



The school...

John Ruskin Primary School is a large Victorian building in a socially deprived area of South London. Part of a diverse community, with 84% of the pupils from ethnic minorities, the school provides a special resource base for 24 children with SEN, with speech and language disorders or impairment.

There is a large flat roof that now has raised beds, pots and cold frames. All year groups have access to growing tubs in the playgrounds. The nature garden has a pond, bug hotel and compost area, and there are maturing fruit trees growing in large pots around the school gardens.

John Ruskin is an RHS partner school with 5 star rating.



Gardening Club at RHS Harvest Festival Show Linley halls 2014

The Project... Suzy Gregory, Headteacher

Our growing initiatives started in the early years, then gradually extended to the reception and nursery playgrounds and on to the roof. Walworth garden farm helped us to develop the garden on the roof about five years ago, then we started a weekly Gardening club.

Gardening projects and outdoor learning are integrated into whole school planning for all year groups. In the last year we have expanded to take

over more and more of the playground with raised beds. Ornamental planters and tubs have also been taken over by children and are planted up to support learning about a wider range of plants.

“In the last year we have expanded to take over more and more of the playground with raised beds.”

An existing wildlife garden is in the process of being further developed with a compost area and pond. We have made a lot of use of the resources from the Food for Life project, particularly around supporting teachers to plan lessons that include the growing. Our cold frames and greenhouse have been a big success, and the good quality raised beds.

Project growth

Our aims are to further develop the planning and delivery of the gardening lessons in class and to support teachers with their growing projects. The wildlife area needs further development to include planting the pond area and providing more bug habitats. We also plan to install more information signs, a leaf bin and wormery.

We won an award in the RHS Wisley Budding Gardeners pallet garden completion, and visited RHS Linley Halls Harvest Festival show.

We plan to take part in Borough market sale with School Food Matters and have a local chef visit the school and cook with different year groups. Further to this, we would like to develop an on-site school kitchen as currently school dinners are prepared and cooked off site.

Three word project summary...

CREATIVITY
HORTICULTURE
INCLUSIVE





Who's involved?

All teachers plan gardening, harvesting, cooking and eating projects on a termly basis. We have built community links with Walworth garden farm, Borough market and local schools.

Through the Gardening club, children take part in a number of activities and competitions outside school, provided through the RHS and School Food Matters. John Ruskin has hosted Inset days for local schools, so we were able to share our experiences and expertise, and show off the gardens.



Challenges...

One of the biggest challenges was gardening on the roof and getting compost up to the top of a five-storey building. There have been problems with irrigation due to low pressure on the roof. We need more funding to improve our irrigation for all raised beds, to ensure good growth through the summer.

Initially, teachers' inexperience with growing was a challenge, but the training provided by RHS and key leads in the school has been great.

There is added workload in watering and weeding, and we plan for more of this maintenance to be taken on by pupils, overseen by lead teachers.

To achieve long-term sustainability, we intend to:

- Apply for funding to boost our small school gardening budget
- Improve irrigation
- Further develop the wildlife area as a teaching resource
- Embed growing projects into the curriculum
- Include some produce grown by pupils in school dinners.



Best Bits

Growing at the school has definitely improved food culture at John Ruskin. Not only has it increased take-up of school dinners, but it has also built awareness of where food comes from and sustainability. School dinners are healthier, and communication with the (off-site) cook has markedly improved.



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