Wilder Schools

Aims

Our aim is to enhance biodiversity across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire, whilst helping children develop a lasting connection with nature to ensure nature is valued and protected into the future.

We will work with school staff to improve their school grounds for wildlife and demonstrate the proven benefits of taking regular sessions outside, whether it be for curriculum-linked learning or health and wellbeing.

We recognise the huge time pressures on schools and teachers; we therefore aim to introduce staff to simple, effective ways to reap the health and educational benefits of the outdoors.

For the wider community, we aim is to help families connect with their local wild spaces and benefit from spending more time together in nature. We encourage action for nature both at home and/or in local green spaces, and our goal is for a community that advocates for nature.

Why get involved?

Wilder Schools will help you embed outdoor learning in your school life.

We are amidst a global climate, biodiversity and health crisis. We, as educators, need to do our best to equip the children we teach with the tools they need to live sustainably, to be successful, happy and healthy in an unpredictable and rapidly changing world.

There's a wealth of evidence showing the benefits of outdoor learning for students, including improved mental and physical health, wellbeing, academic attainment, behaviour, attitudes to learning, cognitive skills, resilience, self-esteem, social skills and personal development.

By exploring and learning in local wild places - including their school grounds - children develop not only a stronger knowledge of the natural world, but also a deeper sense of belonging to it.

The BBOWT team will work with either lower Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3 students (occasionally exceptions are made if the programme is deemed suitable for other ages).

Benefits for teachers include increased confidence to teach outside the classroom. Training sessions over three years, coupled with ongoing support through a Wilder Schools network, build a movement that sustains beyond the life of the project.

How to get involved

Any Primary or Secondary school within Berkshire, Buckinghamshire or Oxfordshire can apply, **though places are very limited.**

If you have school grounds to which you would be able to make changes, a year group you would like us to work with, and a senior leadership team who would be supportive to this work, we'd love to hear from you.

Applications can be made here: https://www.bbowt.org.uk/wilder-schools/school-application-form

Applications close at the end of each May for the following September.

Schools will be notified in June as to whether or not their application has been successful.

Berkshire Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

Headteachers of all participating schools will be expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding outlining what the school can expect from us and what we will expect from the school. This Memorandum is available to read at the top of the application form and will also be included in the booking form for signing if your school is successful in its application.

We also expect the school's support in promoting the programme.

How much does it cost your school?

Wilder Schools is a free service, funded by BBOWT.

Visits to our Learning Hubs (College Lake, Tring; Sutton Courtenay, Didcot; and Woolley Firs, Maidenhead) are a highly beneficial add-on to the programme and are paid for by the school. See here for further details of costs: https://www.bbowt.org.uk/explore/discover-and-learn

Our Wilder Schools will receive preferential booking for our Learning Hubs.

We do have a bursary scheme through which some schools will also qualify for free visits. You will be notified whether this is the case at the outset, if your application is successful.

What do Wilder Schools get?

Year 1

- Nine days with an outdoor learning specialist working with students in your school grounds (usual cost £250 per day), including a whole school assembly
- Optional - a visit to one of our three Learning Hubs (or other local BBOWT nature reserve)

Year 2

- Termly meetings (usual cost £150 per day)
- Access to the Wilder Schools network, including termly newsletters
- Full day of CPD training for up to twelve staff (usual cost £400 per day)

Year 3

- Termly meetings (usual cost £150 per day)
- Access to the Wilder Schools network, including termly newsletters
- Full day of CPD training for up to twelve staff (usual cost £400 per day)
- Celebration of achievements and future plans, with a school and local community event

If you have further questions, please email learning@bbowt.org.uk