



## **SANDFIELD PARK SCHOOL**

### **IMPACT OF A GARDENING CLUB**

**November 2009**

“From a simple after school activity to a whole range of extra out of hours provision and curricular changes”

Sandfield Park School caters for children with physical disabilities and associated medical or learning needs. In 2002 the after school clubs were mainly sporting activities and one of the very first non sporting activities was the development of the Gardening Club. This was with the help of a grant from Barclays Bank and the enthusiasm of their staff who donated time of a Saturday morning. With their help we were able to clear ground and fill-in a pond. By digging planting, painting and working with the local fire services by 2003 we opened our memorial garden and our first non sporting after school club.

A sense of whole school community was developed during the creation of the memorial garden. The community provided the “spade work ” and the students at their gardening club the fine touches.

In 2004/05 the court yard area was developed and the memorial garden continued to be maintained by the gardening club. The club also created bird boxes, floral decorations holly wreaths, hanging baskets and a variety of seasonal activities. These were funded by NOF grants

In 2004/05 a raised vegetable garden was added and the gardening club maintained the sensory and memorial garden. The infectious nature of the club spread to the Alder Hey site. They also established a garden with the pupils from the Dowi Jones unit.

The links with the community continued the garden was becoming a whole school collective responsibility. The gardening group worked with

- Park rangers
- Going green volunteers
- Barclays bank volunteers

- Whitakers garden centre
- Local fire services
- Parents and friends
- John Lewis partnership
- School staff and volunteers

All these partnerships did not charge for their time or input. The links with the local fire services and the work of the Princes Trust , supplied a steady flow of volunteers who kept the garden maintained and allowed further developments.

The educational garden has been a good example of how learning can take place in a variety of different ways. In 2005 the school won the Best Educational Garden Award. In 2006 the Alder Hey site was also gained the Award. The prize monies were re invested back into the clubs. The impact of this small cub has been unstoppable!

There was then the development of Golfing areas. Both the putting greens and the pitch and putt course are used regularly at lunch time, after school and during the PE and enrichment lesson time. They provide two areas where golf skills can be practiced and small competitions take place.

There are many examples of how the garden supports the curriculum.

In Art we use the garden to support the Art curriculum and used to enhance critical studies. We use the photographs as a reference when painting. The pupils use the garden and paint the flowers and plants from life. the garden is used to look at and discuss colour, texture etc. The garden provides a peaceful and beautiful place to enjoy our art lesson what ever the topic.

In geography and Science pupils look at weathering on garden walls, conduct weather experiments, operate sundials and look at growth and development of plants. The garden is used as an outdoor classroom. One of the important developments is the recycle bins and compost bins. We have a team of Eco Warriors who monitor wildlife and plants. Details of the bird survey, bluebell survey and squirrel survey are sent to Liverpool Bio Bank.

A sixth form group uses the garden as part of their Asdan 'Towards Independence' horticulture qualification. Pupils need to demonstrate skills in keeping the garden tidy (pruning roses, dead heading daffodils, replacing container compost, sweeping up leaves) as well as skills in propagation e.g. taking and growing cuttings from lavender and rosemary growing in the garden and transplanting seedlings grown indoors into the garden.

The garden has provided important opportunities for the school to link with the local fire station and the young disaffected teenagers who they mentor. This means that periodically the team members come to the school and support the aspects of garden maintenance that the gardening club cannot keep up. The garden is an ideal opportunity to develop important links with the community.

Pupils have undertaken taster days at Myerscough College and then gone to the College Post 19 to study horticulture. The Eco-warriors have been instrumental in being awarded the Eco-schools, Bronze, Silver and Gold awards and in 2009 we gained our Green Flag status.

The Golf Course has been developed by a local firm Novartis to include a bunker and water feature.2008/09

The Sixth Form curriculum for 2009/10 now includes a sixth form sustainable development course. School has an outdoor classroom so that lessons can be conducted outside. Pupils grow produce and use in home management lessons, carrot cakes and pear muffins are our firm favorites.

The memorial garden is used in curriculum time for a quiet area for relaxation and prayer. On a recent Faith Day we used the garden as an opportunity to look at birth and death as natural occasions in the life process. Pupils plant trees in memory of friends and the Faith Day helped us to look at how different faith communities view life and death.

From a simple gardening after school club six years ago the garden environment has yielded six after school activities and has gained Eco status, school Green Flag recognition, developed a golf course, changed its curriculum in response to pupils interests. We still have a thriving gardening club, Eco Warriors and new for 2009/10 we have a flower arranging club. The extra curricular activities continue to thrive in response to pupil need and interest. The whole school is more environmentally aware: -

- Re-cycling
- Composting
- Reducing waste,
- Saving water.
- Reducing electricity.
- Providing habitats for wildlife.

These subjects have all been raised in the school. So from a small after school club six years ago the impact on individuals, the school community and the wider community has been very significant. The developments and 'ripples' into school policy, curriculum, enrichment and after school activities continues to go forward to grow and develop. We look forward to the future.

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