

Biodiversity

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it”.

Robert Swan

The fourth strategic aim of the DfE’s [Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#) is to create:

“A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings.”

We have created some ideas to help make your school grounds a haven for wildlife, whether that’s through wildlife-friendly planting, creation of bug hotels and other habitats, or installing new facilities like hedgehog highways and bird feeders!

There are so many demands on the outdoor learning environment for sports, science lessons, play areas, ponds, forest school, quiet reflective areas, car, bike and scooter parking, bin storage, hard standing play areas the list goes on. So it’s a good idea to audit what you currently have. By measuring your current position, you will be able to show improvements too.

Getting your students involved in this process will be the most exciting and rewarding part. It could also help you to demonstrate progress against the [Eco Schools](#) accreditation process. Children or young people involved in caring for and developing the natural outdoor spaces will have a positive impact on them personally and their engagement and connection with nature.

Turn over to complete a biodiversity audit.

School grounds biodiversity audit		
School Name:		
Date:		
		Comments
Has your school participated in a national observation project this year (e.g. RSPB Big Bird Watch, Big Butterfly Hunt)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school have any wildlife or conservation areas inside the school grounds or has it adopted one outside the school grounds?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do classes go outside the school grounds to explore different habitats for example rivers, parks, beaches or forests?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school have its own dedicated on site forest school area?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school use its grounds to support biodiversity in the national curriculum?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school have a gardening club or committee?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school have any of the following? Select all those that apply	<input type="checkbox"/> Bird baths <input type="checkbox"/> Bird or bat boxes <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife feeders <input type="checkbox"/> Pond <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland area <input type="checkbox"/> Orchard <input type="checkbox"/> Newly planted trees <input type="checkbox"/> Hedges <input type="checkbox"/> Long grass <input type="checkbox"/> Wildflower meadow/beds <input type="checkbox"/> Planted containers/flowerbeds <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly or bee friendly plants <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory garden or plants chosen specifically for sensory needs <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit/vegetable patch or allotment <input type="checkbox"/> Log piles for invertebrates <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	

The next exercise might be informed by students too. Analyse the m² of your school grounds by:

- Amenity grass
- Playground / hardstanding
- Allotments
- Beds and borders
- Wildflower areas
- Wildlife or conservation areas
- Orchards / tree areas

Are you happy with the % of land designated to encourage biodiversity? e.g. wildflower areas, wildlife or conservation areas, orchards and tree areas. Can you identify areas of your school grounds which could switch from amenity grass to a meadowland, wildflower areas, conservation areas? How could improving your grounds biodiversity also help your school to create more shade where needed and potentially flood resilience?

There are people's opinions to consider - after all one person's weed is another person's wildflower. And we have to ensure the grounds are fit for purpose at all times, look fantastic and don't become a burden on the budget, site team or volunteers. If your school is not happy with the % of land designated to encourage biodiversity, could you create a clear and measurable target to increase that % of land? This could include a planting target as well as changing the use of the land target.

Now you have identified the land designated to encourage biodiversity, have you some procedures in place to minimise negative impact on the ecosystems within those areas? Have you shared them with your Grounds maintenance team? Can you work with your Grounds maintenance team to further protect and conserve those ecosystems?

Consider No Mow May: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay/>

Useful resources

Further support could be obtained from:

- <https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/>
- <https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/>
- <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/ten-topics/biodiversity/>

Grants could be obtained from:

- <https://britishbeecharity.com/> for free wildflower seed bombs and learning resources about bees and pollinators and if you're feeling brave for full funding for a bee hive, bees and beekeeping equipment!
- <https://www.gardenhealth.com/new-horizon-fund> up to £1000 of resources to Support community gardening projects across the UK. Allotments, schools and community gardens are all be eligible for donations
- <https://theoutdoorguidefoundation.org/> for primary schools - The foundation's goal is to get 10 sets of wellies and waterproofs to every state primary school in the UK.
- <https://www.evolveadvice.co.uk/grants> Enabling schools and other organisations to get pupils learning outdoors. Grants can be used for: equipment purchases; specialist training; travel and/or resources, with the focus on supporting pupils in getting outdoor learning
- <https://www.linnean.org/the-society/medals-awards-prizes-grants/our-local-nature-grants> Some examples of possible proposals could be: running a school festival about nature; painting community

murals showcasing biodiversity in the area; building a community garden; creating a nature walk; hiring a speaker to come and talk about local foraging.

- <https://lftl.org.uk/projects/local-school-nature-grants/> Helping schools branch out into nature by providing equipment and training. All schools (not PTAs) in England, Scotland and Wales are welcome to apply, although the training provided is best suited for KS1 to KS3
- <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/> The Woodland Trust is giving away free packs of trees to schools, because they want to make sure that everybody has the chance to plant a tree. Schools in England, Wales and Scotland can apply. Sufficient land must be available to plant the trees, and proof of permission from the landowner must be given
- <https://treecouncil.org.uk/grants-and-guidance/our-grants/> Funds are available to assist schools and community groups proposing to undertake well-planned tree, orchard and hedge planting projects. There must be strong community involvement. Applicants must ensure that they can plan, execute and claim for their completed project by March of the following year
- <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/grants/> Enabling schools to get their pupils learning outdoors.