

Catholic Schools Eco-Newsletter No.18

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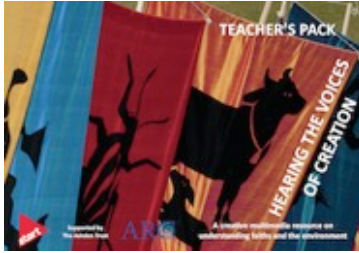
Welcome to our early spring newsletter. Firstly, a huge thank you to all the schools that responded to our call for articles. We have been truly overwhelmed – not only by the volume of responses (which is the best ever) - but by the immense variety of activities which your schools and students are involved in, from eco blogging, planting pumpkins and sunflowers in newly-created school gardens, green flag awards, school twinning and lessons in bushcraft... By telling us about your ideas you are – you might like to know – giving Muslim, Sikh and Hindu as well as Christian schools as far away as India, the Philippines and Kenya ideas about starting their own environmental activities and outreach. One of the things they get from this newsletter and all your ideas is the sense of wanting to present the environment, nature and Creation as something to protect because it is beautiful and joyful and not just because it is serious and threatened.

There is so much happening that we are going to do a later spring newsletter just after half term, and in time to help planning for Climate Challenge and World Environment Day. Next time we will share the inspiring ideas from All Hallows School in Somerset on how to do a fabulous eco timetable crash and their plans for the whole school to take part in a national eco-challenge for a full day in Climate Change Week March 21-27. We will also share news of the blessing of a lime tree, Bristol Zoo's endangered species programme; and have extra articles on bush craft training and butterfly gardens.

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1. Hearing the Voices of Creation: a free RE Teachers Pack



Last year ARC produced a DVD Teachers Pack to help RE teachers at key stage 3 to stimulate pupils' imaginative engagement with faiths and the environment through narrative, drama and music. It celebrates the ways in which we have allowed other parts of nature to speak for themselves. There are four lessons based around Creation, Crisis, Restoring the Balance and Images of the Future.

It uses footage from ARC's *Hearing the Voices of Creation* celebration at Windsor Castle in November 2009, with full gospel choir, Indian classical dancers, Sikh musicians, a Tibetan throat singer, and an important message. Among the poems and stories are *The Story of the Monkey King* (Buddhism) and *The Story of the Tree* (Christianity). Lesson 4 is based around St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* – it appears as a gospel number, and when it was performed at Windsor even the soldiers, in their full bright uniform could be seen tapping their feet. It was launched at Clarence House and sponsored by the Ashden Trust.

Feedback has been gratifyingly positive:

1. *'I hereby wish to thank you for the DVD which arrived today. Many thanks to you and your organization. It will be of great use to me and the community.'*
2. *'I've had a look at the resource myself and thought it was really great - the interactive activity ideas in particular. I run quite a lot of training for teachers and PGCE groups and quite often they struggle to find ways to connect with stories beyond just reading and circle time.'*
3. *'The ideas are great and we would like to embed these ideas'*
4. *'Thank you for the packs. I do know that your resources were appreciated as they were made available during the RE Teacher weekend conference'*
5. *'Thank you for this resource. It is extremely useful to have Creation accounts from different religions collated together in one place in a way that enables comparison and enquiry.'*
6. *'...[I] can see the potential of wonderful resource with a number of units - both at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. We especially like the attention to two faiths and comparing in the one lesson - very useful...Many thanks - the resource is appreciated, and WILL be used in Environment module KS4, Human and Animal Rights with year 8 summer term at KS3, Buddhism with year 9 - to be used before Christmas; and might write into Hinduism with year 7 for next year.'*
7. *'We will be reviewing the pack for Green Christian magazine... We will certainly send you a copy when it is ready.'*

We still have a few left, and they are free, so if you (or any other school you are in contact with) haven't yet received one, please email Pippa Moss at arcworld@arcworld.org. It's for Europe Region so sadly the DVDs don't travel overseas. If you have received it, do send your feedback – it all helps!

2. St Augustine's School, Solihull: eco-twinning with Tanzania

We were recently awarded our second green flag for our eco schools activities. In the past four years, we have developed strong links with Loolera Primary School in Tanzania through the Medical Missionaries of Mary who worked in the local area for many years.

We changed our curriculum and adopted a cross curricular approach to teaching. Each year group has a link to an eco schools topic. Our walking bus is going from strength to strength. Putting messages in the Parish newsletter enhances links with the wider community and has reaped rewards in parent (and indeed grandparent) helpers. Plants have been donated to the school via the parish newsletter and we have a flourishing gardening club. The parish has also sent in their vouchers from various supermarkets enabling us to buy gardening equipment and a greenhouse.

We have tried throughout the past four years to inform as many people as we can of our recycling, re-using and reducing activities. As a consequence, we have benefitted from vouchers, equipment, volunteers for the walking bus etc. Along with a change in our curriculum, we feel we are developing stewards of God's wonderful creation for the future.

Submitted by Karen Doherty.

3. Ickleveggie eco blog: St John of Beverley RC Primary, Yorkshire

ickleveggies

This is the blog site for all the growing and Eco-School activities at St John of Beverley RC Primary

Assistant Head, Jonathan Roe has been in touch to tell us about the school's initiative to start an eco blog, which can be done without any charges, and which helps students learn about technology, communications AND growing ickle veggies. With thanks to Jonathan and students Alice O'Hanlon and Eva Leak:

"Over the last few years we have become a keen growing school. We've teamed up with the RHS and their Benchmark Scheme and have achieved Level 4. We've developed veggie gardens and a wildlife garden that has been awarded a Big

Wildlife Garden Green Award, and we have entered Yorkshire in Bloom and this year won a gold medal. We have recently been re-awarded our Eco-Schools Green flag. All of these partnership opportunities require us to provide evidence of what we do, the activities that children get involved with, the plants that we grow, the special events that parents get involved in.

Creating a record of what we do has always been problematic until we hit on the idea of blogging and we created www.ickleveggies.blogspot.com "Ickleveggies" is an opportunity for children to record all their gardening and eco information. We can record all the best gardening moments we have had and enjoyed. Recent blogs have included:

- Children writing about harvesting the last of the winter's parsnips for the school kitchen and the Cookery Club.
- A picture from a parent showing the pumpkin carving they did with pumpkins grown at school.
- A link to the Conservation Foundation showing the elm tree we have planted at school from disease-resistant cuttings. (See examples below)

Alongside these newsy items children keep an annual record of what we grow in each bed in the veggie garden. This allows us to keep up to plan our planting and keep an eye on which plants do well in each bed. Children also keep minutes of our Eco-Club meeting and via a link to www.scribd.com we can upload documents such as our Eco-Schools Action Plan and our Eco Code.

Of course there are wonderful opportunities for fresh learning along the way. Ickleveggies helps us with our ICT and media skills, from taking good photos, to uploading them, to report-writing and publishing new posts. Ickleveggies links gardening with ICT and English. Blogging gives the children a genuine opportunity to write for a purpose. Growing plants doesn't always appeal to everyone, but by incorporating new technologies into the growing activities at school more children have been drawn into the world of horticulture.

www.ickleveggies.blogspot.com
www.stjohnofbeverleyrcprimary.org.uk/

Class 6 Getting Mucky



Yesterday Class 6 went into the garden and tidied it up. Some of us went around the school grounds litter picking. A couple of us went and refilled our pond (we discovered that there was a leak in the pond). Meanwhile some of us tidied up the veggie beds that had a lot of weeds in. After some of us

dug up the veggie beds to soften them up from the cold winter. Mr. Roe and some others tidied up the shed. Some of us made a sign for the fruit waste bin, stuck it on and emptied it in the compost bin. We also took the seed heads from the artichoke plant and hug them up for the birds in the wildlife area.

Pumpkins from pumpkins from pumpkins ...



Today was our Harvest Celebration. Afterwards we had a sale of produce. The massive pumpkins were very popular and these alone raised £68 towards a solar water pump for an African village. The pumpkins were grown from seed from one of last year's pumpkins bought by Mrs. Noyes. She brought back seed for us to grow this year's crop. Mrs. Noyes (pictured) bought two pumpkins herself!

New Club Members



This term we have got a new group of gardeners; these members will carry on until the end of November. Today we harvested our first pepper along with courgettes, tomatoes, and beans, and cleared out and replanted our pots on the ramp. The new gardening club members are Alice, Lily, Peter, Eva, Monica, Francesca, Aidan, Kelsey, Ryhannan”.

4. Chris Packham visits English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Worthing

Submitted by Year 5 students: Dom and Josh:

Chris Packham came to English Martyrs School. He started as a photographer and moved onto the TV shows, Spring Watch and Autumn Watch. An assembly was held in the School Hall first thing in the morning where Mrs Fordham, Year One teacher and the leader of the Eco Council, introduced him. It was a very exciting event and we were lucky as we were one of only three schools which he visited. Chris Packham tries to get the world interested in wildlife. He has many pets including snakes, spiders, rats and dogs. He has great knowledge of wildlife, estimating that there are 10 million animals

in the world about 1 million beetles and that there are approximately 2,600 types of snakes.

Chris Packham has been passionate about wildlife and nature since he was a child, where he used to spend most of his time outside finding various animals and taking them home. In his house he keeps a spider in a jar, on his windowsill and he doesn't like wild animals in his house. We interviewed a year 3 boy who had spoken to Mr Packham in person. He told us he helped them to make bird feeders out of recycled bottles and sticks. He recommended www.natureadventureclub.co.uk and www.kidsclosetonature.co.uk. His message to young people was to spend more time outside and to get closer to nature and to do whatever you can to help save endangered species such as tigers.

5. Every Child of God Matters Everywhere



Last time we promised to tell you about a Church of England guide produced by the Bradford and Ripon & Leeds Diocesan Education Team called **Every Child of God Matters Everywhere: Global Education in Church Schools**.

It is an inspiring guide, which explores the unique roles of faith schools, and offers a change in perspective. For example: rather than questioning how to fit in issues such as global poverty and injustice with the Christian ethos, the guide asks: how can global education NOT be deep at the heart of all they do in church schools?

The guide makes a link between church schools, the community and local churches. It suggests that in working together on global issues we can all benefit. Do download it and read it, but if you don't have time for that, just read these two quotations:

*We plant seeds that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.*
From **The Violence of Love**, Archbishop Oscar Romero

Dear Teachers:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness. Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become more human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, or educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human. Haim G. Ginott

<http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/everychildofgodmatters.pdf>

Until after half term...

Victoria Finlay, Communications Director (ARC) and
Nicki McHugh, Water Schools Programme Manager

PS If you'd like to stop receiving this letter then let us know, or – much more encouraging for us – if you think there's anyone who'd like to hear these stories, and contribute, then ask them to register and we'll add them to the list.

PPS you can also read this on a pdf from our website, where you can also catch up with our archive. <http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=349>