

CASE STUDY

SCHOOLS FOOD WEB - GETTING SCHOOLS COMPOSTING IN SHROPSHIRE

JULY 2025



BACKGROUND

Garden Organic and the Shropshire Good Food Partnership (SGFP) collaborate through the shared goals of promoting food growing, ecologically sustainable food systems, and community education.

Key achievements

- Over 20 schools and nursery schools supported over 12 month period
- 800+ children engaged

Repurposing Waste

- Food Waste diverted from commercial collections and made into a useable or sellable resource for schools
- Cardboard repurposed in compost and to make no-dig beds

Supporting Biodiversity

- Increased diversity of planting in schools gardens
- Rethinking school grounds and making space for nature

Cost savings for schools

- Reduced commercial food waste collections
- Reduced cardboard and paper collections
- Reduced compost costs

Gardeners and composters of the future

- Building skills and confidence
- Normalising food growing and composting

People and Planet Health

- Children recognising and tasting a more diverse range of plants
- Increased understanding of the need for a healthy and biodiverse growing space for people and nature
- Increased awareness of a healthy diet

The Shropshire Good Food Partnership (SGFP) is a community-led initiative working to build a resilient, sustainable, and fair local food system across Shropshire. Their mission is to create a food system that is:

- Good for people – promoting health, equity, and access to nutritious food
- Good for place – supporting local economies and food producers
- Good for the planet – encouraging environmentally responsible practices such as composting and growing organically

A member of the Sustainable Food Places Network since 2022, the SGFP brings together a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Local food producers and retailers
- Schools and educators
- Community groups and growers
- Local authorities and policy makers

The partnership is led by a team of directors and supported by an advisory group representing key sectors such as farming, education, waste management, and local government.

The SGFP invited Garden Organic, a member of the SGFP Waste Steering Group, to help deliver the Schools Food Web Programme – an initiative supported by a Zero Carbon Fund Grant in partnership with Let's Go Zero.



PROJECT AIMS

The Schools Food Web Programme aims to decarbonise school food systems across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin by involving 20 schools in a comprehensive School Food Audit, followed by education and training to help each school become more sustainable. The project focuses on:

- **Growing:** Encouraging school gardens to supply ingredients
- **Procurement:** Sourcing more local and sustainable food
- **Cooking:** Building skills and confidence in preparing fresh meals
- **Eating:** Promoting low-carbon, nutritious food choices
- **Food Waste:** Valuing food, reducing waste and creating compost from unavoidable waste.



METHODS AND DELIVERY

FOOD AUDIT
WITH
ROADMAP TO
DECARBONISE

MICRO-GRANT
OF £1000 FOR
RESOURCES

MENU OF
FREE
WORKSHOPS
TO SUPPORT
JOURNEY

All schools were provided with a free Garden Organic lead composting session, often supported by one of our local volunteers. Schools were offered a menu of options and activities to suit their circumstances. Choices included:

- Workshops on Hot and Cool composting, and Wonderful Wormeries
- Composting stories and games - What goes in the compost bin? How quickly does composting happen?
- Garden treasure hunt; exploring 'greens' and 'browns', searching for leaves to make leafmould and activities using compost
- Creatures in the compost; a closer look with microscopes

A school resource kit was developed, comprising presentations, microscopes, magnifying glasses, bucket wormeries, games including Top of the Heap (Top Trumps with composting creatures), The Virtual Compost Bin game, books and puppets. Sessions were adapted to suit the age and stage of each class - ranging from nursery age children to key stage 3. Schools also had access to a £1000 micro grant to buy compost bins and gardening equipment.



“THE CHILDREN ABSOLUTELY LOVED THE COMPOSTING WORKSHOP, AND THEY LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT IT, AS DID STAFF! WE ARE AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR JOURNEY AND STILL HAVE LOTS TO LEARN, BUT WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING CHANGES FOR THE BETTER.”
ASSISTANT HEAD, TIBBERTON

“WE’VE HAD A LOT OF FUN WITH THE WORMERY. I’M SO PLEASED TO HAVE THE WORMERY AS I’VE BEEN AFTER ONE FOR A LONG TIME.” CLASS TEACHER, HOLINSWOOD



COMPOSTING IN ACTION

Each school has unique challenges and opportunities implementing successful on-site composting.

Embedding composting into the school culture

To achieve this you need the right people on board, including communicating with caterers, kitchen staff and caretakers to ensure investment. "As a full time teacher, I can only do so much, and it is the facilities management team and Business Manager who meet more regularly and who can create the time to ensure things happen." (Class Teacher, Oakmeadow School)

Choosing the right method - food waste, green waste or a combination of both?

HotBins require more maintenance but can process cooked food waste. Wormeries require regular care (including during holidays). Dalek/Compost converter plastic bins process green waste. Schools were informed and advised of the benefits, costs and challenges for each, and how to manage them.

Siting the bin - making it easy

Site surveys helped staff determine the best place to put the bin, weighing the balance of easy access and end use.

Involving the children - giving ownership

"Utilising the children's eagerness, inquisitiveness and enthusiasm to make it about them and for them to feel that they have been leading on it" (Oakmeadow School)



Managing risk

Fundamental to successful delivery, comprehensive risk assessments were supplied to all schools to keep everyone safe. Handwashing is key!

COMPOSTING... THE NORM NOT A ONE-OFF

COMPOST
HEROES!

Church Preen School is planning to elect 'compost heroes' from the student body to champion composting across the school. It will introduce a small compost bin in each classroom and the staff area, to contribute to its vegetable garden.

Lawley School have an eco team who weigh breakfast club food waste in a morning, lunch waste each day and fruit waste each week. Large pieces of cardboard are saved to use in the new vegetable site, ready to be mulched with compost in the autumn term.

Holinswood School have introduced Waste Warriors. Eight children from Year 5 take it in turns to 'work' lunch times. The class teacher reports: "They monitor the other children at waste stations, encouraging them to recycle correctly. Food in food waste bin, plastics in that bin and so on. This is working really well. It helps that there are no foreign items in with the food waste. We are using the HotBin for cooked food, and keep salad items for the compost bin. KS1 have food bins for their salad/fruit items which we collect on a Thursday & Friday to fill up our compost bin."

WASTE
WARRIORS!

Lilleshall School now have several 5 litre compost caddies that they use to collect fruit and veg waste from break times. They empty around 8 per week into the HotBin. Children in the Eco-committee have responsibility for this and know how much green waste to put in alongside brown materials such as shredded paper and bark. The other compost bins (dalek style) are used for waste from the vegetable garden and non-invasive weeds.



LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

"WE'VE FOUND THE COMPOSTING JOURNEY QUITE CHALLENGING SO FAR. WE'VE MAINLY BEEN COMPOSTING FRUIT WASTE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, IT ENDED UP ROTTING RATHER THAN COMPOSTING PROPERLY. WE'VE SINCE LEARNED THAT WE NEED TO BALANCE THIS WITH MATERIALS LIKE LEAVES, PAPER, AND GRASS CUTTINGS — SO WE'RE ESSENTIALLY HAVING TO START OVER WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT'S NEEDED."

HEAD TEACHER, LOWER HEATH

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

Holinswood Primary School - "All the food waste and composting initiatives at school are now circular. Food waste, both cooked and uncooked, is treated through one of three methods: the classroom wormery, the regular composter for uncooked food and the hot bin for cooked food. The resulting compost and fertiliser are used to enhance our gardening and growing initiatives, and the produce from the garden is then used in school by our Cook. The children are notified if part of their school dinner is made with produce that is from our school garden." Class Teacher

Oakmeadow Primary School - "Planting and growing our own food so that the children see this actually taking place. Most walk past it every day on the way in to school. Now we're finally in a place that all kitchen food waste no longer goes to landfill but is composted on site." Class Teacher

Church Preen Primary School - "The hot composter seems to be ticking over nicely. We generate less than 1 caddy of food waste a day, which is added to the composter. We therefore have no need for a council food waste bin and are looking to get out of the contract at the earliest opportunity" (saving £1000 annually)

Lawley Primary School - over 544kg of food waste processed in their HotBin in two terms! The school has an eco club who weigh the food waste daily and children have been inspired to get involved.



OBSERVATIONS

"I have felt quite daunted at the prospect of composting in school, I do not know much about it or how it works, and I worry that I don't have the time available to focus on this as much as I need to. The session put me at ease, offered me lots of great ideas and tips to start a composting system and the children are all inspired and ready to get started. The knowledge I have gained has really helped me work out how we can do this in a time efficient way and encouraging the children to lead is key to make this happen. The activities on offer were really engaging and suitable for the Y3 class. The older children joining the workshop loved the opportunity to work alongside their younger peers and encourage them to engage with the content. Thank you for your support and I am sure I will come back to you with more questions as we get further into our composting journey here at Longden!" **Teacher at Longden**

WHAT THE CHILDREN THOUGHT...

"IT WASN'T JUST ABOUT THE COMPOST BIN BUT ABOUT ANIMALS - THE DECOMPOSERS" MARNIE (Y6)

"WE SHOULD GET CADDYS FOR EACH CLASS - AND THEN FILL UP THE COMPOST BIN WHEN THEY ARE FULL" GRACIE (Y6)

"I ENJOYED LOOKING IN THE MICROSCOPE" ELI (Y3)

"WE SHOULD COLLECT MORE THINGS TO COMPOST" ALEXA (Y3)

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

If your school is keen to get composting, Garden Organic can provide bespoke workshops, information advice and resource packages. Find free resources and lots more here:

www.gardenorganic.org.uk/expert-advice/growing-in-your-space/schools



CONTACT DETAILS

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