

The Nineveh Charitable Trust - Final Project Report - June 20, 2022, St George's Church of England Primary School, Corunna Rd, London, SW8 4JS. <http://www.st-georges.wandsworth.sch.uk/> Towards a School Happiness Garden in a Deprived Area – Grant Awarded £2500 – Received February 2021.

The Happiness Garden is now complete and in full use. We raised our final target figure of £50,000 which includes the very generous donation of £2,500 from The Nineveh Charitable Trust, and several 'in-kind' donations. We officially opened our Happiness Garden on May 26th, 2022, attended by the Mayor of Wandsworth and the Queen's representative, the Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London.

We believe we are enroute to achieving our Happiness Garden's purpose. i.e., To improve our pupil well-being by giving them a broader, more rounded education by: Delivering outdoor classroom activities in a safe environment which are fully resourced, accessible and easily adaptable. Embedding the garden experience in school life so that learning outside through practical, nature-based activity is part of the children's DNA. Since the pandemic the school has experienced a massive rise in mental health issues amongst the pupils making the benefits our garden offers even more crucial for their well-being.

Legacy: To ensure the garden is well maintained for the future we are building a core of volunteers, to work together through a structured community gardening programme. We have also created a Garden Handbook which includes a garden maintenance schedule and have established a Garden maintenance fund to support this. In the longer term the garden will also be a legacy for the wider community.

Happiness Garden Development Challenges: Much slower development of the garden than anticipated. A. COVID: lockdown, sickness in the school and the garden project team, social distancing and restrictions on group numbers. Result: We had to do our work in a piecemeal manner and had to use a very limited number of volunteers. B. Our Happiness Garden Mural was to be painted on a wall owned by Network Rail; their required approval took several months, holding up the painting and as a result a considerable swathe of our planting.

Intended outcomes from the garden: Increased opportunities for outdoor learning - Yr 5 Weekly gardening sessions commenced with the growing season in March 2021, because of COVID, sessions we have continued with the same year group as they moved into Year 6, this was to ensure continuity of learning live-life cycles and harvesting their produce. **Forest School sessions** monthly and continuing throughout the school year with every class participating across the school cohort. **Storytelling after school sessions** for families around the fire pit and most recently at our garden launch.

Increase in physical activity and stamina: Year groups use the Garden on a rolling weekly schedule so that pupils get to make use of all the elements including den building.

Gain confidence in natural play: Staff observations: When pupils use the playground in break times, the first thing they must do is duck under the branched arches into the Happiness Garden, a complete change of scene from the asphalt next to it. The installed resources have stimulated and enhanced the options available for free, informal, undirected and creative play. Children always have great imaginations but the new elements and moving parts seem to have expanded their ideas and it's become a popular place to be.

Learn to solve problems and carry out small achievement tasks: During Build Phase: Yr. 5 Pupil's assisted by carrying out a site species survey in Autumn 2020. Soon to be repeated by Yr. 6. Yr.6 assisted with filling and painting the bug boxes. All Pupils participated in designs for the mural. **Curriculum:** All classes Nursery to Yr.6 attending Forest School Sessions. Yr.5 into Yr.6 attending weekly Gardening Sessions.

Stronger community cohesion: Community Task Days, Tideway Corporate Days (Garden Build). Community Gardening sessions(maintenance) continuous.

The Nineveh Charitable Trust Grant went towards: Resources for our forest school; materials for our gardening sessions; teaching sessions with our community gardener; project management of garden development; a facilitator table; plants. **We are so grateful to the Trust - all these elements have greatly enhanced the value and use of our Happiness Garden, giving a backdrop for greatly improved mental health and joy in learning.**

Number of people who directly benefitted from the grant: 210 pupils plus parents and siblings; 30 School staff; three young people from FAST youth club, Volunteers directly involved: 20 school/parents, seven local community, 25 corporate volunteers (Tideway). Happy Street Festival: 1,000 people July 21; running again July 22 - activities in the Garden 1,000 expected. Through their attendance at an inset training day and Forest School pupil teaching sessions, many of our teachers now have an understanding of Forest School. However, to build on this next term another teacher inset day on Forest School will be run.

Most proud of: With our base area of high deprivation and multiple mental health issues, and despite the many barriers which we hit while building our garden, even in the dark days we involved the children where we could. They helped with the design of our beautiful Storytelling Chair, the design of our mural, made and painted bug boxes, carried out a species audit, grew vegetables and each child took home bulb growing kits to celebrate the start of the garden build. We are now reaping the benefits of the Happiness Garden experience, seeing motivated and more engaged children.

The Forest School and Gardening workshops have contributed to the development of collaborative learning skills, by encouraging children to work with others on the challenges they face in these outdoor activities. The 'experiential' learning also appears to be equipping children with practical skills and an appreciation for being outdoors, which they can then

transfer to family activities outside of school. Especially making decisions in a group setting, such as building a shelter or cooking the grown produce

To give a shift in focus away from the parameters set by the classroom, has lifted the pressure for some children and unlocked a fresh way of learning. The space can still encompass objectives set in the classroom, but the change of scene has opened up a new approach to the learning and allowing for those who struggle in class to thrive.

We believe The Trust's contribution to our garden has certainly fulfilled the Trust's first objective of Health, Welfare and Education of the General Public. Thank you so much for your support.

Feedback:

Selection and Payment: You gave good clarity on your requirements, so writing the proposal was straight-forward. We were informed when the next Trustees meeting was and were delighted to receive your grant of £2500 (requested £5000), it was a difficult time, and we were aware that there were many calls on your funds. The payment process was very efficient.

Updates: We are planning to use the garden for community events – on July 9th we will have the local Happy Street Festival and may well have over 1,000 visitors – we will certainly send an update on that. We will send news of other developments if you feel this is appropriate.

Visits: As you know we celebrated our Garden opening on 26th May – sadly none of your Trustees was available to attend – but we would certainly welcome a visit by your Trustees.

Comments: I do apologise for sending this report rather late. Despite this I do hope it gives you a flavour of the value of your support and the difference which it is making to our community. I include here a link to a video of the Happiness Garden and its development which was made by the school https://youtu.be/NJCD_64iEHg. We are hoping to have a video on our Happiness Garden Opening when we have this, I will forward it to you. I also attach some photographs below. Once again many, many thanks for your wonderful generosity.

Early Photos of the Happiness Garden during building time, as soon as elements were added we made use of them.

1. Family Story Time



St George's was lucky enough to have a storyteller come and lead a session. We invited children and their parents to the storytelling session. It was a fantastic afternoon. Children came dressed with extra layers and some even brought flasks of hot chocolate and snacks.

It was amazing to see that the parents enjoyed it just as much as the children. Parents had an hour of no mobile phones and really got involved. Once the session was finished one parent said "That really took me back to my childhood, being by a campfire" and another said "I really loved listening to the stories, thank you!"

It was another fantastic afternoon in our Happiness Garden bringing the St Georges and Patmore community together.

2.Nursery Forest School



Here are St Georges' nursery children enjoying their first forest school session with Steven who manages to bring the outdoor learning to life and ignites the power, wonder and joy of learning through nature.

Building dens and shelters, collecting leaves and even looking for fairies are just some of the amazing things that happen in the Happiness Garden.



3. Photo May 22 - The Mural, Bug Boxes and recent Planting

