

Name of School: Ridgeway Infants School

Address: Uplands Avenue, Littleover, Derby

Judge: Barbara Shannon

Date of Judging: Friday 26th June 2015

Dear Mrs Patel, staff and children,

Thank you so much for showing me around your delightful gardens in June and for all your hard work in creating such wonderful outdoor learning and playing spaces of which I am sure you are all very proud.

1 GARDENING ACTIVITIES, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

The many different areas in your grounds are providing a splendid outdoor classroom and a wealth of gardening activities for children, staff and parents and participation is high. It was wonderful to hear that every child in the school had planted a sapling and that this has added approximately 300 trees to your wonderful wildlife area. The children were able to tell me about the many activities they are regularly involved in: sowing seeds, planting out, making plant supports, netting, taking cuttings, seed saving, weeding, maintaining pots and borders, pest control and watering. They demonstrated their knowledge of plants and how pests can damage crops. They are encouraged to have ownership of the gardens and to harvest crops when ready and to taste and eat the fruit and vegetables. The children are introduced to a wide range of plants and are growing many different varieties of fruit and vegetables. An after-school club, a lunchtime drop in and a forest school on Fridays all create opportunities for gardening and interacting with wildlife and the outdoors. The children have ample opportunity to spend time outside and to participate in gardening activities. So good is their motivation it is sometimes a challenge to provide enough activities for every child!

2 THE GARDEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION AND THE CURRICULUM

A whole school project based around Alice in Wonderland has been planned this year and is integrated into the children's learning in all years. The garden is utilised in key skills learning, construction, story, art, and science. The children have also been involved in creating ideas and planning the development of the garden and outdoor spaces. Your new outdoor 'table' is currently under construction and will add additional opportunities for outdoor play and learning and will incorporate gardening activities.

3 VALUE IN SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE

In the last few years the whole outdoor area has been transformed into a haven for wildlife and many habitats, food and water are to be found all around the site. A wonderful bird bath has been added made by the children out of clay with shell impressions in its surface. The pond is stocked well with a pond dipping platform and is a beautiful feature edged with grasses. The wildlife area is also very much the children's classroom and play area in which they take great pleasure. Composting is developing well with an understanding of how to create good compost. Water is harvested for watering and to top up the pond and children are encouraged not to waste any water. They are gardening organically and although suffering some plant loss due to pests they manage this by sowing plenty of seeds for replacements. Native trees have been planted and plants for pollinators are evident.

4 GROWING FRUIT AND VEGETABLES AND HEALTHY LIVING

Great progress has been made in this area this year and a good variety of fruits, vegetables and herbs are now growing well in several places around the site. The children have built many new wigwams this year for runner beans to climb up, the sensory square is full of herbs, perennials, annuals and there is a wonderful edging of very healthy strawberry plants around one raised bed. Artichokes, kohlrabi, onions, sugar snap peas, runner beans, and beetroot are just a few of the vegetables growing in this area. A fruit garden is beginning to be established and has produced its first apple alongside blackcurrants and raspberries.

5 DESIGN, MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Some areas of your garden are exceptionally well designed and utilised especially your sensory square, where you have a good variety of plants and activities in a small space, and your wildlife and pond area which are excellent and will provide great value in gardening and habitat management activities in years to come, especially with all those young trees. Your planters at the entrance to the reception give a lovely welcome with a mix of annual bedding, grasses and Dahlias where you have combined donated plants with ones you have grown from seed.

Your new fruit garden with hard and soft fruit may benefit from a little more planning and modification as they may be planted a little too close to the building and may need more space in time. Planning any relocation of plants for the dormant season will also help your plants to flourish.

SUMMARY: A most enjoyable visit to a garden that is developing superbly to meet your needs.

Marks Awarded:

SECTION 1	SECTION 2	SECTION 3	SECTION 4	SECTION 5	TOTAL MARKS
18	17	19	16	16	86

MEDAL AWARDED: GOLD

little over