



## Happy By Nature Fund – Project Guide

### Making your school grounds great spaces for nature-based play

#### Introduction

Throughout this project a Learning through Landscapes (LtL) Project Officer will guide you and your pupils to design and create nature-rich play spaces, helping make your school grounds 'Happy By Nature'. This will follow a simple structure, which you can find in the 'Planning your changes' toolkit on the [Happy By Nature website](#).

Along the way you will be able to access resources to inspire your project as well as discover ways nature-based play can grow beyond the school. This process will require commitment from you and your staff to make sure that the project is a success.

Below is an overview of how the project will work.

- To begin the project, your LtL Project Officer will work with you to plan how the project will run in your school.
- They will help you to establish your needs, both of your grounds and more importantly your pupils.
- We will work with your pupils and staff to define the aims of your project, and the play experiences you want your pupils to have outside
- Through a creative, problem-solving stage, you will have the support of both your project officer and a designer to define solutions that meet your school's needs.
- As a team you will decide how those changes are made and how your pupils can be involved with this.
- You will be supported in establishing a budget and finding a suitable contractor to undertake the work.
- You will receive training on how to use the new changes as well as how to maintain them.
- Finally, you can celebrate the changes made and start to think about what comes next!

## The project in more detail

This project is about creating nature-rich play spaces in your school grounds so that your pupils can have more opportunities for natural play. This means they can spend more time in nature and have more lessons outside of the classroom.

We have created Happy By Nature because we believe that school grounds, whether small or large, full of tarmac or with a large school field, are places where children get close to nature. They are places where children play with friends, build relationships with each other and the environment, and where they develop their interests and enthusiasms that can last a lifetime.

## Before you start on the project

Before you start you will be asked to complete a number of forms. This will include:

- An agreement between the school, WWF, and LtL outlining what you will receive as part of the project as well as your commitment to the different aspects of the project.
- Individual photographic permission forms for any child or adult who will be photographed (this will not exclude anyone from taking part in the project, just from being in photographs).
- Evidence of permission from the Head Teacher/Principal and the owner of the land to undertake the project. Further permission for the changes may also be required once plans have been created.



## Where are we now and where do we want to be?

Before getting started on the project you will be contacted by a member of the LtL team to make sure you understand how the project works. During your LtL Project Officer's first visit they will meet with those involved in leading the project. This might include the head teacher/principal, the member of staff leading the project, a governor and/or parent or carer, and ideally whoever manages the grounds maintenance.

#### At the first meeting:

- The school staff will talk about why you have chosen to take part in the project and your general goals.
- The project officer will take you through the different parts of the project and the support they can provide. They will also talk with you about the ways this process can link in with your curriculum and other needs.
- You will define who is taking part in the project: this could be a year group, members of specific interest group, or a group of specific pupils who will benefit most from the project. We also expect everyone in the school to have opportunities to actively learn about the project.
- You will take a tour of the grounds to begin to establish where you are now, what spaces you have and how they are used.
- Pupils will also take the LtL Project Officer on a tour of the grounds to establish what the pupils currently do outside and how they feel about their grounds.
- The project officer will observe play time if possible.
- You will be asked to undertake some consultation tasks before the next visit to help inform the design process.
- The school will establish who will be involved in the project and how.
- You will set dates for the workshops leading up to working with a designer.

#### On the second visit:

- Your LtL Project Officer will work with your pupils in different ways. This could include:
  - a whole school assembly
  - working with the key group within and/or outside of lessons
  - going outside to talk about your grounds
  - measuring spaces
  - understanding plans and scale
  - marking out where changes could take place
  - thinking about the nature-based play experiences they would like to have outside
  - learning about the nature you have or could have in your grounds and the needs of native wildlife
  - starting to create a vision statement for your project
- The project officer may also want to talk with staff to get their views on any issues and challenges, what is working well and their vision for the project if this has not been completed on the initial visit.
- Different elements of the consultation could be with different groups of pupils e.g. different classes in a year group.

The facilitator will take all the information gathered on the visit and create a report for the designer. The designer will then visit the school and discuss the information they have been given. They will also undertake a tour of the site to collect information to inform their design ideas, and also work with pupils to develop their first design phase.

## **How can we get there?**

Your designer will create a vision plan for you – this may include a plan of the site, sketches or photographs of their ideas and an estimate for the cost of the changes. You will be able to comment on the plans and there will be an opportunity for changes to be made.

When you have agreed on the plans the project team will work with you to create an action plan for the work needed - who is going to do what, timescales, additional resources required etc. This will include budgeting and getting quotes for the work to be carried out.

At this point you will send a project budget to LtL who will then release the funding to your school. You will then receive a maximum of £10,000 which you are responsible for spending under the terms of the grant.

## **Making the changes**

Ideally, we will use local contractors to carry out any work that the school community cannot do yourselves. If you are lucky, you may have in-house skills, and these will need to be checked for insurance, indemnity and ability to carry out the work just as any contractor would be. You may know people you have worked with before or be able to access local environmental charities.

The project team will identify where pupils, staff and volunteers can be involved in the changes and make sure this is planned into the work.

When the changes have been made, your staff will receive training on nature-based play and outdoor learning in order that the most is made of your new resources. We will also provide you examples of a play policy and a maintenance plan/guide for the new nature-based features in your grounds.

## **Where are we now?**

To conclude the project, we will look back at what you have done, celebrate the changes and start to think about what you could do next.

You will be asked to complete a short online questionnaire on completion of the project. We will also follow up the project one and two years after it has concluded and again you will be asked to complete some simple feedback. This is essential to help improve what we do and to secure funding for future projects. We very much appreciate you taking the time to help us with this vital part of our work.

## **Top tips for making the best of your school grounds great for nature-based play**

Your project officer will be key to making sure your project is a success. But you too need to commit time and energy to the project.

### **1) Your pupils should be at the heart of your project.**

- They are the experts on play and will benefit most from the changes, so engaging them throughout is fundamental.

### **2) Your senior staff must commit to the project.**

- The project will only succeed if everyone knows the senior team are right behind it.

### **3) Find out who else from your community can get involved.**

- Members of your local community may be able to provide funding, materials and equipment expertise or other support.

### **4) Make the most of what you already have.**

- Even if all you have is a bit of space, this is a great starting point for your nature-base play project!

# The project guide for grant schools

## Step by step

