

Edible Garden 2 – Bridport Primary School: 1st phase:



Bridport Primary School from the garden area

INTRODUCTION

Bridport Primary School has approximately 380 pupils, 11% of whom have some kind of disadvantage, disability and/or live below the poverty line.

There have been great improvements in the school since the last Ofsted report (2019) which showed a declining school. A new Headteacher has brought hope and benefits for the children.

This is what we are hoping to support and expand with the new garden which will include a pond area, growing and exploring, a Forest School area and opportunities to be used for the national curriculum STEAM subjects.

The school has a great deal of land so there are many opportunities for development.

As with St Mary's, in a similar situation when we started working with them 7 years ago, at the outset they had 60 less pupils than capacity. For the last entry year there was a waiting list for Reception. Bridport Primary has 380 pupils at the moment but with space for 440. This of course produces challenges with the school's budget.

Further phases will include Forest School courses and training and the possibility of reopening the school's well-appointed kitchen and providing lunches for the children and the staff using locally grown and organic produce where possible.

There is an excellent local partnership project, **Bridport Food Matters**, which is discussing/planning local food security, quality of food for local families, the local food festival and hoping in the end to find a way not to need our very busy food bank, Cupboard Love.

EDIBLE GARDEN 2: The Idea

The community of Bridport Primary school with children and families would like to refurbish, repurpose and expand a derelict garden and wildlife area. Joining with the community of St. Mary's and Bridport primary (larger school) in co-creating a new gardening project involving the whole school and its local community. Working alongside a professional gardener and community volunteers with the aim of sharing and learning skills of growing food, preparing, cooking, healthy eating and to come together after Covid. Environment, biodiversity, soil and food security are key issues with helping people revive the life of the community, using the garden as a place to restore the mental health and wellbeing of everyone involved. We have over 30% of our local community living below the poverty line. Our experience in developing community projects with growing, cooking and eating has led to immense community support and conversations about the possibility of us working together to help the current deprivation through all that food and gardening can bring. The plan is to revive the waste land and co-create a garden which will grow food, create events and opportunities for community involvement, be used for learning and skills sharing. We will have 2 community meetings with the school to decide the overall plan. We will invite our local storyteller to work with the children devising and telling stories around the garden for their health and wellbeing. The school will communicate the stories and the developing work on the garden through their newsletter which will also be shared by St. Mary's. These two primary schools host most of the children from the areas of disadvantage whose families are often the hardest to reach. Our experience is that through growing, cooking and eating together, we can create a more inclusive and accessible environment for this who feel excluded.

Depression in England has risen by 50% and the mental health of children and young people is of great concern in our community post Covid with anxiety, stress and isolation. We want to address the physical and educational needs and everyone's emotional well-being. We want to come together safely in developing the garden and to be able to learn outdoors. We want to encourage healthier diets. We will connect the work with the natural world and climate change and share ways in which we can help ourselves to learn more about local food and food security for the future of the children and young people growing up in and around Bridport and the connecting villages. Our partners in the community have developed a food "glut" stall sharing produce from allotments, gardens and producers to which we can also contribute, in particular providing fresh produce for the local foodbank.

We are in contact with the school and the PTA. There is strong community concern around our Post Covid recovery and looking for ways to help us to work together with those who are struggling. There are many community groups/local organisations working together, Bridport Food Matters, Bridport Local Food Group, HOME in Bridport and Transition Town Bridport.



The raising of the first Polytunnel at St. Mary's funded by Ernest Hecht Foundation with lunch to say thank you to the community volunteers.



St Mary's Edible Garden a couple of summers ago.