

GREEN TRANSFORMATIONS

Alexa Roditi, Caitlin Thomas, Sammy Mason, Amy Padfield, BES Engagement Team

Most people would agree that there's no real substitute to time spent playing, learning and exploring in nature

Throughout the Connecting Schools to Nature project, many of our partner schools have been on their own journey to reimagine their outdoor spaces.

With an increasing appreciation for the health benefits of being in nature, and to combat children spending less time outdoors, incorporating nature into school grounds will have many positive benefits. Research suggests that nature-rich playgrounds prompt more imaginative play, foster social interaction and promote a stronger connection with the natural world.

GREEN IDEAS

Throughout 2022, pupils and teachers participating in the Connecting Schools to Nature project have been busy designing their ideal green school, with the results displayed in a [virtual gallery](#). Schools were then invited to apply for funding from the BES to kickstart the process of turning their green transformation ideas into a reality.

Caitlin Thomas, Outreach Project Intern with the BES Engagement Team, who spearheaded early progress was particularly excited to see such a diversity of applications. "Our partner schools have applied for a variety range of items, including hedgehog homes, gardening tools, wildflower seeds, and even a new pond dipping platform! This equipment will promote pupils' connection with nature whilst also creating a more wildlife-friendly environment."

Nearly 30 schools have applied for funding, with many of them already making exciting changes such as creating mini ponds, wormeries and bug hotels. Sometimes, it's the simplest bit of kit that can help get pupils outdoors and enjoying nature.



Spending time outdoors is shown to have multiple health and wellbeing benefits for young children – sometimes a little mud is welcome too!

"Thank you so much for funding our outdoor kit. We are over the moon with our mud suits. This will make such a difference to getting the children outside in all weathers to connect with nature." says Sarah Bell, a teacher at Kirk Merrington Primary School in Durham.

We're thrilled to be able to help these visions become a reality; hopefully bringing benefits to both pupils and wildlife for years to come.

ECO DAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Thanks to additional funding from County Durham Community Foundation and the Banks Community Fund, the BES Engagement team were able to organise a day of green transformation activities at Laurel Avenue Primary in Durham in December 2022. We spent the day outdoors, learning about the environment and making positive changes to the school grounds. Every child in the school planted a native tree to create a new woodland area, created bird feeders to take home, and spotted wildlife around their school. The children clearly loved getting stuck into the different activities and were definitely not deterred by a little rain & mud! Thanks to their efforts, the school now has a lovely wildlife-friendly area at the back of their field. They are planning even more green transformation activities for the future – we can't wait to see what they get up to next! ✨

CONNECTING SCHOOLS TO NATURE IN NORTH-EAST ENGLAND PROJECT

The Connecting Schools to Nature project was funded by the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. It is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

As the project comes to an end in the spring of 2023; we have a lot to celebrate and owe a huge thanks to all the teachers, pupils, and volunteers who have contributed their time and energy to it. The team are working to ensure the continued legacy of the project learning, resources and materials developed. For access to these and to explore possible ways to engage with future planning please keep your eyes peeled on BES channels or drop the team a line at outreach@britishecologicalsociety.org

Green Recovery Challenge Fund

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Environment Agency

NATURAL ENGLAND



County Durham Community Foundation

BANKS Community Fund
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