



Schools Environmental Challenge
Anthony Roper Pre-school and Kindergarten
CIO 2022



Introduction

Who we are:

Anthony Roper Pre-school is a long-established, community-based, charity-run pre-school in the heart of the village of Eynsford. Previously being run from the local village hall, we moved into a prefab 'hut' on the grounds of the local primary school around 2002. In 2010, a brand new, purpose-built building was completed and we have been occupying this site ever since. We have always appreciated the lovely setting that we occupy – being close to the river and surrounded by the school's fields and woodland areas, but over the last few years, we have become more involved in creating a sustainable setting, with an emphasis on helping the youngest members of society learn about the natural world and how humans impact on it. We hope that by beginning at an early age, children do not consider caring for the environment something that is an additional chore but is part of their everyday lives.

You will see over the coming pages some of the things that we have been doing at the Pre-school – some for several years; others more recently.



Children exploring the sunflower heads from last year's plants – collecting the seeds to feed the birds.

Supporting the children in how to take care of their world – action plan

Sustainability

Recycling

From the moment the children enter the Pre-school, some as young as two, we help them to understand their role in helping the environment. We have recycling bins for their waste from their lunchboxes, with clear labels so they can identify the items that can and cannot be recycled. We explain in simple terms what happens when the products arrive at the recycling centre and how some things will be made into new items.



As well as helping them understand what happens to their rubbish, we compost any food waste as a result of what the children eat at snack time and any fruit or vegetable leftovers from their lunchboxes. The children quickly learn that these go in our compost bin and then at the end of the day they are transferred to the large compost bin outside the front of the Pre-school, where, after lots of time and work by our good friends, the insects, who live in the bin, we will have lovely compost to use on our allotment garden.

Composting



Saving water

To help water our allotment garden during the dryer summer months, we have a water butt outside the front of the building. The children learn that water is precious and should not be wasted. We use the water from the water butt to help our allotment garden thrive and the children only fill up the watering cans when needed.



Our second water butt is used to supplement the children's water play. Again, we explain to them that they must not waste water and once it has all gone from the water butt we will need to wait until it rains again before we can play with any more.

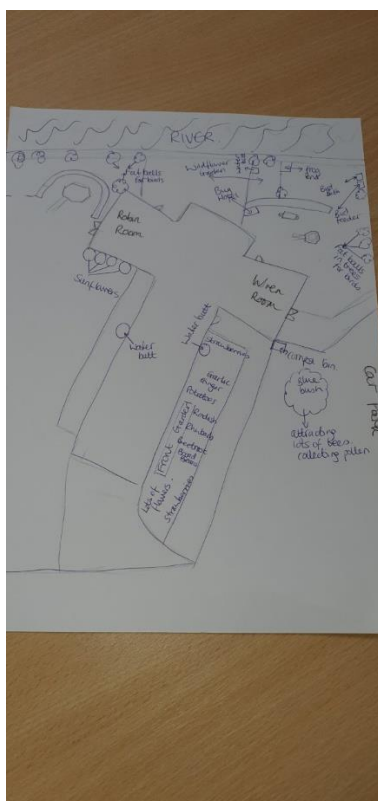
We also talk to the children about conserving water when they are washing their hands in the bathroom and how to turn the taps off so that we don't waste water down the drains.

We have further reduced our environmental impact by re-using, re-purposing and repairing the majority of our equipment. We never buy plastic craft materials (including glitter) and we re-use paper that would otherwise have been thrown away in our arts and crafts. Our milk is delivered in glass bottles, rather than plastic bottles or individual cartons, we conserve energy by only using lights when necessary and the children are learning about alternative forms of energy, including solar and wind turbines – there are images of these alternative sources displayed within the children's rooms to prompt discussion.

We are engaged in the Kent County Council Education for Sustainable Development Award Scheme, which is based around the United Nations Global

Map of the Pre-school – our biodiversity areas

A group of five young children are sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. They are all looking at a book that one of the children is holding open. The children are wearing colorful clothing and hats. One child is wearing a white shirt, another a pink dress with heart patterns, and another a white shirt with a blue skirt. They are all looking intently at the book. The background shows some green plants and a wooden fence.



Creating habits for wildlife

We are fortunate to be on the grounds of the Anthony Roper Primary School. We have trees in our gardens and are very close to the river Darent. Therefore, we have an abundance of wildlife that visit the area.

Bug hotel

To help the wildlife and encourage more diversity, we have created a 'bug hotel' in Wren Garden. The children helped in its creation, using a donated pallet, recycled flowerpots, sticks, leaves, cones, leaves, etc that we collected from the garden. They are helping to keep it neat and tidy and inviting for the insects that we hope will set up home there.



Amphibian pond

Being close to the river means that we attract visitors that live in or near water. To enhance the children's understanding of the habitats needed by divergent species, we created a small 'pond' at the bottom of Wren garden. We have been lucky to be visited by several frogs and the children have loved being able to see the young froglets emerging from the murky depths and hopping off towards the riverbank.



Bird bath

The bird bath needed a bit of a deep clean, so the children helped to get it 'spa ready', using brushes and clean water. They worked really hard on providing a lovely bird bath for the birds who visit our garden to wash in. The teachers explained why the birds need to keep their feathers clean and how we are helping them by providing clean, safe water – away from predators and not too deep.



Feeding the birds

The children have been learning about what the birds who visit our gardens need to survive, especially during the winter months, and how we can help them with that by making our very own fat balls.

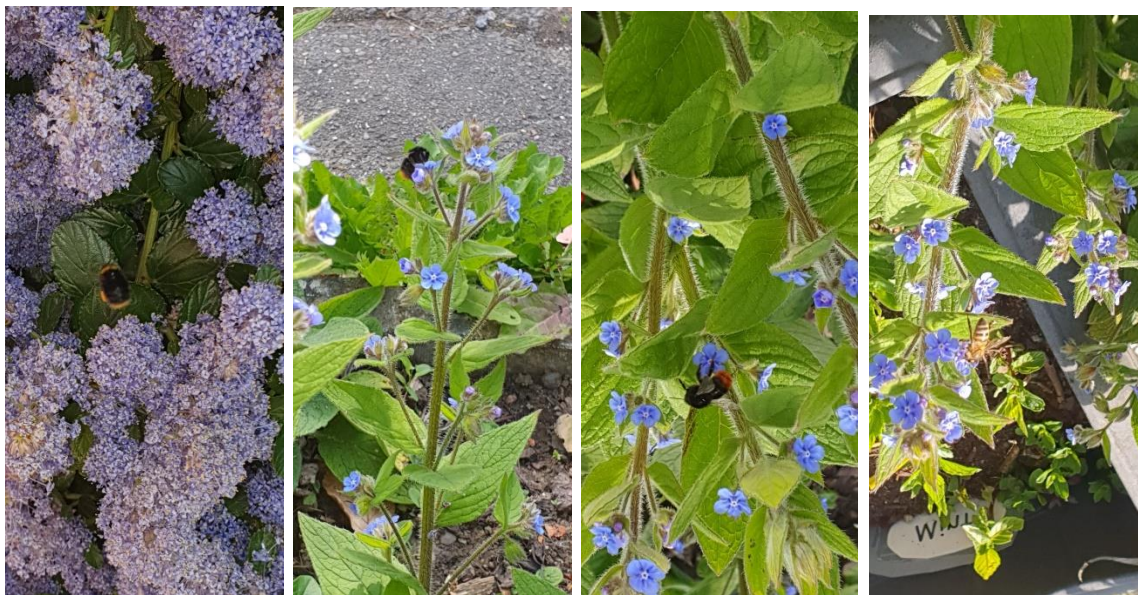
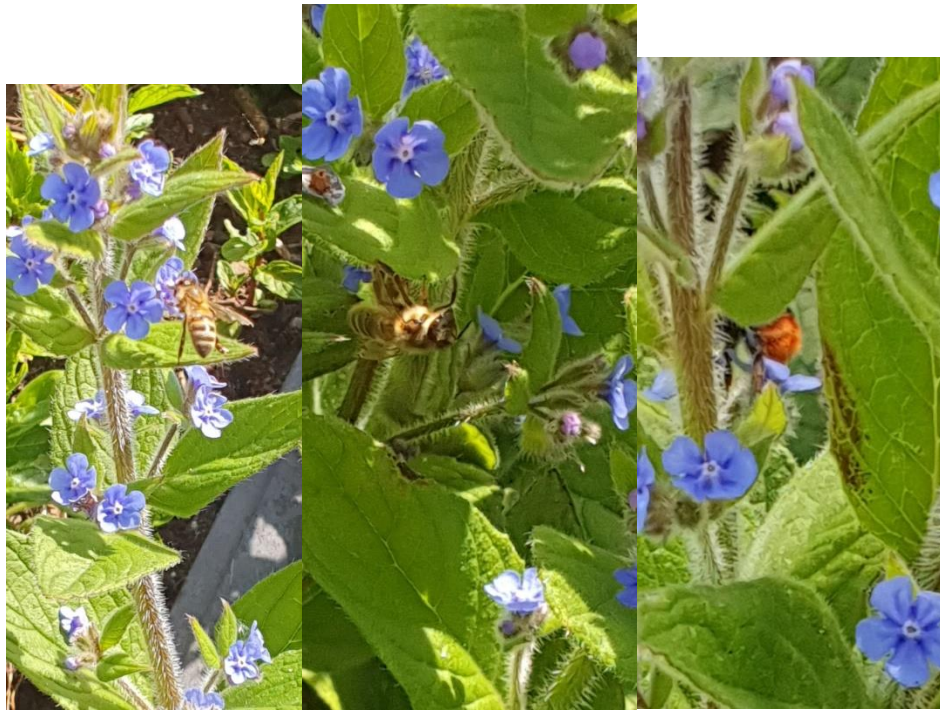


We are also helping the children notice the different species of birds that visit our gardens and thinking about the varying diets of each type. We have recently purchased 'squirrel-proof' bird feeders, as the fat balls were very popular with the local squirrels. Last year, we collected the seeds from our Giant Russian sunflowers, as the flowers faded. We used the seeds to help supplement the bird seed over the winter months.



Plants for attracting insects

We have some lovely plants in our garden which are attracting a lot of bees. We have a sheet which identifies the different varieties of bees that live in the UK and from the photo below, you can see that there are different types visiting our flowers.



Identifying species

We use the below wildlife identifying sheets with the children during the session. They are able to access these independently, as well as with the teachers. As you can see from above, the children are able to identify the differences between some of the bees who visit our gardens by using the sheet. They also look for other insects, habitats, trails and tracks and birds that visit our gardens and the woodland area on the grounds of the school site. See images below:



We found a bird's egg that had fallen from a tree – the children noted that it might have come from our birdbox or a nest.



Exploring the weather - wind

Children need hands-on experiences to really understand their world. Describing the wind doesn't really work with young children who are still learning how to communicate. However, being able to feel and see the effect of the wind makes it real. Whilst we talk about the effect of the wind on their hair or the trees, a simple but effective way of demonstrating what wind can do can be seen below:



Exploring the weather – rain

The children have been learning about rainfall through the use of simple rain gauges using recycled large plastic water bottles. The teacher explained how to use the rain gauges and asked “what does it mean if the water level hasn't moved from 0?” One child replied, “the sun has been out”. The teacher expanded on this, suggesting that, whilst that may be the case, it could also be that it may have been cloudy but the clouds weren't rain clouds.





Growing our own food

We are very fortunate to have the support of the Eynsford in Bloom group, who have been helping us with our allotment garden. The children are learning about where some of their food comes from and how to take care of our plants whilst they are growing. This is an invaluable experience for children. Some children have no idea that a potato grows underground, or that a runner bean grows really tall. The whole experience of growing fruit, vegetables and herbs is one that the children not only enjoy but is invaluable in supporting their learning and development. Children learn through all of their senses. Through the allotment they are able to explore all five. Below are some photos of our developing allotment and the children's contribution to it:





We are also growing other plants, including onions, garlic, beetroot, radishes, rhubarb, ginger, broad beans, sage, mint, parsley, rosemary, chives, fennel and lemon balm. Alongside these edible plants we are growing some companion plants, such as marigolds. We do not use any chemicals on our allotment and believe that the children should be learning about organic growing and eating and how the natural world can solve many of the problems a gardener may face.





We will use some of the produce in tastings with the children, but will also sell some of it on to our lovely families for a small donation before the end of the summer term.

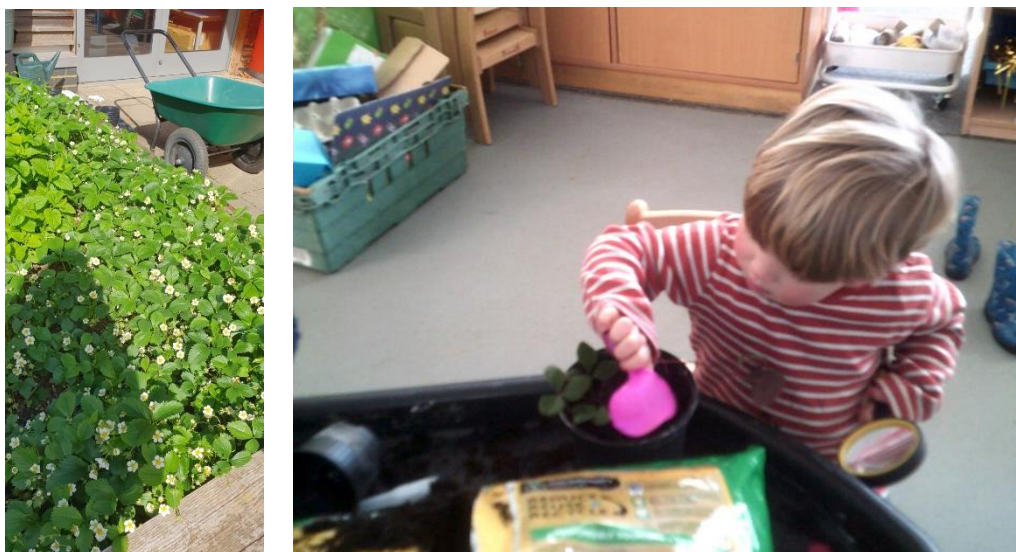


Children harvesting our rhubarb.



The children chopping the rhubarb to make a scrummy crumble.

We also have a wonderful strawberry patch and, over the winter months, one of the volunteers from Eynsford in Bloom, potted up some of our strawberries to use at the village event in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. She also returned many of the small plants to the Pre-school for us to use in our 'Mothers' Day Shop'.



The children re-potted the strawberries into larger pots, which they then 'sold' to their families as gifts for Mothers' Day. This not only meant that the mums got a useful gift, but the children learnt some simple economics of how food is grown and sold. We also created a circular economy and a mutually beneficial support network within the local community. Below are some photos of the children re-potting their plants, buying them from the shop, growing on and nurturing them at home:





We hope you have enjoyed learning about all of the things we do at the Pre-school to encourage the next generation to take care of their world.

Thank you.