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**GROWING TOGETHER FOR SCHOOLS 2017**

Name of Entry **TWEEDMOUTH WEST FIRST SCHOOL**

Contact & Role Mrs Anne Robertson

Brief description: Tweedmouth West First School is a Forest School with an extensive school field which is also the outdoor learning area, with a productive allotment, fruit trees, many wildlife areas, a firepit and wooden shelters, and established trees.

 **AREAS OF ASSESSMENT LEVEL ACHIEVED**

 **Educational value Gold**

 Involvement of students and/or carers in design, growing and maintenance.

Contribution to students’ understanding of plants and their uses.

Contribution to the students’ development..

Use of horticulture in the curriculum.

**Horticultural quality Gold**

 Appropriate choice of plants

Appearance, quality and condition of plants

Maintenance – weeding, deadheading etc.

**Environmental understanding Gold**

 Sustainability

Wildlife consideration

Awareness of the environment

**AWARD GOLD and Runner Up**

**ASSESSOR'S COMMENTS:**

**Educational Value**

The whole ethos of Tweedsmouth School is based on being a Forest School, and this is evident in everything that I was told about and shown during my visit. The members of the gardening club and Mrs Robertson gave me an enthusiastic and varied tour of the allotment and all the wildlife areas in the grounds.

The children showed good knowledge of what they were growing in the vegetable beds and the fruit bushes, and how the produce would be used. They were absorbed in showing me every part of the grounds, and are obviously very proud of their school and what they are learning.

The school field is used as an outdoor classroom for a great part of the curriculum for all ages. It underpins the pupils understanding of their environment.

**Horticultural Quality**

The allotments have been refurbished with the recent donation of sturdy new raised beds which will become the responsibility of each of the year groups. Currently they are planted up with a good selection of vegetables. They were well maintained and thriving, and the gardening group had ensured that there were few weeds in sight. The whole allotment garden looks very well managed, with good bark paths and well maintained fencing around the greenhouse and neighbouring houses. Recycled containers and tyres are planted up with potatoes, herbs and annuals.

The trees and shrubs in many of the wildlife areas, which had become overgrown and too large in places, have been pruned and the children appreciate the effect that this has had on the regeneration of these spaces.

**Environmental Understanding**

As Tweedsmouth West First School is a Forest School, understanding of the environment is a fundamental part of the childrens' education and development. On a practical level, this is displayed at various locations around the gardens. Recycling and care of their immediate environment is evident.

The four newly constructed compost bins at the allotment will be a great asset, and the children understood about the cycle for creating compost and its importance in cultivation. The use of recycled materials is encouraged throughout the grounds, and I liked the newly constructed wooden shelters around the firepit.

The whole area of the grounds can only be described as wildlife friendly, and the children are encouraged to observe what is attracted to the wild areas.

There are birdboxes waiting to be placed in suitable locations, but as the bees are using them currently they are serving a wildlife purpose, though perhaps not what they were intended for originally!

I was very impressed by all the evidence that I saw of how the school is based on eco-awareness, teaching the children to appreciate their environment, and their personal responsibilities for it, in a magical location.

**Eileen Burn**

**Assessor**

**4/6/17**