

Lancashire Education Awards



Application Form

Please note that sharing good practice is an essential part of the Lancashire Education Awards and by completing this form you agree to be contacted by interested schools. The contact information and information you provide on this application form will thus be published on a website should your application be successful.

Establishment name:	Thornton Primary School
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Lancashire Establishment no (e.g. 02013 or A1005). If you do not have a Lancashire number please provide your full school address and phone number	02035
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Network/cluster name (if you are applying for an award for network/cluster work and more than one establishment will receive an award. Please list all the schools that would receive the award.	
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Headteacher/principal/ head of centre name	David Ashcroft
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Lead contact name (if different from Headteacher; this person will be contacted for queries/to provide evidence, etc.)	David Ashcroft
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Lead contact email address (will need to be checked regularly)	head@thorntonprimary.lancs.sch.uk
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Project title (will appear on certificate, maximum 15 words)	The power of outdoor learning
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Award applied for (please put an X in the appropriate box):

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 Educational 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)
<p>In 2018, we had a change in senior leadership and it quickly became apparent that we needed to make changes at school. The children lacked self-esteem and were not proud to a part of their school. We needed a change; one that would restore pride in our school. We felt it had to be something tangible that the children had ownership over. This, along with conversations with children, sparked the idea of creating our own Forest School area that would be built by the children for the children.</p> <p>Families, children and staff have worked together to create what has been described by visitors to our school as an inspiring outdoor learning environment for children to explore and develop. We don't have a forest but what we have is space and an abundance of energy and drive to make changes. The development has been an opportunity to offer a broader and more diverse curriculum for our children that many of them have never experienced before.</p> <p>The children from EYFS to Year 6 now have Forest School lessons in our wonderful site led by our Forest School teacher. They are developing skills and confidence that they didn't know was possible.</p>

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

In February 2018, whilst on the Year 6 residential a boy in Year 6 remarked that he loved walking in the lakes. He had never done it before and the only place he normally walked was to the local corner shop. This confirmed the idea to make the changes. We couldn't take our children to the lakes everyday but what we had back at Thornton was a site that could be developed and enable us to bring a bit of the lakes and outdoor learning to our school.

The whole school community came together as one to create a magnificent Forest School site so that all children would be provided with opportunities to develop a love of learning in the outdoors.

What we wanted to achieve was a love of learning outdoors, pride in our school and enhance our curriculum. We also wanted to engage those children who had significant behaviour issues and make them love coming to school.

Community is at the heart of our school and we wanted to re-engage with our local community who kindly donated time and resources to help us to create an outstanding outdoor learning area

This project started out as a way on igniting our children's passion for learning but has become so much more. Children now walk around school with a smile, speak positively about Thornton Primary School and are enjoying learning together.

Vocabulary skills have also developed by providing children with real life experiences so they better understand the world around them. The impact is still being measured; however, there is already evidence of improved communication and language skills which are being applied in other areas of the curriculum as well as a significant improvement in behaviour.

Who led the project?

David Ashcroft, Headteacher

Gemma Brocklehurst,

What steps/actions did you take?

- Discussions were had between the SLT and governors about ways in which we could raise children's motivation to learn and develop their self-esteem. The idea of the Forest School came about after exploring different ways in which this could be achieved, following conversations with the children.
- Donations from local companies of basic resources including wood chippings for making paths, branches and logs were very kindly made.
- Plans were drawn up about how to develop the site and the position of Forest School leader was advertised.
- Extensive Forest School training was undertaken by the Forest School leader so that the sessions could be run in a safe, meaningful manner.
- The site was then developed and continues to be; it seems as though each week there are new additions to further develop learning opportunities.

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

The Forest School enrichment has ensured that we now deliver a broader and better balanced curriculum; we are now providing children with real life experiences that they love and cherish. Previously, our school had significant issues relating to poor behaviour. Many children were at risk of exclusion. Those same children were the ones who displayed poor self-esteem and lacked self-confidence. Through the development of outdoor learning, the children are now thriving and come to school smiling. The impact on behaviour and self-esteem is evident; there is a pride in our school that is clear for everyone to see.

Parents and families have commented on the difference at the school because of the project in the recent parent questionnaires. In 2017, there was only 6 families who chose Thornton Primary School as first choice for their child's school. Restoring pride in our school and re-engaging with the local community has meant that already this year over 35 families have attended open afternoons to enquire about a place for their child in September 2019. The word has got out that the school is changing and we owe much of that down to our outdoor learning in the Forest School and the impact that has had on our children's behaviour and self-esteem and our much enriched curriculum.

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

The next steps are to further develop children's communication and language skills. We would like to monitor the impact of the Forest School on how it has, and continues to, support closing the word gap for children who start school with lower communication and language skills.

Please attach any supporting evidence – this will be considered alongside the application.

Evidence could include: school improvement plans, governors minutes, e-scrapbooks, examples of children's work, PowerPoints, photographs, letters from parents, anything that demonstrates the outcome of the project.) **Please be mindful that files containing large numbers of high resolution images/video clips may not be received.**

Supporting evidence attached:

Statement from School Adviser, Marie-Therese Bamber

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

For any schools in a similar position, my advice would be to not be afraid to think outside of the box and do something innovative. Be brave and bold and engage with the families and community; you will reap huge rewards.

For any school thinking of developing a Forest School, I would fully recommend that you give it serious consideration; the benefits to the curriculum are incredible. Many areas can be developed on site using resources that are available for free. We created a 'deadhedge' seating circle using branches, bark chippings and log seats. All of these items were either on site or came to school for free via a local tree surgeon. Utilising social media such as Facebook, we were able to receive the donation of a pond. Ultimately, it is about getting stuck in as a school and developing a site together.

Adviser/LCC Consultant's supporting statement (the application will not be considered without this)

Please see attached

Adviser/LCC
consultant name

Marie-Therese Bamber

Date of application

04/02/2019

Please email your completed form to advisory.support@lancashire.gov.uk. You should also save the completed form to your computer/network before closing it.