



Mill Water School

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Mill Water Sensory Orchard

Newsletter Summer Term 2016

Summer is here and work in the Orchard has moved forward apace! Welcome to our Summer newsletter, besides the progressive work that the children have accomplished we have some exciting news.

We have been awarded a Bronze Wildlife Action Award by the RSPB reflecting the extensive work the children have done to benefit and encourage local wildlife, this is a great achievement and we are working our way towards Silver and eventually Gold.

The National Lottery has awarded the Orchard Project £10 000!!! This enables us to move forward this year in ways we had not thought possible in the short term, it is an amazing opportunity to push forward the development of the area. We have acquired our own apple press and crusher already and plans for the wheelchair accessible treehouse will come to fruition over the Summer holidays. Big thanks to the Lottery Fund.



Awarded to:

Mill Water School

This award recognises that you have carried out special tasks to improve the environment for birds, wildlife and people

Signed:

Mike Clarke

Mike Clarke,
RSPB Chief Executive



RSPB Wildlife Engineers is the only membership and RSPB Phoenix is the honour membership of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Date: 22 March 2016

Small copper butterfly by Richard Beards (stock images.com) The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity, England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC205248. 0000041 10/0

Meanwhile the Children...

Have been very busy indeed! Ongoing work to paths and the tactile rail have kept us busy and been highly successful. We have been working hard to keep the Devon Jungle at reasonable levels of wilderness; we want a wild but also safe space. So much work has been done educating the children and staff about potentially dangerous plants in the area and removing some of these where appropriate.

The Senior School has created a set of three tractor tyre gardens for classes 1, 2 and 3 and the little ones have made an excellent start growing vegetables, herbs and flowers. The African garden is also fully planted with vegetables that are, fortunately, growing just as vigorously as the weeds!





Tyre Gardens for the Lower School

Children from the senior school built raised bed gardens for classes 1, 2 and 3 using tractor tyres kindly donated by Catherine Phillips.

We dug the tyres in to make them level and filled them with topsoil.

The junior school planted them up and it seems our soil was very fertile!



Taming the Devon Jungle!!

The Orchard is wonderfully diverse and we want to keep it that way. But we need to access it and we need to know which plants are dangerous and why. Children and staff have been learning the positives, potential risks and how to safely handle prickly, stinging and poisonous plants. We have also been removing invasive plants, thistles, Himalayan Balsa and hogweed among others. We have also been keeping up the paths we put in in the winter.





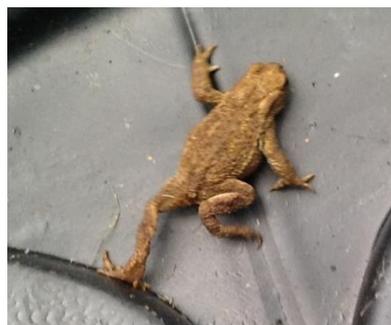
The Memorial Garden

Within the boundary of the Orchard is a garden space that we have set aside as a place to remember pupils of Mill Water that have died since the school's inception. Sadly many of our children have conditions that affect their life expectancy. The memorial plaques from the previous school have been transferred to the new and remounted by the children and a commemorative bench has been emplaced. We had meaningful discussions with the children around remembering people and pets that have passed away.



Wildlife in the Orchard

Numerous species have arrived or passed through our Orchard this Summer. Great tits are already nesting in one of our bird boxes, a family of six stoats passed through, there are many rabbits and badgers come in at night. Squirrels are adept at stealing our bird food and one morning we saw a fox. We have found all kinds of insect and toads frogs and newts. It is a privilege to be surrounded by such diversity and the children really enjoy learning to identify and searching for signs of these creatures.



Funding Update

The Lottery Grant of £10,000 enables us to get some of the bigger aspects of the project moving.

We have bought our own apple press and crusher meaning we can really take advantage of the crop this year and share the Apple Week experience with other Schools.

Plans for the Wheelchair Accessible Treehouse and Aerial Walkway are moving forward apace.

Thank you to everyone for your support.

Thanks again to all the children and staff of Mill Water for their hard work.

Thank you to all our supporters and friends beyond the school for everything you do to support the project.