

# PUPILS GET SET AND READY TO GROW

Sally Clifford reports on a new scheme helping people cultivate food

In order for the next generation to appreciate the importance of growing their own food, educating youngsters about the process is imperative.

It is also important to encourage them to take an interest in wildlife, to respect and appreciate the world around them.

Having recently taken part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch, youngsters at St Columba's School in Tong Street, Bradford, are already showing enthusiasm for all things bright and beautiful.

And their interest is growing, along with the flora and fauna within The Quad, the natural square in the centre of their school which they have spent the past three years developing.

Here pupils not only learn about growing their own, they can actually get their hands dirty! Within this natural haven, only a short way from one of the busiest corridors into Bradford, they can get busy in the greenhouse and build bug hotels.

There are raised beds for growing vegetables as well as fruit trees and a wildlife pond where the youngsters can go pond dipping and learn about its underwater inhabitants.

The introduction of a summer house has provided the youngsters, and teachers, with a sanctuary where they can fill in their spotting sheets when looking out for minibeasts. This will be particularly helpful for Year 5 students in their pollination studies.

Developed with the School Council, the project is an integral part of school life and pupils, and staff, recently had the opportunity to demonstrate its importance in an open day. Designed to Get Your Grown Up Growing, the aim of Tuesday's



ENTHUSIASTIC: Dillon Ryder, Cadence O'Neill and Bryan Jakobowski in the Quad Garden at St Columba's School



GREEN: Young gardeners at St Columba's School

event was for parents and carers to visit the project. "We want to extend the enthusiasm the children have got for gardening into homes and show them where they can plant," says teaching assistant, Linda Marshall.

Linda explains you don't need a garden. "You just need a pot and you can still plant a pot with your children because they want to protect the environment." "Parents know children are coming to school, they know they are learning maths and

things like that, but this can be something they can do as a family and to get people doing family things together is really important."

The Quad also fits in with the youngsters' curriculum studies as Linda explains. "Part of the curriculum in Key Stage one has been minibeasts and Year Five had been doing about allotments and growing.

"It is making sure our children are as happy and as healthy and as geared up for the future world as we can make them," she adds.

The Quad is a fine example of encouraging youngsters, and their families, to get growing and there are positive moves to get the people of Bradford to follow suit by becoming involved in an established growing project which is already expanding around the globe. Launched in Todmorden in 2007, Incredible Edible aims to bring communities together through food growing.

Living in Todmorden, Bradford Council worker Alison Bunn has seen the benefits first-hand and, following the recent launch event at the Victoria Hall, in Saltaire, is hoping to bring it to Bradford.

The idea for the launch was to introduce the scheme to the city and district and encourage groups and organisations to get involved by setting up, or developing, their own growing schemes.

"We want people to start doing it. Groups who are already involved to get more people involved," says Alison.

She says the aim is to get people out growing. "Getting people out and getting people growing is really beneficial in terms of healthy living, knowing where your food comes from and eating more healthily, but also beneficial because it brings communities together and that is the key ethos of Incredible Edible. Food is a sharing thing and the little motto of Incredible Edible is 'if you eat you're in' because everyone has a connection with food."

Alison says she believes the launch event demonstrated people's interest. "What it has definitely already done is started discussions. We have had emails from people who are saying 'we have this scrap of land what can we do if we want to grow something?'"

She says the scheme has to be community led and is now hoping to develop it throughout the city and district. "It needs individuals to say 'we would like to get involved in this.' But it is definitely something we will be taking forward."

● For more information about getting involved in the Incredible Edible scheme email [alison.bunn@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:alison.bunn@bradford.gov.uk)

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