

Buds

Grow in the garden

Social & Therapeutic Horticulture Programme.

St. Matthew’s COE Primary School, Surbiton.

Aims of the programme

- To support improved wellbeing, anxiety, behaviour and attendance.
- To provide a positive social environment.
- To encourage independence and emotional regulation.
- To encourage responsibility and self confidence.
- To support reduced dysregulation due to a lower demand environment.
- To create opportunities for language and communication development and turn taking provision.

Buds delivers a programme of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH), which is the use of plants and gardening to improve a child's physical, mental and social health.

The three mechanisms used to deliver these improvements are: the natural environment, the social environment, and meaningful occupation.



Afternoon sessions

These sessions consist of four groups of 6 or 7 children and a TA on both Weds and Thurs. Various processes and strategies have been introduced:

- A simple **code of conduct** has been created to ensure the children know the boundaries within the allotment. This supports a positive environment where everyone feels physically and emotionally safe.

- There is a clear start, defined activity, and time allocated at the end of each session for a concise reiteration of what we have achieved. This has been devised to create an **expected and familiar rhythm** for all who attend.

- **Group cohesion and social inclusion** is encouraged within these groups. An active listening exercise is used to begin each session where we get to know each other better.

- The children are supported to be as **self-determining** as possible within the activity parameters, and they have been encouraged to be **democratic** through their group selection of team names.





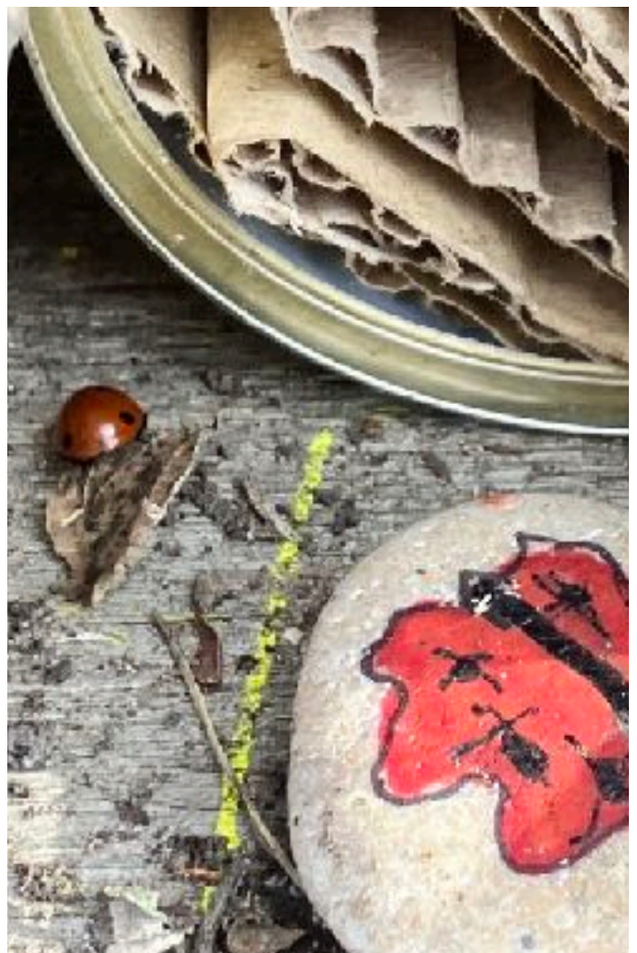
Afternoon session activities

This Autumn half term, the children have taken part in a variety of seasonal activities at the allotment. These form the ‘meaningful activity’ mechanism of the STH programme.

Each activity can deliver a variety of different benefits to different children. These can include:

- Supported feelings of self-identity and agency.
- New friendships and a sense of belonging.
- Increased feelings of hope.
- Time and space to re-regulate emotions.
- Development of fine motor skills and the opportunity to try out new physical abilities.
- Development of communication skills, interpersonal skills and language.
- Increased affinity with nature and a sense of awe.
- New interests and hobbies.







Afternoon session activities

The children have participated in seven weeks of activities this half term including:

- **Scale and time.** As an introduction to '*Buds*' and the idea of growing a variety of things, we planted really slow growing (but ultimately huge) conker trees and very quick growing (but teeny, tiny) cress heads. The children were able to practice motor skills and volume measuring skills.

- **Beautiful bulb bubble bath.** This was a team activity. We worked together to plant our up-cycled bath tub with highly scented and frothy flowering hyacinth bulbs. We then made a fun sparkly shower head. We will look forward to enjoying this much needed sensory display in spring after the long winter.

- **Free strawberries.** The children planted the new strawberry bed with propagated runners. We talked about how it is possible to create plants for free and use supermarket coffee grounds waste as free fertiliser. We then learned that insects pollinate the flowers for free, which then gives us fruit. We also talked about the seasonality of different foods, as many children can be very disconnected from where their food comes from and when certain foods are ripe.

- **Planting hope.** Daffodil bulbs were planted in pots along with written happy thoughts and drawings on pieces of paper. The children thought this was fun. We talked about our favourite seasons, and feelings of happiness and hope.







- **Alliums for dinner.** We smelled some crushed garlic and onions and chatted about which savoury foods we liked most. We planted garlic and onion sets and considered how we will need to be patient for 8 months until we can harvest them to cook delicious food with. The children were also able to practice their measuring skills.

- **Big bug hotel.** We discussed our favourite insects and our favourite cosy places in which we like to snuggle. We explored what different insects need to over-winter. We then made a giant, cosy bug hotel. By imagining their own cosy places and then using their creativity to make cosy places for their insects, the children were developing their affinity for nature and the idea that they can care for it.

- **Pea shooting.** We played with language, and our understanding of the alphabet, and named all the things in nature that we could think of beginning with the letter ‘P’ (It’s actually quite tricky). We then sowed pea seeds in recycled pots to grow tasty windowsill pea shoots at home. Window sill gardening is an accessible activity for everyone, regardless of their socio and economic demographic. This activity enabled the children to proudly take a piece of the allotment home with them, where they can then learn to care for it independently.

- **Play time.** We played lots of nature-based games in the sessions including, ‘Pea shooter football’ and ‘Bugs in a jar’. These games reaffirm the session activities and support the children in their ability to take turns.





Morning drop-in activities and in-lesson activities

The mornings are utilised for general maintenance of the plot (jobs that aren't suitable for the children) and preparing activities for the afternoon.

Individual children (with or without teaching assistants) who are **not in class** or those who are on a **movement break** are also welcome to drop-in during this time and engage in an activity. Teachers can also bring their **whole class** to the allotment and use the activities and growing space to **support their lessons.**

This offering has proved to be very popular this half-term and many children have visited. Activities have included:

- Sowing rainbow chard and radish seeds
- Harvesting potatoes for 'Song and Soup'
- Pricking out and potting on wallflower seedlings
- Reception classes often visit with their teachers as part of their lessons.









Lunchtime open allotment

The allotment open for the children to enjoy on Weds and Thurs lunchtimes. Many children enjoy looking round, watering and taking part in activities:

- Sowing wallflowers, eryngium and honesty for over wintering and propagating new plants from the herb bed.
- Making hop-vine wreaths, crowns and wands.
- Picking and eating a lot of tomatoes, radishes and cucamelons.
- Exploring the allotment's many mini-beasts and adding more tins to the giant bug hotel.
- Enjoying the sensory plants such as: the soft and furry lamb's ears, strong smelling curry plants and super tasty garlic chives.
- Sowing broad beans.

























