

An Evaluation of the Norwood School Health and Wellbeing garden

July 2022

Summary:

Spring and summer 2022 has been a hugely successful season for the development of the Norwood School Wellbeing garden.

The garden was started in response to the mental and physical challenges students faced during confinement experienced in lockdowns in 2020/1 and a small group of dedicated student gardeners developed the garden in its first year.

2022 has witnessed a significant increase in the number of students participating in the garden events and enjoying the garden as a relaxing space. We generally have 15-20 students at our weekly club, we have also had workshops and community build sessions, subject lessons being taught in the garden, support for students with behavioural or wellbeing needs and students and staff simply spending time enjoying the space.

As the testimonials, photos and evidence below emphasise, The Norwood School Garden is becoming an important space for students to spend time outside, relax and be in contact with nature. The funding from the Norwood Forum and Lambeth Council has enabled the garden to develop. It has enabled young people to improve in their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Timeline of Events:

1st March – A group of 12 students completed an urban greening project in collaboration with the South London Botanical Society. They added planting to new flower beds installed on Norwood High Street.

2nd March – Weekly gardening club recommences: Students meet for an hour every Wednesday to plant, grow, look after the garden and spend time together outdoors at the end of the school day.

21st April – Interviewers for gardening post held and gardener Beatrice Dandy employed to work in the school

18th May – 20 Students attend the garden design workshop led by Poppy George and Beatrice Dandy. Students learn about aspects of garden design then work together to draw and discuss their own ideas for the future of the Norwood Garden (See appendix for samples of work produced.)

25th June – Community Work Day – 15 volunteers including students, parents and members of the Friend of Norwood work together to develop the garden following the ideas produced by students. Parents and students learn carpentry and raised bed making skills with Poppy George. During the day four new planters are created and planted, benches are installed and repaired and planting is developed. (See photos below.)

6th July – School Gardener begins weekly gardening support sessions for students during the school day. The aim of these sessions is to support students who need support with emotional, mental and physical health during the day. Students are supported in looking after the garden and have the opportunity to take plants home. I have received positive feedback from students and the SEN department on the value of this intervention.

6th July – Year 9 students complete a citizenship project in the school garden – planting a number of young trees.

7th July – LGBTQI+ Club visit the school garden to plant, water and tend the garden.

13th July – Photography Club in the garden. Students create artistic responses to the garden and complete a creative evaluation of the school garden creating responses to the question. How does the garden make you feel?

Throughout June and July – Students use the garden as a space for relaxation and taking a much needed time out during rehearsals and preparation for school summer shows. The year 12 theatre production uses planting from the school garden as part of its end of year show.

Overview of Garden users

Number of students who have attended Norwood Garden sessions	36 Students
Number of Garden users – including classes and clubs who have used the garden and students who have spent time in the garden	90 Students
Number of adults including teachers, parents and visitors	20 people
Total number of garden users	146 users

Additional information for regular garden users

EAL student – English as an additional language	11
Student on Free school meals	11
Students with medical needs	1
Student with special educational needs	6

Regular garden users according to school year

7	19
8	5
9	5
10/11	5
12/13	2

Evaluation of project:

During the garden design workshop a number of the students expressed an interest in responding to the garden creatively through photography. For this reason I set up a photography workshop in the final weeks of the summer so students could communicate their ideas about the garden through a visual medium.

As part of this session I asked the students to write on card an answer to the question 'How does the garden make you feel?' The photo portraits completed express the students' engagement with the garden really well.

A student has also written a piece for our school newspaper, The Norwood Voice, where he explains why the garden is an enjoyable place to spend time. Finally, I was interviewed by public health worker Latoya Richardson and this article was published in the Lambeth council magazine.

During the project I used the (S)WEMWBS mental wellbeing scale with students but found this was a less successful means of gathering evaluation data. Some students were unsure how the questions on mental wellbeing related directly to the garden and others found the document too formal. Generally students self-reported positive mental wellbeing with a wider range of response on questions 3 and 4. I plan to try this questionnaire again in the autumn term.

Question and number of student responses (S)WEMWBS

Question	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All the time
1. I've been feeling optimistic	0	0	5	2	1
2. I've been feeling useful	0	0	4	3	1
3. I've been feeling relaxed	0	2	2	4	0
4. I've been dealing with problems well	0	2	2	3	1
5. I've been thinking clearly	0	0	2	5	1
6. I've been feeling close to others	0	1	1	4	2
7. I've been able to make up my own mind	0	1	1	4	2

Financial report

Funding received from Norwood Forum	£4700
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Expenditures:

Materials	£881
Incredible Edible: consultancy and workshop	£600
Community Gardener	£1350
Total	£2831

Projected Expenditures Autumn 2022:

Materials	£600
Community Gardener	£1200
Total	£1800
Contingency	£69

Forthcoming events

The scope of the project has always been to continue with the garden into the autumn term which will give the opportunity to welcome new year 7 students into the garden. Events planned for the garden are as follows:

- Sept: A welcome back harvest event in the garden
- Sept: Welcoming new year 7s students to the garden
- Sept: Establishing a school environmental committee using students from gardening club
- Sept / Oct: Photography workshop in the garden with artist Lucia Pizzani
- Oct: Community tree planting day with Friends of Norwood
- Sept – Dec: Developing our behaviour and emotional support programme in the garden
- Sept – Dec: Increasing outdoor learning opportunities in the school.

Testimonials:

Poppy George – Coordinator Incredible Edible, Lambeth

It is clear to see that the grant from the Norwood Forum and Lambeth Public health has been of great benefit to students and teachers at the Norwood school, and therefore to the school as a whole.

IEL facilitated a co-design day, encouraging the pupils from the gardening club to share their ideas and co- create a design for the space. We also supported the community build day, supporting pupils, teachers and parents to build more raised beds together. This was a fantastically positive day, where new skills were learnt, people worked collaboratively and the garden was enhanced and transformed, building 2 new large raised beds, a new bed in the greenhouse for increased growing and 2 gabion benches, allowing pupils to sit and enjoy the tranquility of the garden.

The new gardener employed by the Norwood school with the help of IEL has been amazing at connecting with the children and is a very talented gardener, who is able to share her knowledge and skills in a clear and engaging way, creating a relaxed atmosphere in which the pupils can thrive.

The health and wellbeing garden at the Norwood School has demonstrated itself to be a really popular place amongst students, and is a very successful example of a community garden bringing all the health benefits of gardening, being outdoors and connecting to nature. It is an inclusive space that nurtures both people and the planet, as many of the pupils are also inspired to create more wildlife areas to support biodiversity in the school as a result of the project. I am looking forward to engaging more with the garden next term and to see it further grow and develop, and to witness the positive impact it is having on the school.

Harry Isitt – Teacher and Co-founder of The Norwood School Garden

"The gardening club has grown and thrived this year attracting loads of new members with sessions regularly well attended. We've doubled our bed capacity and have procured and erected a second hand greenhouse that has become the focal point of the club, allowing us to start earlier in the year with seed sowing and potting on etc. The children are relatively self-sufficient in the garden, carrying out tasks with light supervision of the staff and our fantastic gardener. They have all really enjoyed the opportunity to garden at school and the club is a prominent part of the extra-curricular offering at the school. It has also been used as a place to work with pupils with SEND or behavioural needs and we look forward to carrying on that work in the new academic year."

Appendix :

Evaluations:

How does the garden make you feel? Photo responses to the garden:



Responses 'Fresh', 'fresh in my mind', 'calm and happy', 'beautiful flowers', 'makes me smile', 'relaxed and calm.'

An article by Sebastian Gili Pizzani

School Garden - Norwood Voice

The Norwood School has a Garden! It's easy to miss but take a look next time you come through the front gates and on your left and you'll see a green, vibrant and relaxing space. Why is it important for the school to have a garden? Seb Gili Pizzani explains "I really enjoy gardening because whenever I feel annoyed or stressed then gardening refreshes my mind and makes me smile."

The garden was started by Mr Isitt, Mr Foster and Ms Fabian but much of the work has been done by students planting and looking after the crops. This means that the garden is a

community space where people have worked together. Seb says “I especially enjoy seeing and chatting to my friends in the garden and working with teachers.”

One of the rewards of the garden is being able to pick the food you have grown. “The most popular fruit in the garden are the strawberries. At the moment we are making a strawberry bed so that I can harvest and share these incredible fresh fruits.” The strawberries we grow at the Norwood School are as good as any you could buy in a supermarket and they are a lot more eco-friendly.

Seb sums up the reason for spending time in the garden like this. “Gardening is overall an amazing chance to discover more of nature's potential and to make new friends.

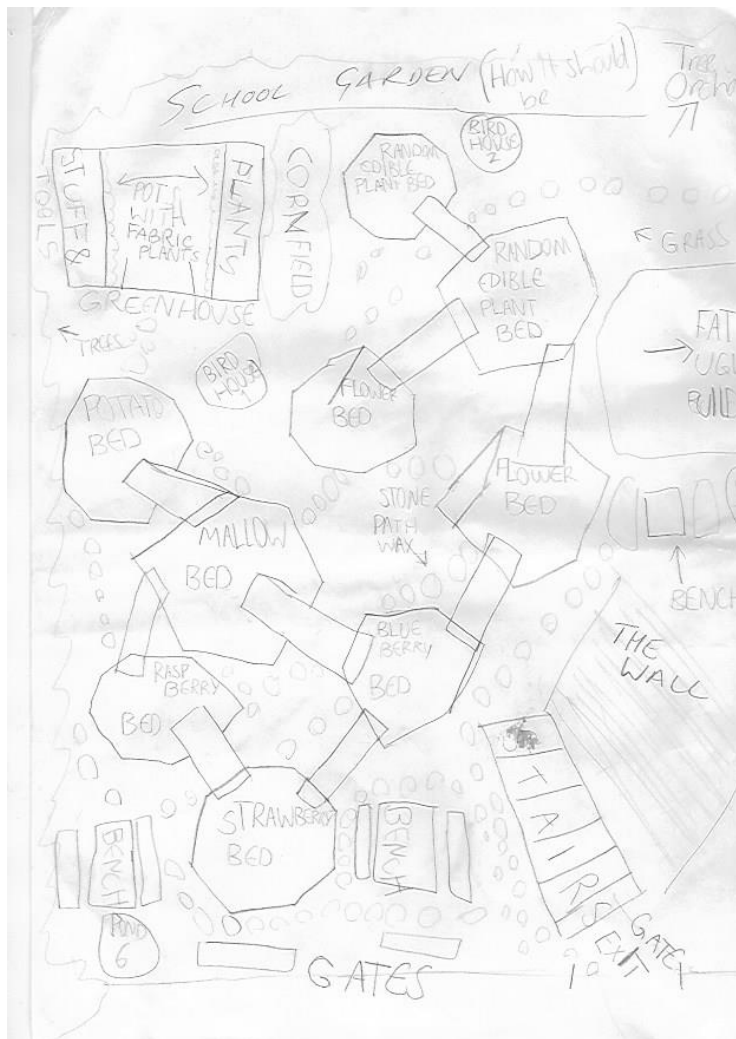
Our garden is going very well :) “Students are welcome to join us in the school garden on Wednesdays from 3-4pm. It’s a relaxing place to spend some time.

Designs for the garden produced by students during the co-design workshop June 2022:

Themes which came out of the workday which we are using in the garden are

- Mixing wildlife friendly planting with edibles
- Dedicating spaces to wildflowers and trees
- Creating different shaped planters and building in benches around the beds
- Creating a water space for wildlife.





Photos taken by students during the community work day - June 2022





Photos of the School Garden



Completing the community work day



Harvesting potatoes



Learning about garden tools



Tending the garden



Building new planters and benches during the community work day



Newly planted greenhouse raised beds



First session of gardening club - March 2022