



The National Education Nature Park

Embedding nature-based learning for children and young people

By Louise Downey, Sustainability Team Leader



National
Education
Nature Park

The [National Education Nature Park](#) is a key strand of the DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy delivery. It seeks to embed nature-based learning in the curriculum and encourage children and young people to take action to improve the biodiversity on their school site for the benefit of people and wildlife. The Nature Park programme is led by the Natural History Museum, with support from leading institutions including the Royal Horticultural Society, the Royal Society, and the Royal Geographical Society. This [short video](#) provides more information on the National Education Nature Park.

The Nature Park programme is transforming climate education, enabling children and young people to take decisive action to boost biodiversity by bringing together school land into a "virtual nature park". The goal is to empower every child and young person in England, through their place of learning, to take action to make a positive difference by:

- Developing a connection to nature
- Understanding the threats facing it
- Feeling able to act for nature

The programme has been designed so that all educational settings can take part regardless of the size of their outdoor or green spaces – you don't need access to any large green spaces to take part. In fact, creating green spaces in previously 'grey' areas, such as concrete paving, brings the greatest benefits for both nature and young people. So, if your site has grey spaces, you have the most potential to make a difference! Improvements can be made to any site, no matter its size or starting point. This means all schools, nurseries and colleges can take part and make a difference for nature.

Since the Nature Park launched in 2023, 2,100 education settings across England have put themselves in the map and mapped nearly 5 million square metres of habitat. In West Sussex, 46 schools have already registered to participate in the Nature Park and are starting to map the habitats on their sites. The Nature Park has regional officers available in the southeast who can visit schools to help with different aspects of the programme. To get in contact with the southeast regional team please email southeastnaturepark@rhs.org.uk.

If your school is already participating in the Nature Park and mapping your site, please share your experiences and progress with the West Sussex County Council Sustainability Team by emailing sustainability@westsussex.gov.uk so that we can help spread the word.

The Nature Park programme is designed around five main aims with several co-benefits:

- **Fostering a connection to nature and improving wellbeing:** the programme's suite of activities develops young people's connection to and confidence in nature in their local environments. Plus, it channels their eco-anxiety into action and allows them to see the collective difference they are making for nature through hundreds of small actions.



- **Developing green and digital skills:** participation in the programme supports the development of [six key green skills](#) across all subject areas. These include identification and ecology, recording data, interpreting data, creative thinking and decision making, environmental stewardship and horticulture and communication.
- **Involving all children and young people:** the programme is flexible and adaptable. It can be implemented for every young person in a formal education setting in England, from early years up to further education, no matter what the starting point or the amount or type of space available. All learners can contribute to, and recognise their role in, the programme, no matter what their interests, skills or future aspirations.
- **Putting climate and nature at the heart of the curriculum:** by establishing best practice for climate teaching and working with expert partners, the programme provides free curriculum plans and quality-assured resources across all subject areas and key stages. These support educators to embed climate and nature across the curriculum. The [Nature Park five-step process](#) provides a flexible way for educators to enable youth-led improvement of their sites through data collection, decision making and habitat creation.
- **Biodiversity gain across the education estate:** England's primary and secondary schools cover an area roughly twice the size of Birmingham, in addition to the space covered by thousands of nurseries and colleges throughout the country. The programme supports young people not only to implement nature recovery actions on their sites, but to study the resulting biodiversity gains to evidence and celebrate their impact.

Taking part in the Nature Park will enable you to meet the biodiversity elements of your climate action plan. Visit the National Education Nature Park website for more information on the programme and to register.

The extensive [library of free curriculum resources](#) available on the Nature Park website supports educators to deliver climate and nature education across the curriculum. All resources can be delivered within the existing curriculum, supporting quality-assured climate and nature education at the same time as national curriculum learning. The programme is designed to upskill educators and provides support and guidance that helps educators to feel more confident in teaching and delivering climate and nature content.

The programme follows five key steps, which support the development of skills and wellbeing to help all children and young people engage with nature. This [video](#) explains the five-step Nature Park process in more detail. By encouraging a strong connection with nature, the Nature Park brings significant co-benefits for mental health and wellbeing. Access to green space has been shown to have [overwhelmingly positive impacts](#) on the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of young people. For more information, please click [here](#) to access the National Education Nature Park's 2023/24 Annual Report.