

# Development Education Centre



(South Yorkshire)

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RGH Lewis  
The Nineveh Charitable Trust  
8 Mill Lane  
Saffron Walden  
Essex  
CB10 2AS

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Dear Mr Lewis,

We are pleased to send you the first year report on the Outdoor Learning (with schools linking) project for the school year 2018/19.

Enclosed is the project report, a copy of the baseline pupil questionnaire, some photographs of the project and the first year costings.

Working in partnership with Freeman Biodynamic Farm enabled the project to be completed and was a perfect venue for allowing the pupils to try out lots of aspects of gardening.

The evaluation of the project so far showed that pupils were thoroughly engaged with the outdoor learning aspects of project and that this engagement with gardening has been taken back in to the school environment. As one pupil commented:

*'I really liked when I met new people from (the other school) because meeting new people is fun! Gardening is amazing!!'*

Thank you again for your support with this outdoor learning project. Having been able to run the project for this first year we hope you will feel as positive as we do in looking forward to continuing this project in 2019/20.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Belgeonne  
Global Learning Adviser



## Overview

In 2018/19 four Year 5 classes from two primary schools in Sheffield have had hands on sessions at Freeman Biodynamic Garden, trying out various aspects of gardening and harvesting a variety of foods, some of which they got to take home. These pupils have also taken skills and enthusiasm for growing back to their schools and local community, starting to grow vegetables in school gardens and learning about where food comes from.

## Project development

This outdoor learning project is being led by [DECSY](#), the local Development Education Centre, which has over 30 years experience of working with teachers and other educationalists to promote a more just and sustainable world.

Valley Park Primary is an above average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, although a very small minority of pupils have a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils on pupil premium is over double the national average. Around a third of the pupils have identified special educational needs and / or disabilities, which is well above the national average. Nether Edge Primary is a much larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, of which about 80% are of Pakistani heritage. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. A few pupils come from White British backgrounds, although this number is increasing. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is just above average. Both schools are now part of the same Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and the headteacher of Nether Edge Primary was appointed Executive Headteacher of both schools for this last academic year and was de facto headteacher at Valley Park.

DECSY is working with The [Linking Network](#) programme, funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Education and Pears Foundation which brings together classes from demographically diverse schools. This project built on DECSY's successful [Building Communities through Dialogue](#) project, linking primary schools with different school populations that feed into the same secondary school (in which Nether Edge Primary was a participant). This involved pairing up the pupils as pen-pals, enabling them to get to know each other at a neutral venue and the teachers to plan joint curriculum work. The aim of this school linking with outdoor learning project was to get pupils in Year 5 to get to know each other through engaging in outdoor learning and understanding growing food together, so that they would take skills and ideas learned into the school and wider community.

## Getting the project started

The schools agreed to two Year 5 classes getting involved in the project in the Autumn of 2018 and a teacher from Valley Park and the Community Lead from Nether Edge visited Sheffield Organic Growers. The main co-ordinator from Sheffield Organic Growers also visited each school to make some suggestions about where they could carry out growing. However, both schools faced staffing issues, which meant they could not carry out the initial pupil visits to the Sheffield Organic Growers and community woodland sites in October as we had hoped.

In January 2019, Sheffield Organic Growers informed us that they could no longer work with the project as they now had other commitments and site users. The DECSY project lead sought to find another site to visit and found an outdoor classroom on the outskirts of Sheffield, and at the end of March signed an agreement to work with [Freeman Biodynamic Garden](#) (FBG). This site is part of a local college that educates young people with complex behaviour and learning difficulties. It is run as a social enterprise distribution service that delivers fresh organic fruit and vegetables to local shops and restaurants. We agreed that the schools would visit on the one afternoon that the college pupils go home early. DECSY staff had by now spent a lot of time getting the project off the ground, but finally we were able to go ahead.



### **The Project up and running**

In April, the four Year 5 teachers for the two schools involved in the project attended an afternoon meeting at the FBG site. DECSY staff went over the main features of the linking and outdoor learning project (including how to link the social and growing activities into the curriculum) and the FBG site manager gave them a tour of the site. We also agreed a baseline questionnaire that would be given to the pupils before they first visited the site and at the end of the last visit (see 'Outdoor Learning Pupil Baseline' attached). DECSY staff gave the teachers a lot of activities, resources and websites to be able to make the most of building on the linking and the outdoor learning and growing opportunities.

At the beginning of the Summer Term in May, we arranged for the first two sets of Year 5s (Group A) to visit FBG for an afternoon of activities to get to know each other and the site. The groups were split into three groups with ten from each school in each group. One group had a tour of the FBG site, another did co-operative games and the third did woodland activities, then they swapped round. At the beginning of June, the second of the two sets of Year 5s (Group B) visited FBG for an afternoon of similar activities. At the end of each afternoon, when asked if they had enjoyed themselves and what they had learned, pupils were very positive and many said they had enjoyed getting to know pupils and making new friends from the other school and the site itself. One of the most popular things they had learned about was how to feed and handle the chickens.

In June and July, the classes visited the site for an afternoon again but this time with 15 from each class (thus four visits for all of Groups A and B from each school). This time they did hands-on activities to learn about growing fruit and vegetables, supported by FBG and DECSY staff and volunteers. These activities included potting out plants, digging potatoes, onions and garlic, picking broad beans, blackcurrants and redcurrants, plaiting onions, sorting, weighing, bagging and labelling dried thyme for selling and making compost. At the end of the sessions, pupils got to take home some potatoes or currants. It was clear that the pupils and teachers enjoyed these sessions a lot and the pupils learned a lot about growing different fruit and vegetables. We were also lucky in that it only rained on two of the six occasions and not heavily – in these instances we were able to do most of the activities under cover in the large polytunnels or the barn.

The FBG site manager made visits to each of the two schools in June and July to advise on which parts of the school grounds could be adapted or better utilised for growing plants, vegetables and trees. Both schools made their first attempts at growing food crops. One harvested them and made soup that the pupils said was very tasty. The other has planted vegetables that will be looked after by the caretaker and which they hope to enjoy when they return in September.

### **Meeting the anticipated outcomes**

The original outcomes of the project were:

- Greater understanding of where food comes from and sustainable agriculture
- Increased self-confidence, sense of agency and self-efficacy
- Greater curiosity about the wider world
- Greater sense of community spirit and well-being

The project carried out before and after questionnaires with both sets of Year 5 classes. The questionnaire comprised 20 questions that the pupils rated on a five-point scale: 'Definitely not me' – 'Doesn't sound like me' – 'Not sure' – 'Sounds like me' – 'Definitely me'. The first 16 questions were taken from the RSPB '[How connected are you?](#)' survey, with the other four questions agreed with teachers. One set of 'Before' questionnaires was mislaid, so we have three completed sets out of four. 64 out of 81 pupils in these classes completed the questionnaires. The 'Before' baselines were done in May and the 'After' in July, a period of six weeks, in which they made two visits to the growing site. All the classes moved about 0.2 in a positive direction on the scale. There were some interesting responses to particular questions where some classes moved about one point or more on the scale: 'People do not have the right to change the natural environment', 'Humans are part of the natural world', 'When I feel sad, I like to go outside and enjoy nature', 'I like to see wild flowers in nature' and 'I can explain what biodiversity is and why it is important'. We



have run further statistical analysis on these data which we aim to incorporate in our final analysis at the end of the second year of this project (see below).

We asked pupils and teachers to write down any thoughts about the impact of the project, along with completing the questionnaires. As this was done in the last week of term, only one class added comments to each questionnaire - all 22 pupils responded positively, saying how much they enjoyed meeting pupils from the other school, playing games, learning about growing, where food comes from (and looking after chickens) and taking part in planting.

*'I loved going to the garden because it made me so peaceful.'*

*'Spending time in the garden was fantastic because you could learn more about the nature. Spending time in the wild is great.'*

Quotes from pupils in another class included:

*'I love going to the farm, I enjoy working with my hands and feeling like I'm really doing something important.'*

*'I think I might become a farmer when I grow up.'*

The project also had a positive impact on the teachers, who were really pleased, and sometimes surprised, to see how the pupils got really engaged in and focused on the activities.

*'Getting to go outside during the week and do some practical work with a purpose is really good for recharging and resetting your brain during a stressful half term.'*

*'You can tell the kids really enjoy being there, some of them really surprise you with the things they care about or will do.'*

*'It's a good way to see some of the children who are less able academically, thriving and doing really well.'*

The evidence gained from even this short period of engagement seems to have shown that all the original project outcomes are on the way to being achieved.

### **The future of the project**

We are looking forward to continuing this project over 2019/20 with a new group of Year 5 pupils, with this Year's 5 pupils now in Year 6 able to help out with the work in the school grounds. The Site Manager at FBG is putting together a five-year plan for growing in each of the schools and will visit the schools next year to support their work. Sheffield Organic Growers have agreed to support the work at Valley Park as it is much nearer than FBG. The funding for next year will enable us to ensure that the five-year plan gets off the ground. The teachers can now see the value of outdoor learning and engaging pupils in growing, so they plan to build more of this into the curriculum and share the learning and enthusiasm with other staff. Valley Park is planning to become a Forest School next year, so this will fit in well. Nether Edge is planning to offer more lunchtime and after-school activities to the pupils, including a Gardening Club and a Cookery Club. We will also encourage parents to share ideas about growing food from their own communities and heritage and to get involved in the development of the school gardens. Valley Park already has an active group of parents helping with this. This will hopefully lead to sharing recipes and tasting food from different cultural backgrounds. We will also encourage parents and carers to attend the open days at the Freeman Biodynamic Garden and Sheffield Organic Growers sites. The Executive Headteacher is now head of a third primary school in the MAT, so we hope to get them involved in the project as well. We will also share good practice with other schools in the region through our various networks, including the [Learn Sheffield Subject Networks](#), especially Outdoor Learning and PSHE & Citizenship (DECSY runs the latter).



We ended up working with Freeman Biodynamic Garden who have only worked with post-16 pupils before. It was an eye-opener for their staff to work with a younger age group and to see their enthusiasm and that they were capable of far more than they had anticipated. They are keen to work with us and other schools in the future. Sheffield Organic Growers will be involved in the project next year. We helped them to increase visitor capacity by getting funding for another compost toilet from a local trust.

#### **How this project has fitted in with the interests of the Nineveh Trust**

The project has had a direct impact on the health, welfare and education of four classes of Year 5 primary school children and their teachers. This is clear from the comments quoted. The wider impact on parents becoming involved in school gardens is also significant.

The children involved have been provided with an experience of the outdoors and of a farming environment which they would not otherwise have had. The project combined hands-on experience at a local organic farm with classroom learning linking their experience to wider issues of healthy eating, climate change and sustainability.

Partnerships with Sheffield Organic Growers and Freeman Biodynamic Gardens introduced the children to ideas about the links between agriculture and the environment, instilling positive attitudes to sustainability and good food practice.

The [RSPB study survey](#) 'How connected are you?' of over 1000 children found that only 1 in 5 children (8-12 years) in the UK have an acceptable measure of connectedness to nature. Nearly all the children in our project over this past year will have taken a much greater connection to nature away from this project and are keen to pass it on to others in their school and community. Both schools now have a strong focus on developing [oracy](#) as well as linking the outdoor learning further into the curriculum.

We believe that the project has achieved its stated objectives this year through learning activities which were very much in line with the interests of The Nineveh Trust.



### School Linking with Outdoor Learning Project 2018/19

	Year 1	Year 1	
Activity	Budget	Nineveh Trust Actual Spend	Notes on costs
Supply cover for teacher site visit (1 x 0.5 day) and meetings (2 x 0.5 day) 6 teachers @ £120 per half day	£720		Ernest Cook Trust grant covered this cost.
Teacher and whole class preliminary visit to Freeman Biodynamic Farm	£0	£0	
Transport costs for 4 classes preliminary visits £150 per visit to FBG	£600	£600	
Supply cover for a teacher from each school to accompany half their class at a time on hands on site visits 12 half day visits @ £120 per half day	£1,440	£1,082	
Transport costs for 8 hands-on visits £150 per visit to SOG	£1,200	£1,648	Transport costs proved higher than expected as both schools required coach travel as Freeman Biodynamic Farm is on the outskirts of Sheffield.
Time of grower and assistant grower for initial teacher visits and to develop resources	£1,500	£835	
Time of grower and assistant grower for 12 half-day site and hands on visits at Freeman Biodynamic Farm, @ £110 per half day	£1,320	£835	The grower and assistant grower daily rate at Freeman Biodynamic Farm was higher than stated in the budget and they spent more time on developing the school visits than stated in the budget.
Purchase equipment for children's use on site at Sheffield Organic Growers	£200		Actual cost of equipment was £178.37. Ernest Cook Trust grant covered this cost.
Time for three half day visits for grower to each of three schools @ £110 per half day	£990		Ernest Cook Trust grant covered this cost.
DECSY staff x 1 (research, planning, devise and carry out baseline assessment, meetings, site visits with teachers and children, follow-up work, project monitoring and evaluation) 10 days @ £210 per day	£2,100		Ernest Cook Trust grant covered this cost.
Resources for activities and follow-up learning	£150		Ernest Cook Trust grant covered this cost.
Equipment to develop Gardening Clubs in each school 3x £500	£1,500		Ernest Cook Trust grant covered this cost.
<b>Total amount per year</b>	<b>£11,720</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	



## School Linking with Outdoor Learning Project, 2018 – 2019

Photos of teachers and pupils from Nether Edge Primary School and Valley Park Primary School during the project. The school uniforms for both schools are a very similar green colour. School linking is taking place even if the photos look like the pupils are all from the same school!



Teachers learning about the Freeman Biodynamic Garden site with head grower Pieter Van Vliet



First meeting of two linking classes doing various paired woodland activities including 'Meet a tree.'



Meeting the chickens at Freeman Biodynamic Garden

Freeman Biodynamic Garden staff teaching the pupils to 'plant out'







Making compost



Digging garlic



Taking broad bean waste to compost



Planting onions





Y5 pupils at Nether Edge Primary School planting out seedlings and plants from Freeman Biodynamic Farm.



Y5 pupils at Valley Park Primary School with instructions and practical example of how to grow vegetables in a classroom corner.

Growing areas at Valley Park Primary School including tyre growing and welly growing.

