

WWF SCHOOLS' CASE STUDIES SERIES

Working towards Education for Sustainable Development

Reading between the lines

Education for Sustainable Development and the National Literacy Strategy¹

"Education for sustainable development is such an integral part of the school: it permeates everything I know and teach, and makes it both relevant and exciting." *Teacher*

"ESD within the school has heightened my awareness of these issues." *Teacher*

"I can use the things I have found out about when I am older." *Pupil, aged 7*

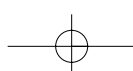
As teachers' workloads and curriculum structures change, it is all too easy to miss the implications of the way we present information to children. Staff may feel they have little choice about what they teach, but they do have a choice about which materials they use. At Farnborough Grange Nursery/Infant and Early Years Centre we have found it can be liberating for pupils and teachers to link literacy with the wider determinants of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

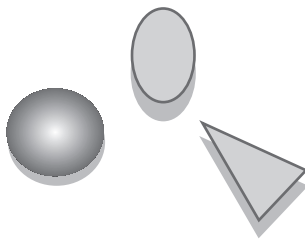
As individuals, children learn in different ways: they are also affected by their stage of development. Early language and literacy depends a great deal upon the motivation to communicate verbally – the foundation for all future literacy success. Challenging, practical, active involvement in all aspects of the English curriculum cannot be replaced by sterile, unengaging material. To be absorbed in the day-to-day activities of school and taught by a teacher with high expectations of standards and life-long learning can be a strong indicator for social inclusion and mental health.

Links to ESD

Educating through the study and experience of the school environment and community can encompass all learning styles and subjects. All learners encounter experiences to which they can relate. ESD can include a wide range of formal and informal activities and situations, as well as contributing to the broad and balanced curriculum which schools are required to provide.

¹ In 1998, the Government introduced the National Literacy Strategy for primary schools in England and Wales. It sets a national target for literacy, with the aim of improving the teaching of literacy in the classroom and the management of literacy at school level.





At Farnborough Grange, our children are motivated to come to school and to find out more about the things that interest them. They develop positive and sensitive attitudes through direct experience and exploration of more abstract ideas. ESD gives them many opportunities to reflect upon and express views and ideas. It also encourages debating skills, such as forming reasoned opinion and developing respect and tolerance of the attitudes, beliefs and opinions of others.



Taking a picnic and letters to elders at the local day care centre.

Through the continuing development of ESD within the curriculum, and effective partnerships with other organisations, institutions and the community, we can undertake exciting new projects and make a difference both to the children and their families – now and in the future.

What's this got to do with Education for Sustainable Development?

Skills

- critical thinking
- problem solving
- reasoned debate; the ability to argue effectively
- creativity; an ability to envision alternatives.

Knowledge and understanding

- how natural processes work
- globalisation and interdependence: how pupils' own lives and actions connect with the lives and actions of others – locally, nationally and globally; past, present and future
- what is involved in different methods of providing for human needs and wants (energy, raw materials, human input, environmental impact).

Values and attitudes

- a commitment to the well-being of all living things
- value and respect for diversity
- a commitment to social justice and equity
- empathy and awareness of the points of view of others
- an understanding of the place of individual and collective rights and responsibilities.

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Making a start

As part of the National Literacy Project we have benefited from having worked with the framework for three years². As a result, we have had time to gain experience and the flexibility to develop and adapt it for the benefit of the children. Initially, we worked with age related texts and focused on developing a basic understanding of the framework – vital ground work – before creating a tailor-made scheme of work for the school. We very quickly realised that the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) could become ‘death by worksheet’ and so, as a whole staff, we decided that the NLS must be developed both to reflect our school ethos and to make the most of the literacy hour. The framework needed to incorporate aspects of ESD; be cross-curricular; address aspects of PSHE and build on good Early Years practice. The ESD and PSHE aspects needed to be incorporated within planning and schemes of work rather than being ‘bolted on’ – something that is now emphasised in the new curriculum.

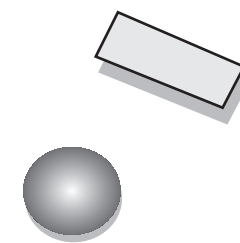
What has worked for us – our approach

The framework offers many opportunities for working with a wide range of texts focusing on various aspects of ESD: stories and poems from different cultures; traditional rhymes and stories; texts set in familiar settings; information texts and instructional texts. We have found these types of resources stimulate children’s interest in the wider world as well as their own community.

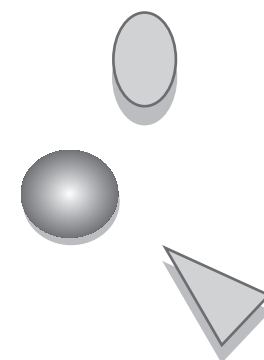
We have also used resources such as magazines, newspaper articles, atlases, gardening books, dictionaries, song books, raps, rules, instructions, diagrams, labels, signs, posters, letters, articles, packaging and adverts.

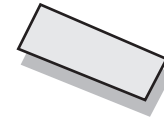
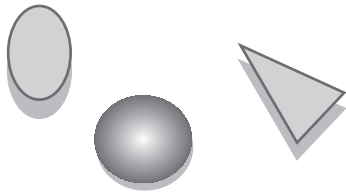
Much ESD knowledge can be acquired through the use of information texts, by researching topics such as: natural processes; human needs; the children’s own lives and the lives of others, and the inter-connectedness of humanity. Within the framework there is also an emphasis on questioning, which can be developed through information texts with children generating their own questions as well as finding answers to set questions about a theme or topic.

² The National Literacy Project (the forerunner of the Strategy) was run in eighteen LEAs on a pilot basis from 1996 to 1998. The Framework for Teaching sets out termly teaching objectives from Reception to Year 6. It is intended as a working document for classroom teachers, and sets out a precise strategy enabling them to plan for literacy provision on a termly and weekly basis.



**Stories from
different cultures
introduce
children to a
wider view of
the world and
an awareness
of others.**





Carefully chosen resources have enabled the teachers to examine many ESD values and attitudes through texts: the well-being of living things; viewpoints of others; social justice; rights and responsibilities. The resources have been chosen and planned into the whole school topic framework.

They may be used to emphasise events in stories, counting rhymes and poems. Traditional stories and rhymes, folklore and customs provide children with an insight into the past; begin to link their lives with the past, and examine change. They can build up a picture of what everyday life was like and how it has changed.



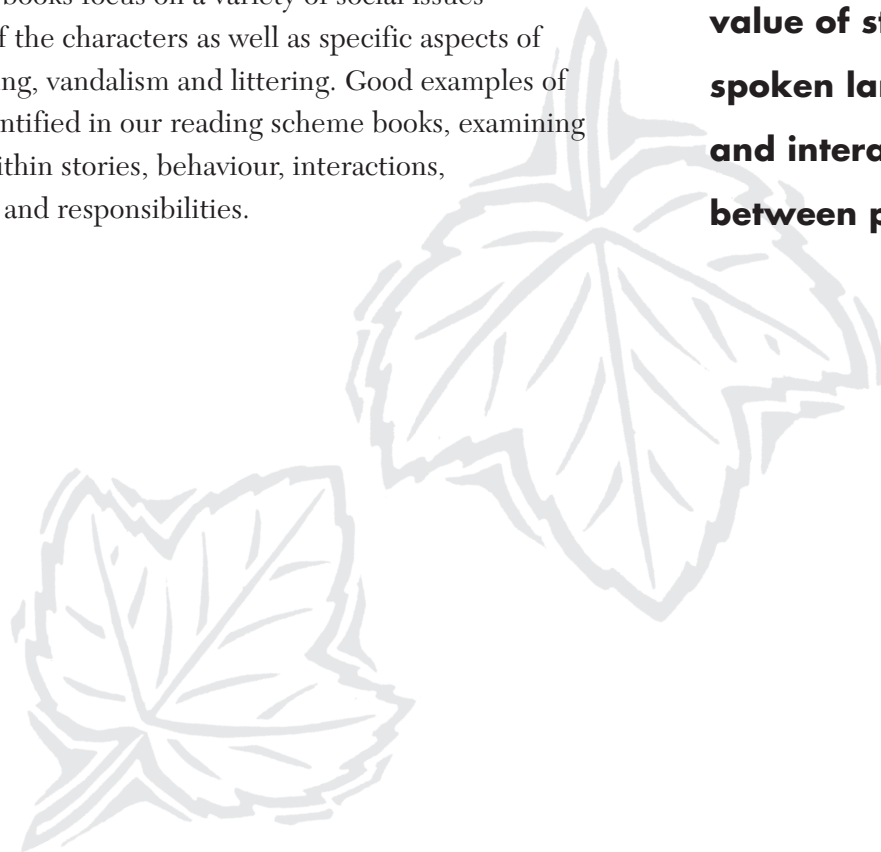
Quality 'story time'...

Comparing stories from other cultures gives an insight into the needs of people and standards of living. Fables provide children with moral issues to be examined and investigated, which relate to their lives.

Equal opportunity focused texts emphasise the rights of people and human justice. Stories can also provide information about alternative lifestyles in relation to gender, religion and beliefs, introducing them to an awareness of other people's views and opinions, which can be discussed, acted out and debated.

Many stories and picture books focus on a variety of social issues through the interaction of the characters as well as specific aspects of citizenship, such as bullying, vandalism and littering. Good examples of citizenship have been identified in our reading scheme books, examining character relationships within stories, behaviour, interactions, community, social justice and responsibilities.

Children develop an understanding of storytelling and the oral traditional value of stories, spoken language and interaction between people.



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Here are some of the book resources we found useful

Books focusing on the natural environment

A butterfly is born, Melvin Berger, Newbridge
Animals and their babies, Melvin Berger, Newbridge
Growing with trees, Poetry Anthology, Richmond Publishing
Investigating fungi, Gwen Pascoe, Era Publications
*Life cycle series – From egg to chicken; From tadpole to frog;
From seed to flower; From caterpillar to butterfly*; Franklin Watts
Life in a pond, Liza Trunbauer, Newbridge
Life in a tree, Melvin Berger, Newbridge
Minibeast encyclopaedia, Monica Hughes, Heinemann
Nature detectives, Lynette Evans,
Shortlands Publications Ltd
Outdoor poems, Wendy Body, Pelican
Seeds get around, Nancy White, Newbridge
Weather, sun and us, Jillian Powell, Belitha Press



**Showing off produce
from our class gardens.**

Books focusing on environmental issues

Consumer guide to toys, Sue Mahoney, Era Publications (consumerism)
Extinction is forever, Graham Meadows, Shortland Publications Ltd
(animal conservation)
Green island, Roderick Hunt, OUP (pollution)
How we use electricity, Natalie Lunis, Newbridge (energy)
Issues, Rodney Martin, Era Publications
Save our Earth, Ron Bacon, Era Publications
(conservation and pollution)
The sun, Ron Bacon, Shortland Publications Ltd (energy, solar power)
What is it like to be... series, Belitha Press
(viewpoints of animals, survival, danger, life processes, conservation)

Books focusing on citizenship and human lives

- A country far away*, Nigel Gray, Anderson Press
(two parallel stories, comparing cultural differences, lifestyles)
- Arthur*, Armand Graham, Puffin (individualism)
- Emeka's gift – an African counting story*, Ifeoma Onyefulu,
Frances Lincoln (different cultures, lifestyles)
- Farmer duck*, Martin Waddell, Walker Books (co-operation)
- Houses around the world*, John Foster, OUP (cultural differences)
- How do you feel?*, Gillian Lui, Evans Brothers Ltd (human emotions)
- I live in France*, John Foster, OUP (cultural differences, lifestyles)
- Rainbow fish*, Marcus Pfister, North-South Books
(friendship, co-operation)
- The big sneeze*, Ruth Brown, Oliver and Boyd (individuals' actions)
- The enormous watermelon*, retold by Brenda Paikes and Judith Smith,
Kingscourt (co-operation)
- The little yellow chicken*, Joy Cowley, Heinemann
(friendship, co-operation)
- Victorian adventure*, Roderick Hunt, OUP (historical comparison)

Examples of guided reading texts

- Billy Rubbish*, Alexander McCall Smith, Mammoth (recycling)
- Bring the rain to Kapiti Plain*, Verna Aurdana, Macmillan
(drought, importance of rain)
- Can't you sleep, little Bear?*, Martin Waddell, Walker Books
(emotions, fears)
- Elmer*, David McKee, Red Fox Picture Books (citizenship, difference)
- It's a perfect night*, Abigail Pizer, Macmillan (environment)
- Katie Morag and the new pier*, Mairi Hedderwidge,
Red Fox Picture Books (change)
- Not now, Bernard*, David McKee, Red Fox Picture Books
(citizenship, listening to others)
- Ruby*, Maggie Glen, Red Fox Picture Books (citizenship, difference)
- Something else*, Kathryn Cave, Puffin (citizenship, difference)
- The home of the future*, Roderick Hunt, OUP (change)
- The world that Jack built*, Ruth Brown, Red Fox Picture Books
(destruction of the environment)

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Text related activities

To ensure that we cover the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – and to save time and resources – we have developed a set of ‘generic’ activities, adapting the approach for different texts. The following are examples of the types of activity we have found work best:

The school council outing: visiting the Council Chamber and talking to the Mayor.



Letter writing

- Children write to characters to research everyday life in a different country or within a different culture
- Letter writing for real purposes, eg in response to local activities
- Writing to local community members to explore and examine issues past and present
- Creating letters between characters within a story
- Writing to councillors to express views and opinions.

Report writing

- Writing a report on an item of news, a local issue, an issue in a story
- Developing two sides to an argument, presenting evidence for and against
- Creating a television report on an incident in a story, focusing on an environmental human issue
- Reporting on change, writing comparisons, positive and negative aspects
- Writing a report/instructions about an environmental process; informing others about new events or procedures relating to an environmental issue.

Labelling

- Adding labels and captions to pictures and photographs
- Speech bubbles between characters discussing problems, issues, activities
- Developing posters to inform others about how they can improve the environment and play their part.

Examples of activities which can be linked to texts



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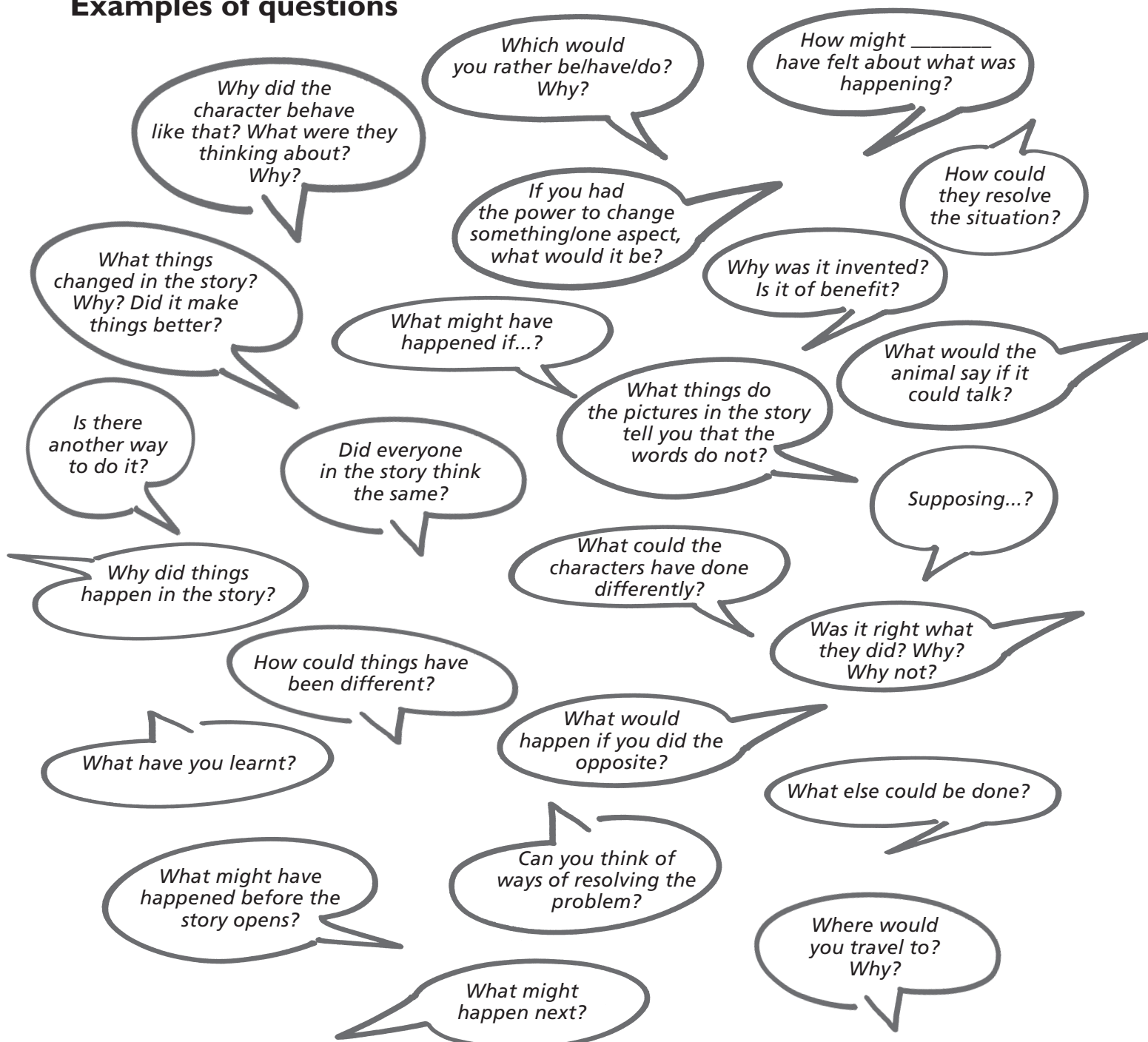
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A question of focus

Teachers found that by developing their questioning skills they were able to draw out ESD aspects within the texts. By focusing on questioning skills, the children became more proficient at practising and preparing their own questions. Careful questioning was found to encourage pupils to explain their thought processes and arguments, and to promote high level order thinking skills, which are an essential part of ESD. Children also developed skills of reflection, observation, analysis, comparison, hypothesis, classification and deduction. Questions need to focus on different aspects of the text – characters, setting, information gathering, interactions, processes, procedures and actions – and can be used to encourage imagination and creativity.

Examples of questions



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Book week

This year we took the theme of ESD for our annual book week. The aim was to develop children's and teachers' greater awareness of the links between ESD and literacy. ESD related texts were displayed and available for all staff to use with the children. Members of the local community were invited to read to the children and to talk about their role/place in the local community. Visitors included local businesspeople, Borough Council employees, the Local Agenda 21 Officer and church representatives.

A storyteller focused on 'green' folklore and storytelling traditions, introducing the children to the rich world of storytelling, mime and music making. He used recycled instruments and artefacts from nature and the past.

An author spoke to the children about her work, which specifically relates to character development and interaction within familiar settings.

A 'book swapping' box was introduced to the children during the week, where they could 'recycle' by exchanging their books with other children. This continues and has been a great success.

Challenges

There are many challenges to be faced that are not just the obvious curriculum constraints. The main ones we found were the attitudes and values of some Inspectors, parents and the business community. Expectations and false divisions between key stages have hindered the development of resources for Key Stage 1 (5-7 year olds) and the promotion of ESD. Nevertheless, we endeavour always to challenge these and to 'fly the flag' of the appropriateness of ESD activities and materials – and the place of ESD in the Early Years curriculum.

The future

We are continuing to develop the ESD theme through our NLS work, highlighting appropriate activities related to texts. We purchase resources that incorporate ESD information and those that can be used to develop ESD values and attitudes. A framework of appropriate texts is being created within the school relating to year groups, topic work and ESD themes. Activities are being developed and shared by staff to ensure lively, interesting and appropriate literacy hours take place.

"I liked meeting
the Mayor."

Pupil, aged 7

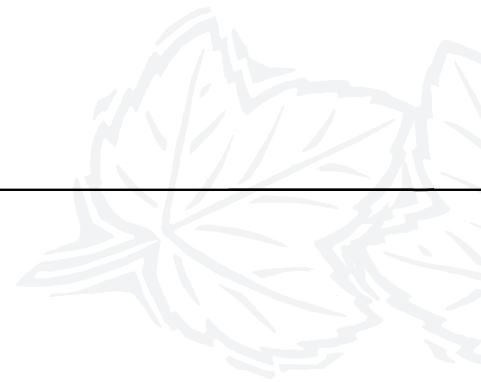
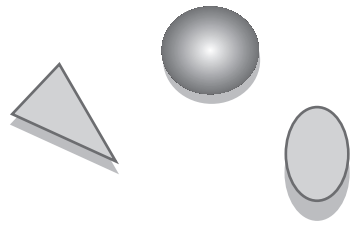


"Taking care of the
world is very important."

Pupil, aged 7

"I told my mum about
the things I would like
to do in the world."

Pupil, aged 7



Teachers references

- A curriculum for global citizenship*, Oxfam
Challenge 2000, Junior Education magazine supplement, September 1997
Citizenship Education: a planning framework for citizenship in school, Hampshire County Council
Education for Citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools, QCA
Making it real. Global Perspectives in the National Curriculum. The Early Years, Birmingham Development Education Centre
Our World Our Rights, Amnesty International
You, me, us! social and moral responsibility for primary schools, Don Rowe and Jan Newton

Further information and resources can be obtained from:

- Birmingham DEC**, 998 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LE
Development Education Association, 29–31 Cowper Street, London EC2A 4AP
Folens Publishers Ltd, Albert House, Apex Business Centre, Boscombe Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4RL
Franklin Watts Ltd, 96 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4XD
Key Curriculum Publications Ltd, PO Box 293, Hemel Hempstead HP2 7ZA
Letterbox Library, Unit 2D, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP
Manchester Development Education Project, c/o Manchester Metropolitan University, 801 Wilmslow Road, Manchester M20 2QR
Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ

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Background

This case study is one of a series published by WWF–UK. Each one describes aspects of work undertaken by schools across the UK, whilst involved in WWF professional, curriculum and institutional development programmes.

In England and Wales, support was originally provided through the Curriculum Management Award Scheme, which aimed to stimulate good Education for Sustainable Development policy and practice, demonstrating ways to integrate ESD within the curriculum whilst working towards a whole school policy. This is one way in which WWF helps develop ideas for new teaching and learning approaches - equipping educators and students for thinking about and acting in ways supporting the goals of sustainable development.

For details of current curriculum development programmes, contact the Education division at the address shown opposite.