

Lancashire Education Awards



Case Study

Establishment name:	Weeton Primary School
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Lead contact name	Mrs Amanda Gilyead
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Project title	Dynamic and Innovative Learning in an Outdoor Setting All the Year round
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Award gained

Award category	X
Innovate <i>A project that demonstrates practice that is new or ground breaking, which successfully engaged and enthused learners.</i>	X
Achieve <i>A project had measurable impact on raising outcomes for pupils.</i>	
Invest <i>A project that has had a positive impact upon an aspect of the wider school community.</i>	
Collaborate <i>A project that involved work across more than one school or work with other agencies.</i>	
Include <i>A project in provision for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities</i>	
Inspire <i>A project that demonstrates embedded exceptional provision of an aspect of the curriculum. Practice will have been developed and refined over time.</i>	

Project summary (maximum 200 words)

On moving to a new school in January 2017 we were given a blank canvas of outdoor space. Our aim was to develop passion for gardening and growing/ cooking our own food outdoors in an environmentally friendly way. We wanted to develop an understanding, love and respect for the outdoors as well as improving scientific skills and knowledge, particularly in biology and conservation. We wanted to develop co operative skills, a sense of responsibility and measured risk taking in order to have a positive impact on behaviour. Two members of staff were trained and have developed a woodland, garden and outdoor learning area. They began a programme of learning in the outdoors in May 1017 for every child in the school, with outdoor learning taking place on two days a week throughout the year. An outdoor covered learning area and extended use of tools and outdoor cooking equipment have now been added, as well as introducing environmental art.

How did you identify the need for this project? What were you hoping to achieve?

Over 90% of our pupils are from Forces families and move regularly, they are away from extended family and one parent is often away training. It is therefore difficult to create their own gardens and have opportunities explore the outdoors beyond the barracks. The unsettled nature of Forces life, with frequent movement of school and change of peer group also can result in behavioural issues that are difficult to deal with in conventional ways. We wanted to develop general knowledge of flora and fauna, encourage a responsible attitude towards conservation and to care for our environment and to improve behaviour throughout the school. All these could be achieved by learning outdoors in a structured way.

Who led the project?

Mr Goth (Head), Mrs Gilyead (Teacher)

What steps/actions did you take?

Two members of staff completed a Forest School Level 3 course, this being an alternative style of child led learning which uses a positive approach and develops independence, self confidence, problem solving skills and a sense of responsibility. On completing the course an area for outdoor learning was set up and classes began to use the area, led by specialist teachers, on a weekly basis. Each class uses the area about once every half term for one and a half days.

What was the impact of the project and how was this measured/assessed?

The impact on behaviour was immediately apparent in that there were very few issues in the outdoor learning sessions in terms of behaviour. Once rules and boundaries were set, children followed them carefully and have become more able to resolve disputes through discussion. This has impacted on behaviour in school and at playtimes, with fewer Level 2 and 3 incidents and no exclusions since the programme started. Attendance has improved on these days with 95%+ attendance on Forest School sessions this term. Year 5 and 6 Science Assessment tasks show an increased knowledge of flora and fauna. Teacher assessment from Reception to Year 4 has also shown improvements in both knowledge and skills in this area. Children have showed great enthusiasm for outdoor related themes and gardening club and the eco committee are both over subscribed. We are currently working on Green Flag Eco status.

What are the next steps? How will you follow up this work?

Forest School sessions will continue to take place on two days a week, led by specialist practitioners. Class teachers and teaching assistants are also involved in these sessions, in order to develop their skills to extend outdoor learning throughout the curriculum. We plan to offer the sessions to local schools and plan to produce a flyer to be distributed in the summer term to enable this.

Do you have any other advice for establishments that might be considering a similar project?

The impact on knowledge, behaviour and positive attitude among the children has been dramatic and as an alternative approach to learning is highly recommended. We welcome visits from anyone considering this approach to come and see what we have done. Time needs to be devoted to setting up and maintaining the area and for the training of practitioners.