



The school...

Chisenhale School is a one and a half form entry school with an Early Years unit – in all 350 pupils aged 3-11. The majority of pupils are from a White British or Bangladeshi heritage, with the remaining children coming from a very diverse range of groups. The school is in the East End of London in a very densely populated area, but also close to parks and canals. The school is a Victorian building with a modern extension that provides office space.

There are three playgrounds, one on the roof that contains 12 planters, a small garden in the main playground that contains raised beds, and further planters and a willow tree in the separate Early Years playground.



The Project... Ruth Crossan

Since 2009 the garden has been transformed into an Edible Playground and we have really developed the role our garden plays in the curriculum. The RHS school gardening scheme gave us a framework and we soon worked through the levels to become a 5-star gardening school. We also had support from Capital Growth, London's food growing network.

We focus on growing edible plants and these supplement our school dinners.

Engaging with the resources and advice provided by the Food For Life programme helped us to focus on the quality of our school dinners, and we now use proper plates for school dinners instead of flight trays.

We also grow plants from seed, and make chutney, which we sell at our fetes to raise money for further activities. Children have made herby olive oil, lavender shortbread and tea bags to sell to parents, staff and the local community as part of enterprise projects. We have sold our produce at Borough market and at Waitrose as part of the Grow and Sell project. The Waitrose scheme led to a major food-related project for Years 3 and 4, covering growing, designing packaging, pricing – all great to cover the curriculum.

Project growth

Getting a greenhouse was a major step forward for us, extending our growing to supply school dinners and cooking club. We have achieved the Food For Life Silver School Award and are now working towards Gold. We have taken part in Urban Food Week several times.

We have made a lot of effort to build links to the curriculum, for example Lessons in Loaf- we grow wheat, oats and barley and bake our own bread. Additionally we grow our own tea, as it is one of the topics we have looked at.

We felt proud to win the Grow your own lunch competition, led by School Food Matters and Morrison's.

Children and families love to get involved via the Gardening golden club and Friday family gardening after school club.

Three word project summary...

FLOURISHING
INCLUSIVE
DELICIOUS





Who's involved?

A parent volunteer, Cassie Liversidge, and Ruth Crossan, the Parent engagement and Extended Schools Manager, were instrumental in transforming the garden into our Edible Playground. We have two head Gardeners in each class who all meet weekly.

Our family gardening club also provides essential labour for maintenance and takes the initiative in activities like the Hampton Court Scarecrow competition.

Food grown in school is used in school dinners and the cooking club

Challenges...

Funding is always an issue, as is maintenance. To ease funding pressures we enter every competition going and have managed to acquire equipment such as tools, sheds and greenhouses in this way. We also draw on supporter labour wherever we can, for example by engaging corporate volunteers for big projects.

Having the Premises Manager as a strong supporter of our efforts has transformed our growing potential: before this everything would die during the summer holidays! His willingness to water at dawn every day has meant we can keep our crops alive.

Best Bits

It has been a great way of involving parents and children. Often it is those children who really struggle to sit at a desk all day who find they enjoy getting their hands dirty and then get very involved!

Timeline

We are now working to achieve the RHS level 5 in school gardening, a good framework for weaving gardening activities into the curriculum.

We have recently acquired a hive of bees so will soon be producing honey.



The garden plays a huge part in the curriculum

