



# Stonegate C of E Primary School

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## **Reporting on the grant from Sussex Lund**

The children, staff and parents of Stonegate have all been involved in developing the projects in and around the school grounds. These projects have aimed to encourage and preserve wildlife, plant species as well as enhancing the beauty of the local area.

### **Wild Flower Meadow**

The school enlisted the support of wild flower specialist Mike Mullis to provide support and advice on how to develop the area of our school field designated for the meadow. Parents were then enlisted to prepare the ground and following this, children from all classes were involved in planting the Weald Meadow seed mix, the single species native wild flower seed and the potted wild flower plants (Lesser Knapweed, Devils Bit Scabious and Betony). After the planting, this area has been roped off from the rest of the field to allow development of the seed during the Spring and Summer of 2017.

Mike Mullis will return regularly to the area to ensure that the meadow develops to its maximum potential, as well as supporting the children and staff in how to maintain the area and plant and insect identification.



**Total Cost:** Plants and seed £180, Posts and rope for the area £150, Hire of Machinery and preparation of ground £225 and support from Mike Mullis at £16 per hour.

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Website: [www.stonegateschool.org](http://www.stonegateschool.org)

## Living Willow Domes

There were two sites identified to support living willow structures, one on the school field as part of a memorial garden, the other within the school grounds to replace an area where a large oak tree had fallen the previous year.

The school enlisted the support of John Waller ([www.underwoodsman.co.uk](http://www.underwoodsman.co.uk)) to construct the domes and over 2 wet days they were masterfully erected. Children from the school had the opportunity to come out and discuss with John how to work with willow and the design process involved in making these structures.

Following the construction of the willow dome, the school caretaker and parents constructed the wooden border around the area and filled the space with woodchip to enhance the area further.

The structure found in the school grounds will be used to observe the beautiful landscape that surrounds the school ground as well as an area for quiet reading, reflection and for group story telling. This area is used every day by the children.



The dome in the memorial garden links all of the naturally occurring structures together, whilst at the same time providing children with an area to observe the diverse wildlife that inhabit this garden. The children use this area during playtimes and within the after school nature club.



**Total cost:** Cost of willow dome installation and materials £1,900, wood chip and fencing for completion of the area £75.

## Fruit trees

There was an area on the school field identified as perfect for the growing of native species of fruit trees. The school enlisted the support of Mark Piper from Sussex Fruit Trees to identify the best species for the area and then assist in the planting and maintenance of these trees. The following trees were planted: Little Pax, Red Falstaff, Scrumptious, Spartan, Sunset apples, Concorde pear and Guinevere plum. These trees were selected as their fruits ripen at times when children are at school and therefore providing them with the opportunity to enjoy eating them.

Groups of children were involved in the planting of the trees, during this time Mark told the children the methods for looking after these trees and the types of fruit they could expect in the future.



In addition to this, Mark planted Medana Tayberry, Loganberry and Navaho, Ouachita, Reuben blackberries to enhance the quality of the school fencing. They will also provide the children with first hand experiences to observe fruit growing and the identification of insects which interact with these species of plant.

Mark will return at regular periods to provide support and maintenance of the trees and berry plants.

**Total cost:** Work completed by Mark, purchase of trees and labour £678.70 and further support from Mark estimated at £15 per hour.

## **Other purchases**

As part of the project there was also the purchase of bird, bat and owl boxes from the RSPB, which have been installed within the school grounds and on the school field. The school has also purchased a number of bird feeding trays which have been installed within the school garden and as part of the memorial garden. It is hoped that by using a bird camera (Bird Cam Pro) that the children will have the opportunity to identify the species of birds who visit the school. There has been a weekly nature club developed to observe the impact of the bird, owl and bat boxes.

**Total Cost:** Bat boxes £59.98, Barn Owl boxes £299.98, Bird boxes £53.97, Bird feeders £75.69 and bird camera £219.95.

## **Reflection**

The project, in essence, followed the original plan as set out in the Grant application. Additional advice on the overall aims of the Lund and the grant was acquired by the new Headteacher from Matt Pitts as the project was initially designed before the start of the Headteacher's time.

Installation of a new security fence meant that the hedging for one side of the school was redeveloped into plants and fruit producing scrubs to break up the lines of this wooden fence. It was the aim to use these scrubs to encourage wildlife to this area in addition to providing observation opportunities for fruit growth.

Using specialists to complete the work was a good model for designing a project in a school. These specialists worked excellently with the children and gave them a real insight into the work that was being completed. The children benefitted from these learning opportunities. The only downside of this is fitting the project work into the work schedule of these specialists and this can cause the project to lose its flow and make the work very stop, start. In the future we would aim to plan a month for the project to occur and build it into our learning journeys to ensure the maximum learning opportunities can be gained from these activities.

The project has been publicised within the school's newsletters and within the local press (News and Views) to inform parents and the local community of our work. The Lund grant has allowed staff, parents and pupils to work together on a number of projects and has been great for reciprocal learning. Visitors to the school are taken to these areas by the children who describe what the thinking behind the area is and the reasons why it is important to converse the High Weald. The project has enhanced the school's gardening club, developed an after school nature club and has provided the springboard for the school to take part in the John Muir Award and to start the training to become a Forest School.

We had no problems with the Grant Process and were happy with the application process and the way we obtained the money. It would however be really interested to see the development of other projects through a more designated webpage, forum or blog. By doing this then additional specialists could be sought and a dialogue relating to these wonderful projects could be established; maybe further learning opportunities for us, as a school, could occur.

We would like to be involved in accessing future grants or being part of future projects designed for the conservation of the High Weald.

Jonathan Elms, Headteacher.