

## Understanding life experiences through nature at Kender Primary School

Kender Primary School is in a densely populated urban area of Lewisham in South London. With many of their children from refugee or migrant families, they've been using the outdoor spaces to talk about their life experiences in relation to the movement of peoples and wildlife.

Over the years, Kender Primary have worked hard to enhance their site. They've planted trees for shade on their playground and to capture pollutants from vehicle emissions – making their site safer and healthier for the staff and children and encouraging birds like jays, sparrowhawks and woodpeckers.

The Department for Education has [awarded more than £12 million in grant funding](#) to eligible settings through the Nature Park programme, and Kender Primary School are one of the schools that took up this opportunity to expand their work further with a grant.

The school have built a pond, smaller water features and rockeries throughout their school site. They've also created habitats to support the movement of species and to help the children understand their own life experiences.

*"Our local community is ethnically diverse and many of our families are migrants or refugees, so we use our outdoor spaces to talk about their life experiences in relation to the movement of peoples and wildlife. We've installed birdboxes for swifts, which migrate annually to the UK from Africa, and a 'migrant corridor' in our boundary wall to allow amphibians to move between our new pond and the community garden pond at the back of the school. The children can't wait until the spring, when we'll be pond dipping for frogs and newts, seeing all the different kinds of plants blossoming in our rockeries and looking forward to the swifts arriving in the summer."*

Alice Luxmoore, School Business Manager

Through a summer project focussing on sustainability, Kender involved the whole school. All year groups generated ideas for increasing biodiversity, the design of the school grounds and protecting wildlife habitats.

Through habitat mapping and creating new habitats, Kender finding that Nature Park activities line up well with the science and DT curriculum, and pupils can work with the data they generate through Maths. The school have also created a reading bower – a swing under a trellis which has space for four children to sit in – and planted a wildflower meadow next to it, to encourage pupils to research and write about the plants and animals they see. This enriches the school's 'Writing for Pleasure' programme where children will be writing development reports and letters asking for assistance to the school's 'Kender Times'.

Of course, with any project there are always some obstacles. The school are currently having some issues with three half barrels they bought for a group of miniature ponds – they contain residue of the whiskey they used to hold and so the school are having to regularly flush these out to clean it out. As the school says, no one wants a fermented pond!

Kender are excited about what's ahead:

*“We want our space to be full of dragonflies! We’re also really hoping that we can encourage swifts onto our site. They are such a resonant symbol of the journeys some of our children have undergone to come to a Borough of Sanctuary. Our next grant bid is for money to support a Gardening Project for our refugee families, growing food from their home countries to build stronger links within our community. We want more biodiversity on our school site and to celebrate the diversity of our community.”*

Alice Luxmoore, School Business Manager









