



The Garden Classroom

Annual Report

1 SEPTEMBER 2017 – 31 AUGUST 2018

Learning outdoors is proven to increase children's health and wellbeing and engagement with learning

This year we reach a milestone. In November 2018 we are ten years old. It's been quite a journey with plenty of highs and a few lows, inevitable when you care and believe passionately in your aims and the service you are providing. We set The Garden Classroom up to help London children to connect with nature and our growth has been led by our users and our ability and desire to respond to their needs. This customer-led organic growth has served us well giving us a stable and increasing base of schools that regularly use our services and others who respond to new and specific offers. We've also taken the initiative, offering new ideas and projects to schools and to the community, all of which continue to meet our aim of connecting children, young people and families to the natural world.

Quality Badge awarded by



thegardenclassroom.org.uk





Looking back, we see how our supporters, trustees, staff and volunteers have brought new skills and interests to The Garden Classroom, which have opened up new opportunities for us and enabled us to diversify. There are so many of them but I'd just like to mention Joe Swift, our loyal patron, who takes time from his busy BBCTV Gardener's World schedule to support us. We've had great chairs – Rohan Knox, Bob Gilbert (now patron), Peter Carne, OBE and now Robbie Burns and we are particularly thankful to Robbie who has applied his business brain to make us a charity, which is sustainable in the long term. I'd also like to mention Rosey Lyall, a founder trustee and still an active volunteer, who won the Mayor of Islington's Civic Award this year, recognising her outstanding work with The Garden Classroom.



👉 Rosey Lyall accompanied by Robbie Burns receives her award from The Mayor of Islington, March 2018.

📸 Front page photo: Seashore Adventures, Kingsdown, Kent, June 2018

We've been hugely fortunate in gaining the support of some major trusts and foundations and these, along with countless smaller funders, have kept us going. We've got an amazing team including our core staff, our freelance team, our wonderful volunteers, our trustees and our patrons. We thank them all. To work with such brilliant people who have the wellbeing of London's nature-deprived children and young people at the heart of everything they do has been the greatest pleasure.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR ENDING 31ST AUGUST 2018



LEARNING IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS (LINE)

We started with LiNE (learning in natural environments) and it's still central to our work. We provide cross-curricular outdoor learning programmes in 16 parks and gardens in Islington, Hackney and Haringey. We offer a two-hour pop up session in any park or garden close to schools and in some places offer a full-day experience.

THE SECRET GARDEN SHARED

A literacy programme at a new site, Quaker Gardens near Bunhill Row in the City. Several of the schools in the south of the borough enjoyed learning about the history of Quaker Gardens and plants from all over the world that grow in the gardens.

SUMMER ON THE GREEN

Nature days with games, crafts and activities encouraging families living in the surrounding tower blocks to use Newington Green in Islington as a place to enjoy the natural environment.



URBAN FOREST SCHOOLS

At the beginning of the year we were asked to investigate whether Islington presented opportunities for Forest School sessions. Forest School is a long-term programme within natural green spaces with trees, lead by qualified Forest Schools practitioners working with small groups of children. Long-term programmes are vital to see the benefit of the planning, observation, adaptation and review that goes into each session. Working in a borough with no forests and with schools with ever-tighter budgets we surveyed every green space in Islington, talked to headteachers and conducted very

► TGC patron Joe Swift visits TGC's Urban Forest Schools pilot at Elthorne Park N19.

successful six-session pilots with four schools. The result is a service we're calling Urban Forest Schools, which honours the ethos and principles of classic forest schools within the limitations of urban sites and the need to work with whole classes. We'll be offering the service to Islington schools in 2019.



TGC A year in pictures



We reached a lot of people: In total, 13,070 people benefited from TGC's service during the period September 2017 - August 2018.



Clockwise from above:
LiNE (Learning in Natural Environments) in Islington.



LEARNING AWAY: BRILLIANT RESIDENTIALS
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AT CHIDDINGSTONE, KENT



8640 children participated in
education sessions with TGC



91% of teachers
rated their TGC
experience very good
or outstanding



SEASHORE ADVENTURES, KINGSOWN, KENT



TGC saw an increase
of 21.88% in school
bookings, and 40%
increase in activity



CAMPING IN THE COUNTRY AND ON THE COAST



Our Learning Away programme has been growing year by year and this year - with generous support from a wonderful farming family - we spent three weeks in Chiddingstone, Kent, camping in a field which used to be used by hop-pickers. Some 120 children joined us for this experience and you can see how much it meant to them on a short video, "Pretty much everything you dream of", on our website.

New this year was our Seashore Adventures pilot programme based in a beautiful campsite at

- 📍 Camping at Chiddingstone, Kent
- ➡ Seashore Adventures at Kingsdown, Kent



Kingsdown, just north of Dover. Two classes of 35 pupils each spent four days with us there, travelling to Walmer by train, hiking to the site and spending long days rock pooling, bouldering and learning about the ecology of the seashore. Their teachers saw the experience as being transformational for many of the children, giving them opportunities to build character, independence and resilience, all vital skills transferring to secondary school.

Health, wellbeing and life satisfaction improved in children who participated in our Seashore Adventures pilot



➡ Gillespie Park, N5

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF BEES

TGC's excellent and established bee team continues to deliver and grow a programme of bee-inspired outdoor learning at Gillespie Park delivering more sessions to more children.

LITTLE EXPLORERS

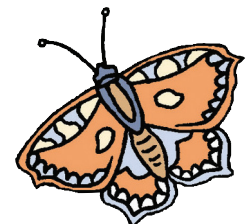
Our programme for carers and toddlers had a different focus this year as, working with 575 beneficiaries, we targeted hard to reach families and encouraged them to come and discover the benefits of playing outdoors with their children.

- 📍 Little Explorers under 5's nature drop-in, King Henry's Walk Garden N1 and Kings Square EC1



ACORN CLUB

Our nature discovery Acorn Club ran during half terms and holidays in two sites and was warmly received by children and parents.





OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ISLINGTON COUNCIL

TGC continues its excellent partnership with Islington Council's Public Realm, Greenspace & Leisure Department and is the only formal provider of outdoor education for schools using Islington's valuable green spaces complementing the service at the Ecology Centre provided by the council's conservation team.

Our close relationship is based on mutual respect and support, a passion for the recognised benefits of providing opportunities for meaningful engagement within Islington's green spaces. We value this highly.

KING HENRY'S WALK GARDEN

TGC continues to enjoy delivering a programme of high quality outdoor learning at King Henry's Walk Garden, N1 and we are thankful for this beneficial partnership now approaching its 10th year.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Our second Grotto on the Green, a free visit to our Santa in his grotto (TGC's highly decorated hut) with music, nature-themed presents, entertaining elves and cakes and tangerines kindly donated by local businesses was a great success. We built on this with Picnic on the Green on the last day of the school term in July, drawing attention to London National Park City. In 2017/18 TGC provided family nature activities for 33 community events such as the Angel Canal Festival. Nearly 3,500 people benefited from community events this year.

'Picnic on the Green', a community event on Newington Green N1
 Outdoor learning at King Henry's Walk Garden, N1



'Picnic on the Green', a community event on Newington Green N1

LOOKING FORWARD

It's a big year for us with our 10th birthday on 26th November, an event we're celebrating with a comedy night fundraiser supported by Pleasance Theatre, London: Simon Amstell, Rob Deering, Mae Martin, Mawaan Rizwan and Arnab Chanda. We are very grateful for their support.

On a more serious celebratory note we've secured funding to enable us to offer every Year 5 class in Islington a heavily subsidised outdoor learning experience we're calling "Every Child a Nature Lover" and we hope all schools will enjoy this in their local park. This Autumn we've explored a new countryside site, which we hope will provide an easily accessible day-long countryside experience for local

schools in the future.

Preparing to launch a new Urban Forest Schools offer for Islington and deliver an extended TGC's Learning Away Brilliant Residentials Countryside and Seaside Camping programme will be significant landmark areas of growth for us. As we know too well, awareness of the significant benefits that a meaningful connection to nature can bring is steadily increasing and because of this more opportunities will inevitably come our way (as has always been the case at TGC). We're excited to meet the challenges ahead!

Marnie Rose
 Founder & Chief Executive
 The Garden Classroom

FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

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Gardeners Charitable Trust



Treesurvie Ltd

We are very grateful for specialist support arborist company Treesurvie provided when they installed bird and bat boxes on Newington Green, N1. Also for their fantastic work managing the trees and woodlands at our Kent sites.

DONORS

Brother Jonathan Trust Foundation
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Tower Bridge Trust
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The Garden Classroom

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The Garden Classroom is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee and registered in England.

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