



Brighton & Hove environmental education

Run your own School Wildlife Club



Spring Term

Environment Club

Ongoing Activities



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Create a 'School Grounds Year Book' - documenting your activities and findings through the different seasons, using photos, databases, drawings, writing inspired by the outside etc.

Create signs, information boards and fact sheets for your grounds or wildlife area.
Laminate and display permanently outside.

Make giant sculptures of flowers and bugs, using withies, reclaimed materials or clay, and display in the area.

Get involved with the development and maintenance of school gardens and wildlife areas.

Gardening projects - vegetable patch, container gardens, hanging baskets, herb gardens etc.

Write letters to local businesses and garden centres asking for supply of seeds and resources.

Build a compost area. Organise collection of schools organic waste. Observe changes over time.

Draw maps of your grounds. Use to record species of plants and animals found on the site.

Survey your grounds.

Choose a few trees, bushes and hedges. Keep a detailed record of them throughout the year.
How wide or tall are they?

How do the colours change throughout the seasons?

What animals are living in them / eating from them?

Dates of appearance and disappearance of seeds etc.

Dates of appearance and fall of leaves.

Set up a bird feeding station and monitor visitors to the site.

Which birds come?

How many of each type?

How long do they stay for?

What is their favourite type of food?

Record your findings on the Nature Detectives Website - www.naturedetectives.org.uk.

Compare your findings with national results.

This site is a fantastic resource and well worth checking out for lots of additional and seasonal ideas.



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Signs of Spring

Warm Up - Looking for Signs of Spring

Discuss signs of spring.

Prepare some strips of card with double-sided sticky-tape down the centre.

Take a walk outside and collect signs of spring to stick onto the card - this could be buds, spring flowers, new leaves, catkins, feathers from young birds.

Remember to discuss what is acceptable to pick - you might decide only to use things fallen on the ground, or to take a small example only where there are plenty of others around.

Look at the examples of cards.

What do you notice about spring colours and textures?

Main Activity - Spring Treasure Hunt

In groups - children create their own Spring Treasure Hunt for other groups to follow. Examples questions may include:

Can you finda shiny bud, a buzzing insect, a hiding hole for an animal etc

Closing Activity - Phenology

Discuss phenology - the study of 'firsts' in nature - ie when you heard the first cuckoo or saw the first blackthorn blossom. This can then be compared with records from the past and used as a measure of climate change.

Look at www.naturescalendar.org.uk.

Decide which recordings might be relevant to your grounds, either which could be added to the website or used to create records specific to your grounds.



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Trees

Warm up - Twig Bud Identification

Take a walk around the grounds looking for leaf buds on trees.

Look at how the buds might protect themselves from the harsh winter weather.

Try identifying the twigs using the Winter Twigs identification guide.

If there are not many species in the grounds, you might want to bring in examples from elsewhere.

Take any fallen twigs with buds inside and either dissect the buds, or place in water and watch them open up over the week.

Main Activity - Measuring the Age and Height of Trees

See separate sheet

Closing Game - Bud Identification Race

Collect about 7 –10 twigs from different trees, making sure the children have had a chance to identify them (see warm up activity).

Form two teams and line them up facing each other, about 10 metres apart. Give each player a number, so on each team there is a one, two, three etc. Put the twig specimens in a row between the two teams. When ready, call out the name of a tree represented by one of the specimens, then call out a number (out of sequence)

eg "the next twig is beech, and the number is.....six!"

As soon as the 'sixes' hear their number, they race to the specimens, trying to find the beech twig. The first successful player earns two points. Choosing the wrong specimen loses two points.



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Birds

Warm up - Magic Listening Jewels

Give each child a 'magic listening jewel'. This could be a painted stone, small crystal, or anything else that looks precious.

Tell the children that when they are holding their jewel they need to close their eyes and they will be able to hear all kinds of sounds. Do this for approx 1 minute and then get the children to tell you what they can hear.

Repeat activity and count how many different bird songs they can hear, and where they may be coming from.

Birds are particularly noisy in spring as they protect their territory and also sing to attract a mate.

Main Activity - Making Bird Boxes

Make bird boxes from pre-cut pieces of wood.

See separate sheet for template.

Position in trees at least 2m off the ground. Face the box north-east or south-east to avoid strong sun, wet south-westerly winds and cold north winds.

Closing Game - Woolly Worms

Make woolly worms by cutting approx 10cm strands of coloured wool - equal amounts of dark and bright colours and enough for at least 2 strands per child.

Hide wool in outdoor space.

Children imagine they are parent birds who need to feed their hungry chicks (you!) with woolly worms.

Send parent birds off to collect one worm at a time which they bring back to you.

Stick the returned worms on a card, using double-sided sticky-tape, in the order you receive them.

When all the worms have been collected you should find the brightly coloured ones were collected first. Discuss the results and how animals use colour to protect themselves from predators.



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Minibeasts

Warm up - Minibeast Parachute Games

Use the parachute to represent a woodland. How many woodland creatures can they name? What might the different colours on the parachute represent?

~Elicit 4 different woodland creatures, relying on a wood for shelter and food. Ensure they are linked by a food chain eg worm - centipede - bird - fox. Assign one to each child as you go around the circle. Parachute represents shelter. Discuss what they know about each creature - how they move, what they eat etc.

~Send each minibeast out in turn. Children act out the movement of that species and cross through to the other side of the woodland (parachute) to safety. After each group has had a turn, send in 2 groups together (one predator, one prey) - one will eat the other.

~Create a tent by sitting on the edges underneath the parachute. Use as a space to discuss woodland ecology, and what they know about different minibeasts.

For more parachute game ideas see book 'Don't forget the parachute' by Dinah Pryor, available from SWT for £5.

Main Activity - Mini Minibeast City

Many minibeasts have spent the winter as an egg or larvae ready to hatch out or turn into an adult minibeast. On a warm day, many will be scurrying around looking for food.

Find a good place where a minibeast might like to live – most like dark, damp places. Build a mini minibeast city using things you find in the grounds. They could include somewhere to hide from predators and somewhere to hunt their food. They could even include somewhere to buy new clothes, a minibeast fun fair or whatever sparks the children's imagination.

Closing Activity - Worms

Discuss with children which minibeasts gardeners like and dislike. Talk about the importance of worms in mixing up the soil, letting air into it. Demonstrate this by filling a jam jar with four alternate layers of soil and coloured sand, pressed as level as possible with a layer of leaves on the top. Children dig for worms outside, then place 4 or 5 in the jar. Cover with a lid with holes in, keep the soil moist and put in a dark place. Check for any changes next week. The worms should have mixed up the soil and sand and dragged some of the leaves down.



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Mud

Warm up - What's mud made of?

Best to wait until its been wet. Have plenty of warm water available to wash hands.

Discuss what soil / mud is made of then go outside to find some.

Look at it, smell it, feel it.

Can you find different types of mud? May want to bring some in from another location. Try the mud test.

If you can only roll it into a ball it must be sandy soil .

If you can roll it into a ball and a sausage it must be silty soil.

If you can roll it into a ball, a sausage and a ring it must be clay soil.

Main Activity - Mud painting

Mix a little mud with water and use natural materials (eg sticks, feathers, bark) to paint mud pictures. You could try painting on paper, a white sheet, fences or paving tiles.

Closing Game - Mud faces

This works best with clay based mud. If your soil is very crumbly you could use school clay instead.

Go outside and find a special tree / place. Slap a ball of mud or clay onto the tree / fence etc and decorate it with natural objects eg stones, leaves, feathers, twigs to create a mud face / tree spirit to guard this special place.



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Tracks & Trails

Warm up - Tracks

Best to do this activity after a nights rain when you have a better chance of spotting some tracks.

Discuss how you might know which animals have been visiting your grounds - eg tracks, poo, holes in nuts, feathers, fur etc.

Look at pictures of animal tracks - can you guess which animal they came from? Go for a walk around the grounds looking for any tracks you can see in the mud. If the grounds are already trampled by other children at playtime, they might like to draw their own tracks in the mud for others to follow.

Any tracks you find may be preserved by creating a cardboard collar around the print and pouring in Plaster of Paris.

Main Activity - Making Poo

Discuss what poo is and how we can see evidence of what an animal has eaten in it's poo (eg berries, invertebrates, small mammals). Explain some animals use poo to mark out their territory whilst some are tidy and always poo in the same place.

Look at a poo ID chart and make your own clay poo examples, looking at shape, colour and content! You may need a trip outside to collect leaves, twigs, berries etc to add texture!

Closing Game - Tracks & Trails Race

Using pictures of tracks and poos, play an identification game.

For example, put children in 2 teams.

You describe an animal and when given a command, the children race to collect a picture of that animal's track or poo.



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Gardening

Warm up - Bean Game (a slightly dubious connection with the theme!)

Give commands for children to follow, getting faster and faster as they become familiar with commands.

Broad bean – make themselves look fat

Runner bean – run around

French bean – shout 'bonjour'

Jelly bean – shiver

Baked bean - sunbathe

Main Activity - Practical Activities

Have a walk around the grounds and carry out any jobs that might need doing.

This is a good time of year to;

- Plant trees and shrubs

- Prune trees or shrubs to remove dead or diseased wood

- Turn the compost heap

- Ensure pond is kept ice free

- Clear any rubbish, fallen leaves and weeds

Closing Activity - Make a Biodegradable Flowerpot

Make planting pots out of old newspaper.

Wrap several sheets of newspaper around a bottle. Fold the excess of the paper under the bottom of the bottle. Remove the bottle and push the bottom of the pot flat. Fill with soil to make it steady. These pots can be packed tightly together.

Plant a broad bean in each. Keep in a greenhouse or in a cool place indoors.

When ready to plant out, the whole pot can be planted as it will easily biodegrade.



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Breeding & Offspring

Warm up - Discussion on Breeding.

Which animals lay eggs?

Which animals have a lot (or only a few) offspring? Why?

Which animals have young that look like them (eg rabbit), and which don't (frogs, ladybirds, dragonflies)?

How do animals try to help their young to survive?

Main Activity - Nesting

Discuss how many mammals eg mice, build nests, often underground, to keep their offspring warm.

Divide the children into groups of 2 or 3s.

Give each group a 'baby mouse' – a bottle of warm water, which they have to keep warm for it to survive.

Take its temperature, then build a nest for the 'mouse' outside, trying to make it well insulated.

Take the temperature every 5 minutes – which nest is the cosiest place for a baby mouse?

Closing Game - Offspring Facts:

Make a quiz / True – false game using the following facts

Rats have young called pups

Seahorses – the female lays eggs into a pouch carried by the male. The male then 'gives birth' to the baby seahorses

Butterflies have young which can be called larvae (or caterpillars)

Spiders lay eggs in a silk nest to protect them

A foxes young are called cubs

Both male and female foxes look after their young

Baby birds are called fledglings

Badgers give birth to their young underground in a sett

Adult frogs lay clumps of eggs called frogspawn

Adult toads lay strings of eggs called toadspawn

Young toads are called tadpoles



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Recycling

Warm up - Washing Line Game

Each team will need a washing line or string, clothes pegs and examples of each of the resources named below.

2 team members hold washing line. Other members try to 'hang' resources on line in the order they think they will biodegrade eg quickest at one end, longest at the other.

Hand out answers - how well did they do?

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>
<i>Orange peel</i>	<i>2 years</i>
<i>Woolly socks</i>	<i>1 - 5 years</i>
<i>Plastic coated paper</i>	<i>1 - 5 years</i>
<i>Plastic bag</i>	<i>10 - 20 years</i>
<i>Plastic film container</i>	<i>20 - 30 years</i>
<i>Nylon fabric</i>	<i>30 - 40 years</i>
<i>Leather</i>	<i>up to 50 years</i>
<i>Tin cans</i>	<i>50 years</i>
<i>Aluminium cans</i>	<i>1 million years</i>
<i>Plastic bottles</i>	<i>1 million years+</i>

Main Activity - Coke Can Insects

Make recycled insects out of reclaimed materials.

Coke cans make a great body for flying insects - just add a face, antennae and wings.

Hang or place in the wildlife garden.

Closing Game - Separate the Waste Relay

Collect a number of items that can and cannot be recycled. In two teams, the children take it in turns to run up, collect an item and put it either in the rubbish bin, recycling box or compost heap.

At the end look to see how well they did.

Look in particular at the rubbish bin. Could any of these items be reused?

What does the school use a lot of?

Is there any thing else it could use instead?



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Easter

Warm up - Easter Parachute Games

Think about animals connected with Easter – rabbits, lambs and chicks. Label children as rabbits, lambs or chicks. When their animal is called, children run underneath the parachute and find a new place. When 'Easter' is called, all children run underneath. Introduce a predator, a fox, who has to run and catch something to eat.

Place lots of balls (eggs) on the top of a parachute. One child (the fox) is underneath trying to catch the eggs by pushing them off the parachute (the nest). The other children (the chickens) are around the edges, trying to keep the eggs in the nest.

Main Activity - Easter Egg Decoration

Have a look at any examples of eggs you have available or look online to research the eggs of different garden birds.

Decorate hard boiled or blown (chickens!) eggs, either using natural materials found outside or create an Easter rabbit, lamb or chick.

Closing Game - Easter Egg Hunt

Find mini chocolate eggs in the school grounds.