



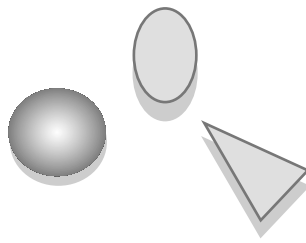
Creating an urban oasis

A sustainable curriculum for sustainable future

At St Paul's we have tried to produce an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) curriculum that provides a relevant and meaningful experience for all members of the school community. Our project has a practical base enabling all pupils to experience visible success and a sense of genuine achievement.

Throughout we have sought practical help and advice from a range of organisations and, closer to home, we have secured the active help and support of the wider school community, parents, governors and our site officer. We want to give ownership of the project to the pupils and the community, and to make ESD an integral part of both school and community so that it cannot be 'unravelling' and discarded.

This case study shows just what we have achieved, charting how we have moved from a management vision to practical reality.



Why is Education for Sustainable Development important to St Paul's?

Many of our pupils do not experience great academic success, and although there is obviously a need to raise academic standards, we felt that simply increasing the time spent on academic subjects could just be giving many of our pupils the opportunity to fail again. We wanted to provide a more relevant curriculum to complement the National Curriculum: one which would enable our pupils to express themselves in a more practical yet structured way. We noticed that whenever the opportunity to express themselves through dance, art or practical technology arose, our pupils were enthused in a way that the literacy hour palpably failed to do.

A practical, whole school, ESD project presented in a non academic context would give pupils the opportunity to develop their practical skills and talents in a way that our existing curriculum did not. The project was structured to embed links within the National Curriculum and PSE (Personal and Social Education), and the use of 'transferable skills' made it directly relevant to our aim of raising standards and pupil self-esteem.

The commitment to ESD became part of our School Development Plan, but it was some time before a truly sustainable curriculum developed.

Making a 'green' start

St Paul's is bounded on three sides by busy roads and is at the edge of a recently regenerated estate of Council and Housing Association properties that have replaced high-rise flats, maisonettes and inadequate housing. There was an interim period prior to development when most properties were boarded up and the school was truly an oasis in the midst of slum clearance. However, the phrase 'urban oasis' was initially picked up in our first OFSTED report, although at that time no development work had been done on the school grounds. It was only with the arrival of the new Headteacher that the idea of developing the school grounds began, and St Paul's started to turn into a genuine urban oasis.

First steps

The 'first steps towards sustainability' were innovative and exciting, starting with David Bellamy opening our Community Gardening Club, and we featured in the local press. The school also became part of the WWF Curriculum Management Award Scheme (see back page). We formed links with Arid Lands, a charity involved in a local project and the Yemen.



Closer to home, the Probation Service helped us to dig out the school garden and an orchard was started. Every child planted a willow rod, whilst parents and pupils from Manchester Grammar School became involved with the gardening club. The staff planned environmental projects and the EAZ (Environmental Action Zone) financed a Sensory Garden for the Early Years Unit. Even a 'Wombles' group was established to collect litter at break times and generally help to keep the grounds tidy.

It all seemed like a brilliant start, but subsequent events showed that these projects could not, in themselves, provide a sustainable curriculum. For although they were attractive and gave almost instant results, they were too ambitious, expecting too much of a community with few skills in cultivation but not demanding sufficient commitment from either staff or pupils.



This became evident when notification of our second OFSTED inspection arrived. Nothing actually stopped but the lack of a whole school commitment meant that little happened in the way of progress. But at least we were able to return and build on the initial projects later, which made developing the new curriculum an easier task. This time the approach was school based with the aim of spreading to the local community.

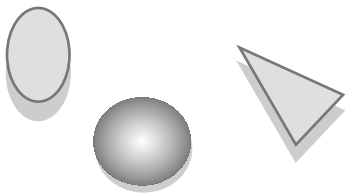
Striding out – one year on

With the pressure of inspection a thing of the past, our Headteacher prioritised his vision for greening the school grounds and expressed his determination that every class would experience an aspect of sustainability. The emphasis was on growing produce that the pupils could harvest, eat and sell themselves.

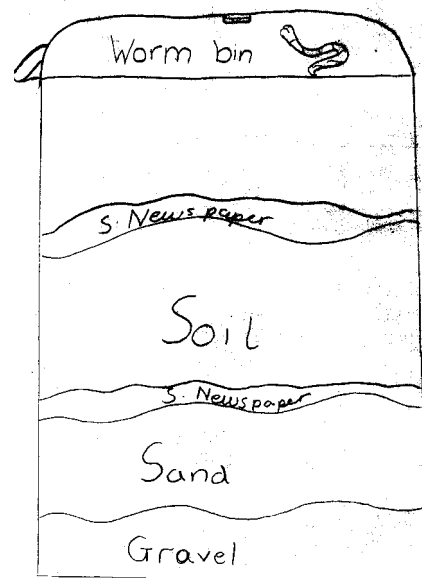
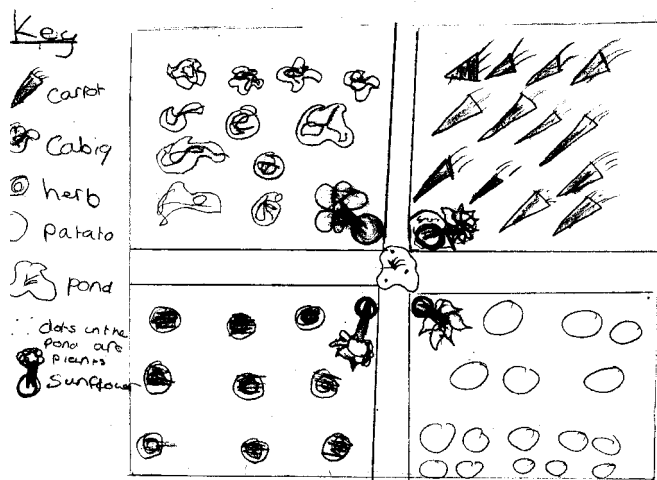
Allowing for staff diversity

While our projects were allocated to ensure progression and curriculum fit, individual staff strengths and needs were also considered. Here was an opportunity for staff to develop their own professional strengths, interests and creativity outside the increasingly prescriptive regime dictated by the demands of the National Curriculum.

The Early Years Sensory Garden and Outdoor Play Area fits in with existing facilities and the new Early Years Learning Goals. Year 1 (5 year olds) developed a garden area adjacent to their classroom. Our 'Weird and Wonderful Plants' topic evolved to meet the needs of a staff member in Year 2 (6 year olds) with an immovable dislike of the soil and gardening! Instead children developed an indoor botanical garden to illustrate the variety of ways in which



different plant species meet their needs. The Year 3 (7 year olds) teacher was interested in the orchard while Year 4's (8 year olds) teacher was interested in seating. The Year 4 class also cultivated a garden area next to their classroom and established a wormery. Years 5 and 6 (ages 9 and 10 respectively) cultivated the allotment, and Year 6 – the most physically capable – were given the task of restoring our newly acquired wooded corner. This approach meant that each staff member started with a project seen as relevant and achievable.



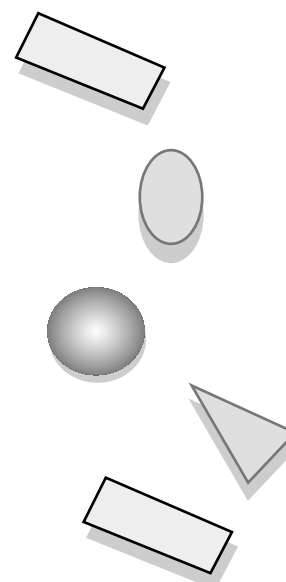
The process of change – planning for commitment

Staff commitment to the scheme has developed through the processes of collaborative planning and 'action learning'.

Collaborative planning – how we did it

Staff were paired and spent a day out of the classroom planning their own projects and using each other as a resource – looking at how their ideas fitted with the National Curriculum and identifying which objectives could be covered. We considered all the other innovative processes included in our everyday curriculum that we could apply to our ESD planning.

'Generic Study Skills' could be used for recording work. We could use 'Book Arts' to record and display work. We considered the type of 'Thinking Skills' involved and actively planned how we would use them. We planned how we were going to involve the pupils through 'Circle Time' and the personal and social outcomes we were aiming for. A number of teachers also included some of the approaches advocated in 'Accelerated Learning in Practice' which was in the early stages of introduction.



We were also able to use the expertise and knowledge of a student working with the local charity, Arid Lands, who gave advice on how to relate our ideas to the wider aspects of sustainability. Everyone then completed an Action Plan and medium term plans and started their project.

"Accelerated Learning is an umbrella term for a series of practical approaches to learning which benefit from new knowledge about how the brain functions; motivation and self-belief; accessing different sorts of intelligence and retaining and recalling information.

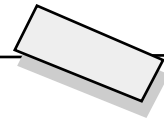
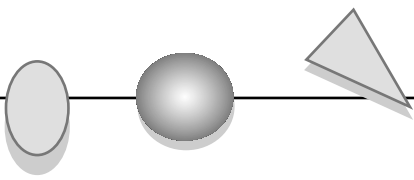
Accelerated Learning carries with it the expectation that, when properly motivated and appropriately taught, all learners can reach a level of achievement which may currently seem beyond them."

Accelerated Learning in the Classroom, p9

Range of Graphic Organisers

All pupils will initially learn the following repertoire of graphic organisers:

Generic Models	Description
1. Picture Models	● a simple annotated drawing to record information
2. Comic Strips	● sequencing events or instructions through words and pictures
3. Maps & Plans	● maps are topographical sketches of the earth's surface ● plans are topographical sketches of manufactured objects & built environments
4. Hierarchies	● organising information in the form of a hierarchy: a pyramid in which people or things are graded in order of value, power or importance
5. Cycles	● a type of sequencing showing a series of events which happen in the same order over and over again
6. Flow Diagram	● a type of sequencing which shows the stages involved in a particular process
7. Diagrams	● a simple picture explaining how something works
8. Cross Sections	● a diagram which shows internal structures
9. Grid/Matrices	● a means of recording & comparing characteristics of a number of similar items
10. Time Lines	● sequencing in chronological order & showing duration
11. Mind Maps	● classifying & connecting ideas by mapping out organically from the centre of the page (topic heading), connected to several branches (main ideas), connected in turn to twigs (detailed information)



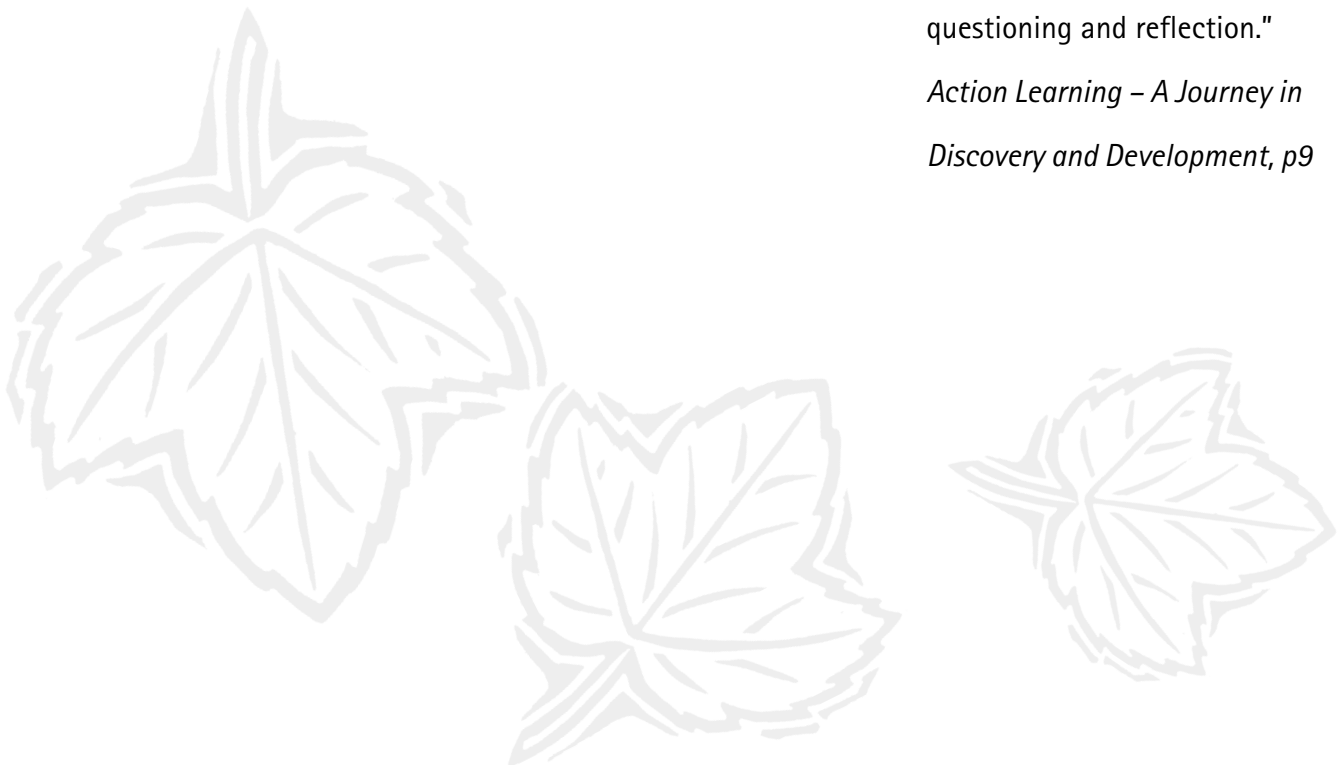
Action learning – how we do it

We split into two groups across the Key Stages. Each person in the group has a set time (usually 30 minutes) to ask for help in solving problems and the rest of the group focuses on the needs of that individual, challenging their thinking in a supportive environment. It is up to each member of the group to ask for as much or as little help as they feel they need. They then go away and apply the advice and report back to the next meeting on its effectiveness or otherwise. The problem and advice remain confidential within the group and only the person requesting help can give permission for this confidentiality to be broken.

Collaborative planning and action learning have given staff ownership of their projects and made things happen. In turn staff are trying to give ownership to the pupils, involving them in decision-making and planning. Initially the projects are teacher directed but, as the pupil knowledge base increases, pupils will be able to take increasing responsibility for project developments.

"Action Learning is a 'process' underpinned by a belief in individual potential: a way of learning from our actions (and from what happens to us and around us) by taking time to reflect on this in order to gain insights and consider how to act in future... it involves a group of people who work together on their 'doing' and their 'learning'; and it requires regular and rigorous meetings of the group to allow time for this process of questioning and reflection."

Action Learning – A Journey in Discovery and Development, p9



What have we achieved?

The scheme of work now in place ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to grow and harvest crops at some point in their school life as well as learning the wider concepts of sustainability. It is designed to show that we can make a difference to our personal environment and to provide the pupils with skills, knowledge and ideas that they can take into the wider local environment and beyond.

But the benefits go far beyond this. The self-esteem of pupils has risen immeasurably. They have learned to work co-operatively. They are becoming involved in decision-making. They are experiencing success – many for perhaps the first time – and benefiting from the fruits of their labour. Slowly they are starting to recognise and discuss the wider issues of sustainability, but most importantly they are involved and feel ownership of the projects.

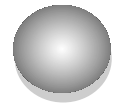
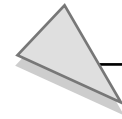
As the project has developed, inter-class co-operation has increased. Years 3 and 6 made a joint visit to local woods sharing experiences and knowledge and using public transport. Year 4 has helped to provide seating that the whole school can use. Older children are helping to maintain and care for the Early Years garden.



"Because we are tending a piece of land in an urban area, we are helping pupils to develop sensitivity and respect for nature and the local environment, and encouraging a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the planet." *Teacher*

"It is nice to see pupils working together and genuinely co-operating, especially those who would not normally choose to work together." *Teacher*

"It is a real opportunity for children with special educational needs to shine." *Teacher*

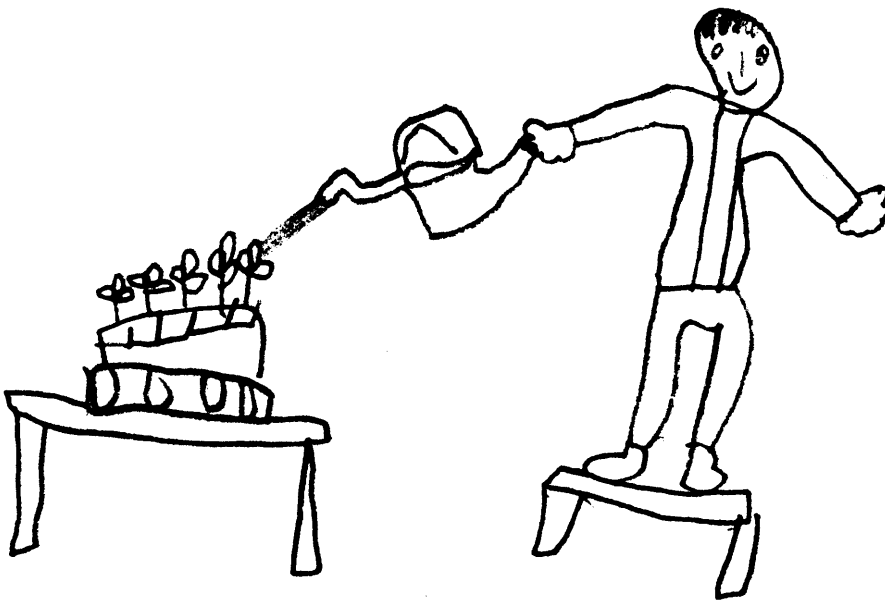


The School Council is involved with looking at areas for development and each class is in some way involved in decision-making for their own projects. For example, on a Year 2 garden centre visit, money (£5) was given to each group of four pupils who then had to decide whether to spend the money on a plant each or one larger plant, involving them in group decisions and negotiation. A variety of outcomes ensued with groups coming to different decisions in a reasonably democratic way.

"We have some underwater plants and some plants that we had to stick on a rock. We got to choose our own plants."

Year 2 pupil (6 year old)

"A co-operative decision-making process involving all pupils supports the work carried out. This takes place during Circle Time and during the Education for Sustainable Development lessons." *Teacher*



Some of our projects have not only introduced different environmental needs, but produce a sense of awe and wonder at the extent and range of the natural world.



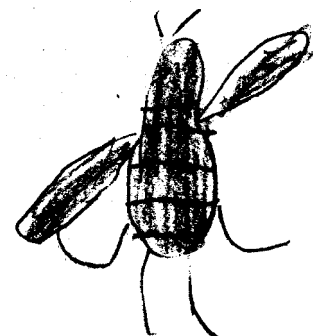
woodlouse



slug



SPIDER



bee

We have sold strawberries to finance bird boxes – another pupil-led decision – and pupils from several classes took plants home to care for in the holidays, which then involved parents in the projects. Parents with their own gardens and allotments have donated plants and seeds and are slowly becoming involved with the project as a whole.

"The seeds are so little that if you breathe on them they will fly away." *Year 3 pupil*

(7 year old)

Different teaching methods have been tried as the school has developed accelerated learning practices. The Year 5 teacher used the Visual Audio Kinesthetic Approach to help her pupils empathise with the plight of battery hens, getting them to visualise themselves in cages or roaming free, and acting out the two situations in the school hall.

We have taken our own produce to the Harvest Festival Service and have trialed an allotment box for the charity Arid Lands. This metre square composter can be reconfigured as ten 1 metre square raised beds or as cold frames. Originally developed for use in the Yemen, it is now available as a resource pack for schools, providing equipment and simple instructions on how to compost organic waste and use it as a growing medium with the accompanying vegetable growing kits. (Further information can be obtained from Arid Lands, see back page.) We have used the allotment box to grow lettuces, cabbages, Brussels sprouts, carrots and herbs, and plan to plant gourds, garlic and sunflowers. In parallel with this we are also trialing a self-watering system using rainwater from our guttering and a trickle feed hosepipe from the base of the collection vat.



"We have bought some weird and wonderful plants. Our class looks superb with lovely flowers. We're doing rather well on plants and other stuff." *Year 2 pupil*

(6 year old)

We have also started to address global issues, mainly by using them as a subject for discussion during 'Circle Time' but also by using appropriate stories for the younger children. And on a more practical level we have been involved in recycling paper. Particularly useful was our participation in the Post Office scheme for collecting used Christmas cards that were then exchanged by the Post Office for Reading Record Books.

What's this got to do with Education for Sustainable Development?

Knowledge and understanding

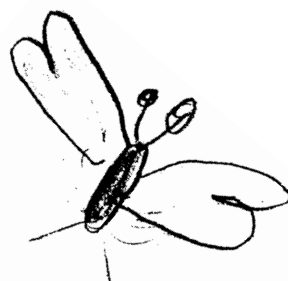
- how natural processes work
- globalisation and interdependence: how pupils' own lives and actions connect with those of others – locally, nationally and globally; past, present and future
- what is involved in different methods of providing for human needs and wants.

Skills

- co-operation and conflict resolution
- negotiation
- informed decision making.

Values and attitudes

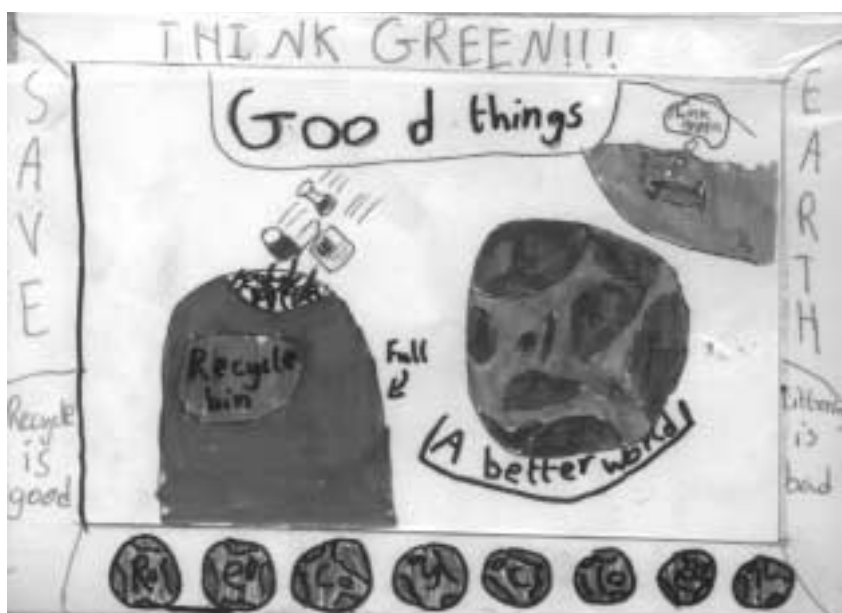
- a sense of identity and self-esteem
- a commitment to the well-being of all living things
- value and respect for diversity
- a commitment to social justice and equity
- an understanding of the place of individual and collective rights and responsibilities
- a desire to participate
- a belief that, working with others, people can make a difference.

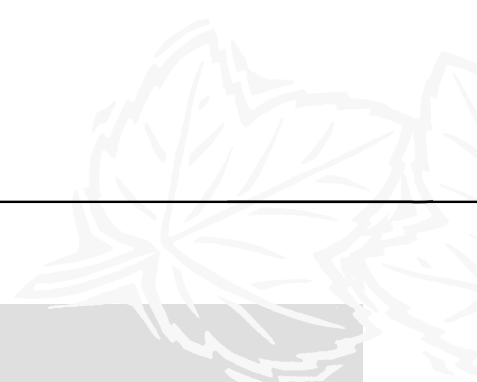
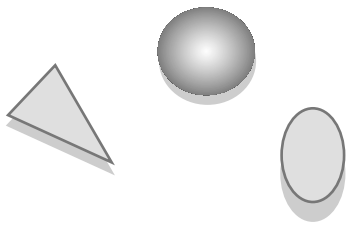


What have we done that is different?

The answer to this question is nothing! It is unlikely that we have attempted anything that someone, somewhere has not tried before. There is nothing that anyone reading this case study could not try for themselves.

We think that our difference lies not in the activities but in the efforts that have ensured that the whole school community has ownership of the project. This will ensure that Education for Sustainable Development will lie at the heart of our school ethos and remain a sustainable part of the curriculum in years to come.





The school and its project

St Paul's is a small Church of England Primary School, with approximately 200 pupils aged from 3-11, in a corner of inner city Salford. Unusually for an inner city school there are very few pupils from ethnic minorities. 57 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 36 per cent have special educational needs. This case study aims to share the insights of St Paul's as it takes up the challenge of ESD through a practical, whole school project designed to develop pupils' skills and raise their self-esteem.

Background

The WWF schools' case studies series describes aspects of work undertaken by schools across the UK, whilst involved in WWF professional, curriculum and institutional development programmes.

In England and Wales, support was originally provided through the Curriculum Management Award Scheme, which aimed to stimulate good practice, demonstrating ways to integrate ESD within the curriculum whilst working towards a whole school policy. This is one way in which WWF helps develop ideas for new teaching and learning approaches – equipping educators and students for thinking about and acting in ways supporting the goals of sustainable development.

For details of current curriculum development programmes, contact the Education division at the address shown.

Further reading

These books contain many of the ideas which have influenced our thinking and approach to developing and planning our project:

A Book of One's Own, Paul Johnson, Hodder & Stoughton
Accelerated Learning in the Classroom, Alistair Smith, Network Educational Press Ltd

Action Learning – A Journey in Discovery and Development, Krystyna Weinstein, Harper Collins

Teach Your Child How To Think, Edward de Bono, Viking

Values and Visions, Sally Burns and Georgeanne Lamont, Hodder & Stoughton

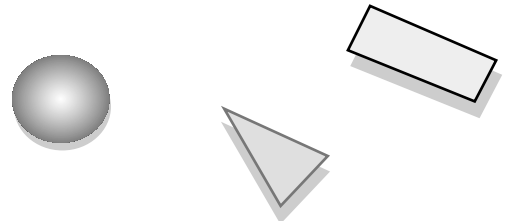
Sources of information

Further information on the Arid Lands resource pack can be obtained from:

Arid Lands Initiative

Machpelach Works, Burnley Road, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 8AU

tel: 01422 843870 fax 01422 842241



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