

Eco Challenge News

Eco Challenge is funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. Over the three years of the project Eco Challenge will support 7500 young people from 250 schools in England.



Issue 2 May 09

Highlights this half term:

- 130 schools involved
- Working with 30 post course providers inc Wildlife Trust, RSPB, BTCV, Groundwork, Local Authority, Community projects
- Not involved yet?

Find out more:

www.fsc-eco-challenge.org

Welcome to our second newsletter of the year which we hope will give you a snapshot of how different schools have benefited from Eco Challenge funding. We are half way through this three year project so if your school is not yet involved hurry to make sure you don't miss this opportunity.

A group of year 7, 8 and 9 set off from Ilkley Grammar in Bradford last November to experience Eco Challenge at Blencathra Field Centre in the Lake District.

The course began with a range of team building activities which the students enjoyed and benefitted from as they got to know each other better and initiated new friendships. The remaining two days included a tough walk, river dip, minibeast hunt, a nightwalk with mammal trapping and a quiet stop at a badger sett. Getting involved in some woodland coppicing gave everyone a chance to learn how to use tools safely. The final team challenge, orienteering and fire building was successful in that it gave the group a chance to share stories, memories and their 'best bits' resulting in the students feeling a real sense of pride in their achievements.

'This was an excellent way of bringing pupils who didn't know each other together – they made new friends'

Richard Jennings, Lead Teacher at Ilkley Grammar



Using tree guards to protect young trees at Nell Bank

Inspired and enthused by their residential visit the group soon made plans for their post course sessions at Nell Bank, a local outdoor education centre. Three days were organised to include activities the students were interested in and had experienced at Blencathra.

Day 1: Care and maintenance of young trees using tree guards and replacing ties and weeding.

Day 2: Hedge/tree planting and willow structures

Day 3: Construction of bird, bat and insect boxes and plant up old wellies.

The Eco Challenge group plan to revisit Nell Bank in the summer term to see the developments of all their hard work. Ilkley have made long term plans to continue conservation work. They will be working in woodlands to help restore them, building and siting nesting boxes, stream cleaning and repairing footpaths.

Due to the excellent experience at the site the school have decided to involve students who are following an alternative curriculum in conservation work at Nell Bank in the future. In this way they are hoping that the partnership already formed between the school and provider will get stronger and lead to more local and community conservation projects.

'All of the pupils enjoyed it and have a far deeper understanding of the environmental issues covered'

Richard Jennings, Lead Teacher at Ilkley Grammar



Potting plants in old wellies

Community project link for Menzies

Menzies High in Sandwell embarked on their visit to Orielson Field Centre in Pembrokeshire last month with a group of 30 eager year 8's. The activities were enjoyed by all but the night walk and the final team challenge - shelter building with a hot chocolate scavenger hunt was the big favourite!



Gardening at Orielson Photo: Sam Akotiah

Mill Pool project, a local area adjacent to the school which has been improved by Community and local organisation work will deliver the post course sessions. The group recently visited the site for a nature walk and to learn about the problem of pollution and littering in the area. Further sessions are planned before the end of term to do survey work in and around the restored pond to link with their science curriculum.

'The talk on non-biodegradable plastics, biodegradable plastics and pollution in general was interesting. It was good for the students to know how long it takes some of these materials to rot away'

Sam Akotiah, Assistant Headteacher Menzies High

De La Salle and the Croxteth Rangers

After a visit to Castle Head Field Centre in the south Lakes in September last year the group has been active working with the Liverpool Ranger Interpretation service. They visited the well established wildlife gardens in Croxteth Hall and Country Park where it was agreed they would help restore its wildlife credentials. They levelled out ground from the entrance, dug up brambles and saplings which they replanted, thinned and cut back rhododendrons and holly and introduced bird feeders and bird boxes.

'They have really enjoyed the hard work and have also realised how they can transform their local spaces with some determination and creativity'

Martin O'Connor, Education Officer at Croxteth Hall

A major outcome of the work is that other Eco Challenge groups will be able to continue with the clean up project later in the year and also other local school groups will be encouraged to use the site as an outdoor classroom study base. A great deal of effort has gone into making it welcoming for both minibeasts and students – as the group created wood stacks for minibeast habitats, made compost piles with suitable left litter and introduced large trunks and sitting logs for storytelling.

Student's thoughts

We ask students after their post course sessions to tell us **if Eco Challenge has made a difference to them**. Here is what a few said:

'It's made me want to join in instead of being on my own'
'I feel more confident'
'It has helped me learn more about the environment'
'It helped me find out that there is a park around me'

Number of schools involved in the project from the eligible Local Authorities

Local Authority	Number of schools involved	
	4/2/09	15/5/09
Nottingham City	4	7
Leicester City	0	2
Sandwell	4	6
Stoke	2	4
Knowsley	4	5
Blackpool	3	4
Liverpool	14	18
Salford	2	3
Halton	2	2
Manchester	7	9
Bristol City	11	11
Portsmouth	7	8
Hull	8	8
NE Lincs	3	3
Barnsley	1	3
Bradford	13	16
Doncaster	4	4
Middlesbrough	2	3
Newcastle	6	8
Thurrock	6	6

Get involved...

If your school is in one of the areas listed above you are eligible for funding. Our website has all the information you need www.fsc-eco-challenge.org or alternatively contact one of the Eco Challenge team for more information and your password to login, on 01743 852108 or email ecochallenge@field-studies-council.org

Ideas to build on Eco Challenge...

We regularly update the **news** section of our website to give you information on how the project is developing and new things which have arisen. We have also revised the **case study** section to allow you to view schools experience of Eco Challenge in more detail.

www.fsc-eco-challenge.org/about/newscasestudies

Share your experiences...

If you have any stories, memories, photos or post course activities you would like to share in our next newsletter please email ecochallenge@field-studies-council.org

www.fsc-eco-challenge.org

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