and resources to developing this within the school as part of their role.

- Recently, we have elected a cohort of Y6 pupils as our ‘Nature Friendly Friends’ – this is an emerging ambassadorial role which will entail a number of responsibilities, including helping staff to prepare whole school projects, undertaking nature-focused practical tasks around the school and supporting younger peers to engage in outdoor learning activities during playtimes.

- Alongside the food growing projects they are working on, our Gardening Club takes an active role in supporting whole school projects as they develop and maintain our grounds, e.g. through seasonal meadow management, topping up bird feeders, etc.

Have you seen any impacts on pupil learning, behaviour, or attendance as a result of your nature-focused learning activities?

Absolutely, yes! Pupils love taking their learning outside, and we are seeing levels of engagement, creativity and knowledge retention increase; we’ve had pupils who are reluctant to talk in class chatter and engage fully while out in nature, others say they can think better outside and most come back inside with rosy cheeks, a smile, positive energy and enthusiasm ready to talk about what they have learnt.





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Pupils can recall pollination and plant reproduction techniques because they have studied them at first-hand in our garden during science lessons. They have used their measuring and teamworking skills in maths to calculate how old the trees in the playground are, and returned excited and empowered, knowing that trees don't have to be cut down to discover their age. Our younger children know what a plant needs to grow successfully because they have been actively involved in nurturing them – and in many cases enjoyed eating the spoils!

Empathy for and appreciation of each other and for nature has increased. For example, pupils now look out for bumblebees that are struggling and are keen to alert staff and provide sugar solution and move them to a safe spot. Similarly, pupils recently found a hedgehog in the school grounds during the daytime and took action to cordon off the area and call a local rescue centre. Pupils now notice bird calls that they would have previously been oblivious to and take pride in caring for plants on site; they like to find feathers and identify species from these, go on bug hunts and work together to find out more about our local species.

There have also been significant positive impacts on some pupils in relation to attendance and confidence. To give a specific example, one pupil who was disengaged from learning and the wider school community really found their place through the increase in outdoor learning that we now offer. This young man was struggling with elements of classroom learning and with self-confidence, but finding a role with responsibility through the Gardening Club gave him something to look forward to and take pride in. As our nature-focused work developed he started to photograph and report on our activities, progressing to conducting interviews with teachers, school visitors and staff from partner organisations. As time went on, he gradually became recognised as our official 'roving reporter' of nature news, contributing blogs, photo diaries and creating radio shows that celebrated the work taking place in the school.

Can you tell us about some lessons or projects that have been especially successful with pupils and/or have made an impact for nature?

Our nature-focused writing week was a big success. Working collaboratively with Andy from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, we set each year group the task of undertaking an activity to make the



school grounds more pollinator-friendly. Classes decided on their chosen project, worked with Andy to plan and execute the practical elements of these, and then used all this as a stimulus for creative writing and producing reports, radio programmes, blogs and more. Within a short space of time this raised the profile of nature awareness and our drive to be more nature-friendly across the whole school – we were all doing our bit, and everyone got to meet and work with our expert, which created an inclusive team ethos.

Another key success to come out of our nature-focused work has been the opportunity to build connections and work jointly with a nearby like-minded school who are on a similar journey to ourselves. We have visited each other's sites, worked together to produce nature-themed, internet-streamed radio programmes, and are now working on plans for further joint learning projects which take advantage of the differing wildlife habitats and outdoor spaces across our two sites.

Our Annual NPL Great Potato Grow Off started three years ago as a way of maintaining a connection between year groups during Covid. Classes compete across a range of categories (from highest yield to funniest-looking spud!), with chitting starting in March and the whole school coming together for July harvest; children love following this whole process and find it magical to see what has grown as a result of their efforts. The school feast which follows is always a highlight too!

As part of our nature-focused work we have also started a school composting project. As well as reducing costs on buying in compost and being an environmentally-friendly way of processing waste, we have learned that compost heaps themselves provide a superb habitat for wildlife; children have loved seeing the insects that have made their homes in there, and the birds that come along looking for a tasty treat! The project has also been a great stimulus for literacy as pupils have created their own detailed 'How to Compost' booklets as a result of what they have learned from their first-hand experience of working the heaps.



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Have you noticed an increase in species on your site (plants and/or animals) as a result of the projects you've undertaken?

2022 was the first year of our meadow flowering and we only created our pond in that autumn, so it is still early days in terms of assessing impact for wildlife, however we have definitely seen some early successes, with many more species of wildflower coming through in our meadow. We are also noticing more avian visitors since establishing our bird feeding stations; going forward we plan to do more surveys to see how our work has impacted on the variety of species that we see, as well as the overall numbers. One thing we are already sure of is that staff and pupils alike thoroughly enjoy watching them feed and nest around the school!

Do you feel there are areas of the KS1/KS2 curriculum that lend themselves especially well to developing lessons with a nature focus?

Outdoor learning generally, and nature-focused activities more specifically, can be used as a focus or a stimulus for many areas of the curriculum across both Key Stages. Maths and Science are subjects where there are many obvious links to nature. Examples of activities we have used for other curriculum areas include: leaves and trees for observational drawing; scavenger hunts using teamworking and tablets to make a presentation; small reading groups taken outside with cloud watching as a final relaxation activity; mapping of the meadow once planted up using geographical skills; composting used as a stimulus for literacy work; design of a bird feeder, nest box or bee hotel for Design & Technology projects, and of course there are huge links with outdoor activities to much of the PSHE curriculum.

What advice would you give to a member of staff at another school who wanted to develop the school's outdoor learning provision but didn't know where to start?



- Start with something small – mix and match lesson ideas to suit you and your pupils – if you enjoy it, they will.
- Look for the support of a member of your school SLT with your venture – it is much easier and more rewarding to implement an outdoor learning focus when you feel supported and are working as a team.
- Don't expect pupils to behave perfectly from the first session but do set expectations (and involve them in drawing up these expectations to improve 'buy-in') – it takes time and a consistent approach for some children to be comfortable with working in their 'outside classroom', as previously 'outside' at school will have generally meant 'playtime'.
- Seek to build a relationship with a neighbouring school for joint projects and/or look at online networks such as the RHS School Gardening Campaign and the Tree Council networks, for opportunities to link up and get involved in a wider community.

Can you suggest any 'quick wins' for nature projects that are easy to resource, engaging for pupils and beneficial for nature?

- Holding a growing competition is a way to do something simple which involves the whole school; the competitive element also builds excitement – just make sure there are a variety of winning categories so that all classes/pupils have a chance!
- Making bird feeders in the winter is something that children really enjoy and can easily be linked to the science or literacy curriculum. Following this up by taking part in the RSPB Big Schools Birdwatch in January is a good way to help build nature connection among pupils and allow them to see the benefits to wildlife that their efforts have had.
- Building a couple of simple raised beds and growing something easy like strawberries allows pupils to learn first-hand about plant science, observe the patch for pollination in action and helps them to learn about seasonal cycles and understand that nature works at its own pace, and that our patience will be rewarded.



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■ Making a little fairy garden is a good activity for younger children. Most schools will have an area that could do with a bit of brightening up and this kind of project allows pupils take ownership of a space, as well as providing a simple focus for a range of curriculum areas such as maths (measuring and use of shapes when planning out the area), literacy (creative writing around the new landscape and myths and legends of the characters that live there) and Design & Technology (building mini habitats into the garden, such as bee hotels, a mini meadow etc, to encourage it to be a haven for other winged creatures, not just fairies!)

Can you recommend any award schemes, websites, books, sources of support for schools that have helped you to embed nature into your teaching?

■ Grow to School offers some fantastic resources – we have found their two free ‘Recovery Curriculum’ packs especially useful in the early stages of our outdoor learning journey, in terms of providing short, simple activities and helping staff and pupils co-create boundaries and become confident in learning outdoors – www.growtoschool.co.uk/
www.growtoschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Recovery-Curriculum-support-pack-Sep-2020.pdf

■ The Tree Council’s Young Tree Champions scheme is really engaging for pupils and staff alike – www.treecouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/tree-champions/

■ The RSPB School Birdwatch provides an easy focus for a winter activity (when inspiration may be running low and nature seems to be more dormant) and comes with some fab free teaching resources – www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-teachers/schools-wild-challenge/activities/big-schools-birdwatch/



■ The RHS School Gardens scheme is great for supporting growing activities in school, with loads of great resources on the website – www.schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/home

What do you plan to do next?

For us now it is all about building on the foundations that we have made, understanding that – much as we would like to – we can’t do everything. We are focussing on what has really worked for us and fits with our school ethos and aims, taking these forward and really embedding them across the school. A few areas of focus for us presently include becoming confident in our stewardship of the meadow and the orchard and establishing both our bird-friendly activities and composting across the school.

We are also really excited to have recently completed ‘Project Polytunnel’, where we used money donated by the Lords Feoffees of Bridlington and drew on the links and expertise of our nature partners to build a large polytunnel in the school grounds. We are now enjoying gaining confidence in using it for growing and exploring how it works for us as a multipurpose outside space and classroom.

To contact us or find out more visit:

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