

Growing Schools Case Studies



Growing Ideas

Developing custom-built growing areas for Special Schools at Springfield School Crewe, Hinderton School, Ellesmere Port and Dorin Park School, Chester, all in Cheshire.

Aim

Developing growing areas customised to fit the needs of special schools, with consideration of their potential use and maintenance

Action

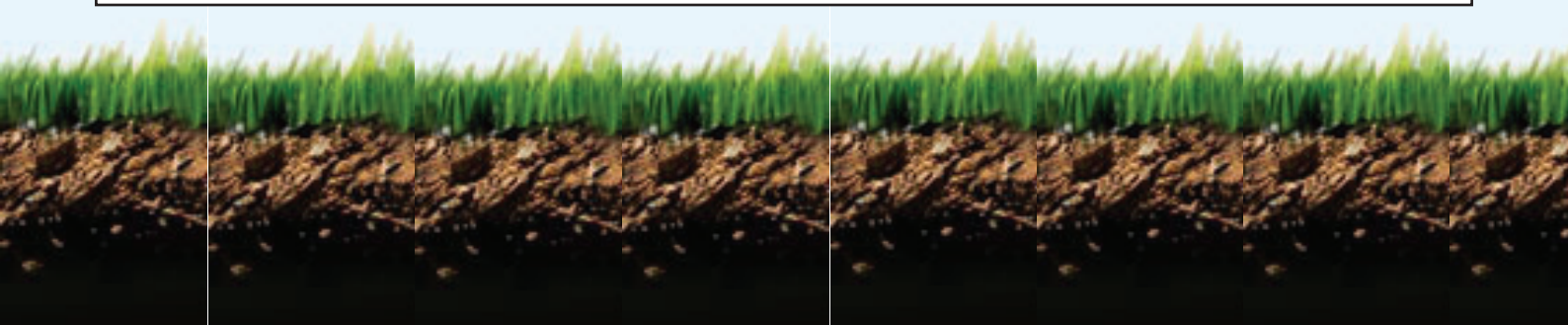
Groundwork Cheshire worked with a representative from each school to develop their chosen area, assist with linking with the community to maintain the beds, and provide workshops to support their use

Outcome

Individual outcomes for each school – see below



Raised beds at Hinderton, Springfields and Dorin Park Schools



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Details

Background:

In a pilot project at Russett School in Northwich, Groundwork worked with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to design and build a wheelchair-accessible bed. Funding came from Cheshire Year of the Gardens and Vale Royal Local Sustainability Grant. The site had its own allotment and supported the project along with a staff member, whose class spent a lot of time growing vegetables and soft fruit. The school extended the growing area and grew sufficient produce to sell to staff and the wider community. They are now planning to extend the beds to the infant department. From this Groundwork made a bid to Local Food to repeat the process with three other special schools who were interested in starting growing.

Springfields School, Crewe

Their original growing area did not accommodate wheelchair users and the orchard area had become overgrown with compacted soil and unsuitable planting. Groundwork put in four raised beds and a cold frame, and regenerated the existing orchard area. The school was planning a new-build café, where they wanted to sell the produce, so Groundwork organised workshops around enterprise education with a visit to a local lavender farm, Phytobotanica. This was supported by work in school making lavender biscuits, pea soup and garlic bread, and learning the skills of essential-oil hand-massage. The beds are maintained by a local company as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Hindertons School, Ellesmere Port

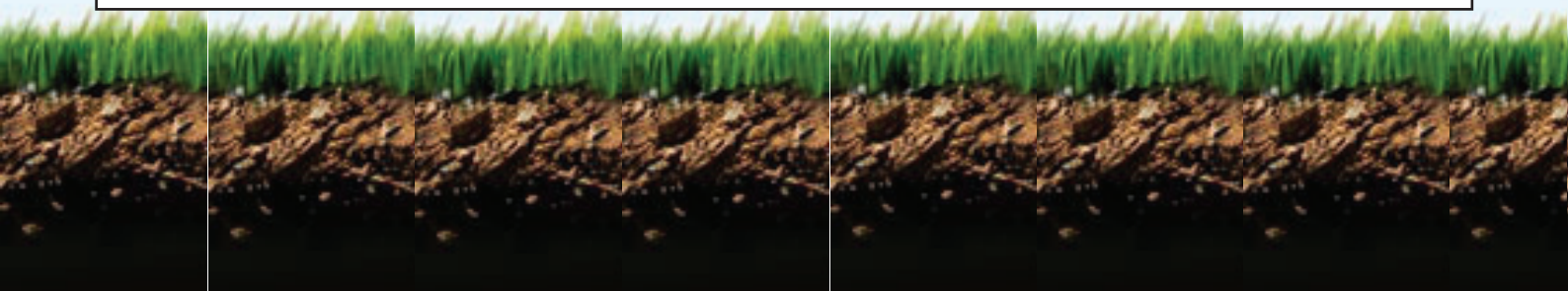
This school had a large, undeveloped area of field that it wished to develop into a fenced-off growing area with a raised bed for each class. Groundwork put in five raised beds and surrounding fencing, and ran workshops on planting. They worked with the lead teacher, who used the project as part of her 'leading from the middle' management training, to set up a rotational growing system for each class with plant instructions and support from the community in maintenance and development of the beds.

Dorin Park School, Chester

This school had a small area of the school field where it wanted a replica of the wheelchair-accessible bed from Russett School. A smaller version was completed, with alterations suggested by the school on how to improve the design using fold-down work-trays. The school had planting workshops and inset training for the staff on using the beds for the John Muir Environmental Award. The beds are maintained with the children through their existing partnership with the Barrowmore Trust.

Learning from the project:

The project ran short of money as each school needed more customised beds/workshops than originally expected. Extra funding needed to be raised from various sources such as United Futures and the William Dean Trust. The contractors did not complete the project as expected,



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which caused concerns as the growing season had already started. The hardstanding surface which was put in for Russett School proved unsuitable for two of the schools and needed extra funding to make more suitable.

