

Sensory Spectacular

Parents and children working together to create a sensory garden at Frosterley Community Primary School, Co. Durham

Aim

To develop an interesting outdoor area to encourage early learning about growing and the senses.

Action

Developing a previous tarmac footpath area at the edge of the building and turning it into a space to grow.

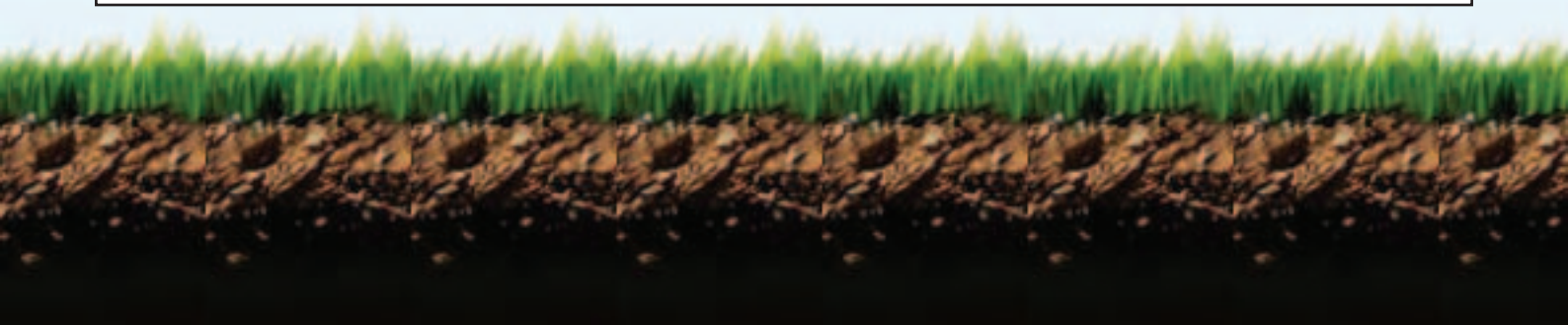
Outcome

Parents, children, governors and adult volunteers working together to design and build the garden.



Details

The school initially secured funding for a Parents as Partners project to support Early Years Foundation Stage learning; linking school with home. This was focused on developing knowledge and understanding of the world. Initially parents worked in the classroom with their children on Friday afternoons. From this grew the idea of developing a school growing area and sensory garden. Parents and the school worked together to raise money to develop the Early Years/Year 1 outdoor play area and then gave time, labour and materials free of charge to dig out the tarmac path connecting this to the classroom, to level the area and build boxed planters with wooden frames to enable hanging baskets to be put out in the spring. Groundwork Trust were involved to lay a membrane and gravel around the area.



Growing Schools Case Studies



A parent volunteer ran a gardening club with the children towards the end of the Summer Term 2009 to set lavender, mint, bamboo and a range of other plants ready to go into the boxes this spring. He even made a solar-powered water feature with them from reclaimed items to add another sensory dimension to the garden. The garden continues to be under construction and the planters will be used by the children to transplant the different fragranced and textured plants for the summer.

The sensory garden has so inspired parents, children, staff and governors that we're now beginning another garden project – levelling a larger piece of land to grow vegetables which the children intend to turn into a mini-enterprise initiative, selling produce in summer 2011 to the parents and local community. Previous to this the school had no outdoor growing area although the PTA had raised money to have a greenhouse installed which previously had limited use.

Children have developed excellent skills relating to knowledge and understanding of the world from planting and growing to understanding solar power. They've also turned a small barren area into a beautiful outdoor space which they can enjoy as they move from classroom to playground, or which they can sit in to complete work outdoors on fine days.

