Project summary

The eco team included school staff, children, parents, grandparents, local community project workers and local wildlife conservation groups. The initial decisions were taken by the children in school council meetings. The two main priorities for school were to develop awareness of environmental issues and to improve the appearance of our school grounds. Our school is situated on a reclaimed brown field site. Although there is very little soil (old mill machinery is just below the surface) we wanted to make full use of the land available by planting vegetables as well as ornamental plants. Regular meetings of the eco council led to a range of activities being suggested by the children including litter collection, a new lighting system in the toilets (new lights only come on when movement is detected and switches off after a given period of time), new push taps to reduce the amount of water wasted when the children are washing their hands, a compost bin to recycle our fruit remnants and peel. The composting also incorporated school meal waste.

We have appointed an Eco-Governor who attends meetings and is regularly updated on progress.

Golden time activities also supported this project, producing garden decorations and providing labour for digging the gardens over. We have carried out a mass bulb planting and have plans for a cookery club which will utilise the fruits of our labours and support our healthy eating principles!

Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

Sustainability - developing an eco-aware school.

Aspect of Every Child Matters addressed:

☑ Be healthy  ☑ Stay Safe  ☑ Enjoy and achieve
☑ Make a positive contribution  ☑ Achieve economic well-being
**What were you hoping to achieve?**

Strengthening and developing further links with our local community.
Developing and re-enforcing cross curricular links.
Developing skills for life and an understanding of the economic value of growing our own food.
Improving the levels of physical exercise and enjoyment of the environment.
Fostering pleasure and understanding of the natural world and the food we eat.

**How did you identify the need for this practice?**

Discussion with the children through the school council. Through our Healthy Heroes project earlier in the year we became aware that many pupils consumed high levels of processed food. The children's enthusiasm to adopt healthier eating patterns led naturally to initiation to the Gardening Club.

**Briefly describe the main characteristics of the school?**

We are a small school (94 pupils) in an area of high deprivation in East Lancashire. Most of our socio economic indicators fall into the D and E categories. We have above average numbers of SEN and FSM.

**What did you do?**

In order to best utilise our available resources, staff sought the advice of a horticultural professional and her group - Cultivating Health. Her advice also included financial assistance and support. The generous donation of planters and seedlings enabled us proceed with improvements to the school grounds and incorporated ornamental and vegetable plantings.
The school council and the PTA provided funds to purchase gardening tools and gloves for the large number of children who wished to become members of the Gardening Club.

**Which members of the establishment and/or wider community have been involved and what was their role?**

Eco council members have become involved with Incredible Edible Rossendale. We are going to join in a local initiative to grow vegetables in the town centre and are currently working with the children to grow vegetables in the school grounds. This is in conjunction with Cultivating Health. Eco Council are holding an Eco Fair with home grown produce and healthy foodstuffs cooked by the children. As part of the school's sports day, Eco Council will be running stalls selling the vegetables the children have grown. As members of Incredible Edible Rossendale we will invite local producers to have stalls selling their produce.

**How has the progress of the project been monitored and evaluated?**

Photographic evidence will be compiled.
Minutes of Eco Council meetings. Evaluative questionnaires will be sent to parents during the summer term to ascertain the impact of our initiative.

**How has the practice been modified or improved during development?**

The involvement of the horticultural professional has been a particular bonus,
allowing the children to benefit from her expert knowledge. She has been able to direct us to avenues of funding previously unknown to us. She invited us to join Incredible Edible Rossendale, which is a new initiative in our local area. The Eco Council have entered the "Potatoes for Schools" growing competition. The children are extremely enthusiastic about the potatoes growing and enjoy the competitive aspect of the project.

**What has been the impact of the project on pupils’ learning, achievement or enjoyment and how has this been measured?**

We have raised the children's awareness of the desirability of eating locally sourced food. We have linked this issue with our previous work on healthy eating, physical activity and economic wellbeing. Curriculum links have been made to science, maths and PSHE.

**What are the next stages in the development process?**

We intend to improve our links with local schools and the local community by extending our involvement with Incredible Edible Rossendale by planting vegetables on community land. Local business has donated materials to enable us to plan the construction of raised vegetable beds. We are exchanging seedlings and bulbs with neighbouring schools, reinforcing the children’s understanding of bio-diversity.

**What aspects of this practice may be useful for other establishments to consider?**

We have found the involvement of the horticultural professional invaluable and would advise other schools to establish such expert links at the start of the project.

**Any Other Comments:**

The children's enthusiasm has grown in leaps and bounds - the membership of the Eco-Council has grown week on week. We are particularly thrilled to welcome increasing numbers of participating parents and grandparents. The children and staff have benefited greatly from the life long knowledge and experience of these older participants.