

Growing Schools Case Studies



Buildings and Grounds

Growing the school, the curriculum and the community at Medlock Primary School

Aim

To provide exciting and accessible new grounds to surround a new school building.

Action

Started with an extra-curricular activity afternoon to involve everyone in planning the new grounds.

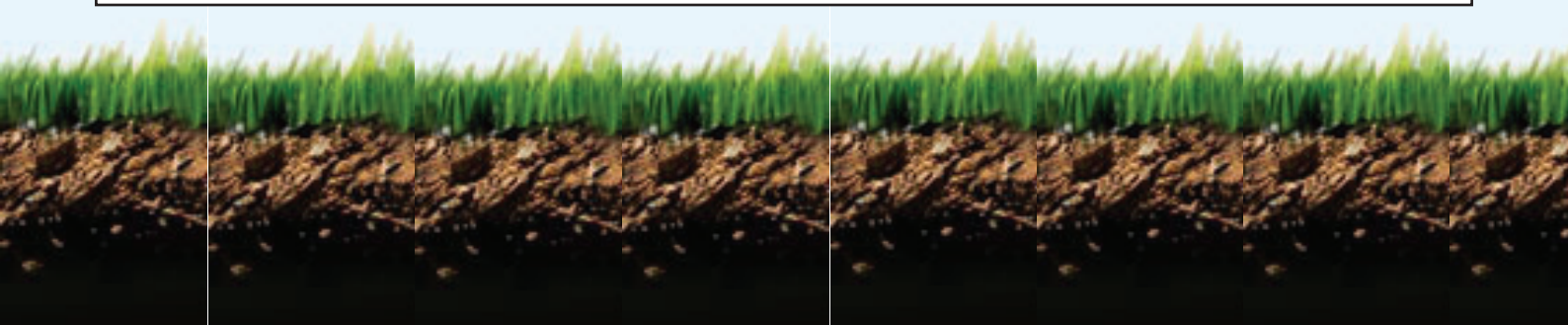
Outcome

Many attractive features in the school grounds, with learning outdoors embedded in the curriculum.



Details

When Medlock Primary School was offered a rebuild, it decided that the new school was not going to be just a building, but a building set in exciting and accessible new grounds. Right from the beginning of the re-build process the school grounds were central to the design and the whole school community was engaged in creating the plan.



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Growing the School

To decide what should be included in the grounds the school organised an extra-curricular activity afternoon so that children and parents could participate and share their views. And their ideas are now bearing fruit: at the front of the school there is a beautiful wild-flower meadow and some raised beds for growing vegetables, and wherever you walk around the school there are planters and pots stuffed with flowers and yet more vegetables, with seed trays on the balconies and hanging baskets dangling from the walls. This year they have planted potatoes and bulbs in the grounds, and some new trees are due to be planted. There is also a wildlife area which is a copse on a grassy knoll where a large bug hotel has been created so that pupils could host and study local wildlife.

Much of the responsibility for the grounds has now been taken up by a teaching assistant, Zoe Hopkins, who is clearly proud of all the work the school has undertaken in creating such a diverse series of spaces. However, learning in the school grounds is also an important part of the curriculum and by embedding it in this way it means the whole school can participate.

Growing a Curriculum

Wednesday afternoons are being devoted to working and learning in the grounds and, in extra-curricular time, parents and children are invited in on Saturday afternoons. Learning outside the classroom is child-initiated, and the pupils are demonstrating a keen interest in their natural environment through their explorations. The teachers are similarly inspired: when teaching about Darwin, a Year 6 teacher decided to send the pupils out into the grounds using the same methods of observation and recording as the scientist. Conducting a Landscape Laboratory they surveyed the natural habitats they found in their school. The positive results of these lessons are evident in the creative methods used to represent the findings of their biodiversity surveys.

Regular teams of litter pickers help to keep the grounds looking beautiful, and the school holds open days so the local community can also enjoy them. Sustainable land use in the grounds is also extended to making the inside of the building more sustainable, as a rainwater-harvesting system was built to flush the toilets.

Growing a Community

Parental and community involvement has continued to be an important part of the grounds work at Medlock, as parents help with the gardening club and local companies support the work with donations. Orange Rock volunteers helped the school to clear up the grounds, and the school has encouraged involvement by asking parents to share their knowledge of plants from a multi-cultural perspective. Pupils are equally encouraged to share their gardening knowledge with the lower years. Medlock is also using the Eco Schools programme to re-invigorate their growing plans. In making the most of its school grounds Medlock Primary has created an environment which is a place of discovery and beauty for those both inside and outside the school.

