Belfast
A World Health Organization
Healthy City

DELIVERING CHANGE

Healthy Cities 21st Century

MAKING LIFE BETTER

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INTRODUCTION

Delivering Change: Healthy Places, Healthy Children featured schools

During 2015 – 2017 the Healthy Places, Healthy Children teaching resource was piloted with Key Stage 2 children in schools from across Northern Ireland and from the World Health Organization's European Healthy Cities Network. Participating schools are listed on the next page.

This booklet is a supplement to the resource and describes the journeys of six of these schools as they explored their local built environment, identified challenges and developed their ideas into proposals which have resulted in children's voices being heard and 'Delivering Change'.

INTRODUCTION

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL AREA:

- Cranmore Integrated Primary School
- Currie Primary School
- Donegall Road Primary School
- Fane Street Primary School
- Glenveagh School
- Holy Cross Girl's Primary School
- Mitchell House School
- Nettlefield Primary School
- Our Lady's Primary School
- Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School
- Sacred Heart Primary School
- Seaview Primary School
- St Kevin's Primary School
- St Mary's Primary School
- St Patrick's Primary School
- St Paul's Primary School
- St Teresa's Primary School
- St Therese of Lisieux Primary School
- St Vincent de Paul Primary School
- Taughmonagh Primary School
- Victoria College Preparatory School
- Wheatfield Primary School

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA:

- St Mary's Primary School: Kircubbin

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA:

- Drumahoe Primary School
- St Anne's Primary School
- St Colmcille's Primary School
- St Eithne's Primary School

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION EUROPEAN HEALTHY CITIES

- 20th Primary School of Illioupolis, Athens, Greece
- Chapaevsk School Number 13, Chapaevsk, Russian Federation
- Secondary School No 19, Associated school of UNESCO, Dimitrovgrad, Russian Federation
- Colegio ARCADIA, Villanueva de la Cañada, Spain
- Lycée Molière, Villanueva de la Cañada, Spain
- Veli Vrh Primary School, Pula, Croatia
- Scoil Einde National School, Salthill, Galway, Ireland

NETTLEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Healthy Places, Healthy Children Proposal

The pupils at Nettlefield Primary School felt there was an opportunity to better use the land available within their school grounds. There were two grassed areas at the front of their school that were not particularly attractive as an introduction to the school and were also unused by the pupils due to a heavy traffic flow at certain times and an issue with cars cutting over the grass.

P5 set to work redesigning these areas with ideas to encourage wildlife, create safe spaces for play and social activities and provide opportunities to grow their own produce.

Making it Happen

Inspired by the pupils' ideas the school introduced a traffic ban during school hours, to ensure that the areas would be safe for use, and set to work. Parents supported the project by volunteering to dig out allotment spaces over the Summer break, Prince's Trust volunteers built a bug hotel and installed specially designed wind chimes and the PTA quickly got on board with fundraising.

The space now contains a wildlife area, 4 allotment spaces, a small play frame and lots of colourful planting. A whole school summer picnic was held in the reclaimed space and the PTA are planning an annual outdoor Summer Fair. The local Sure Start use the space for games as it is now traffic free and each class within the school has made it their own e.g. P4 and P5 undertake a WW2 'Dig for Victory' style grow, taste and cook project when learning about that topic in class.

£700 investment from Belfast City Airport has allowed for additional planting and the purchase of a greenhouse and the school now enters an annual 'Garden on a Plate' competition in Botanic!

Seeing Results and Benefits

The project, initiated by the Healthy Places, Healthy Children programme, has not only provided a space for sport and socialising but has resulted in many incidental outcomes such as a wide range of unique outdoor learning opportunities, a focus on healthy eating and sustainable food sources and a strengthened community spirit.

PRIMARY FIVE

One of the key parent volunteers, who was new to the area, has been so involved she is now employed by the school and has quickly become well known in the area for her horticultural skills and creative upcycling e.g. painting and using old tyres as planters.

The area has been incorporated in the school's Walk a Mile project and there are plans to enhance the space further with murals, involving the Pupil Council. Seating areas will soon be installed, funded by the PTA, for children to relax in and a plaque dedicating these benches to a much missed and loved P2 pupil who sadly passed away will make the area even more special for pupils.

Mrs Forth said "This has been an exciting project which has been largely directed by the pupils themselves. As usual, their ideas have surpassed anything the adults could think of! We are grateful to Belfast Healthy Cities staff for helping us achieve our goal".

ST KEVIN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Healthy Places, Healthy Children Proposal

The pupils at St Kevin's Primary School conducted research and explored a range of issues during a guided neighbourhood walk. After discussion they prioritised the need for constructive play equipment within their school grounds and began to re-design their empty playground space. The Primary 4 class considered the needs of the entire school and developed a proposal which included play equipment at various heights for all age groups, benches for quiet time and relaxing, activity tables to play and learn and a Multi-Use Games Area for football and games.

Making it Happen

The proposal was ambitious but the P4 class were determined. Their teacher completed a funding application to Active Belfast which secured an initial £9,500 for play equipment and other resources. The Principal then secured a significantly larger grant to bring the children's whole proposal to life! The drawings created and the evidence gathered by the pupils through surveys during their Healthy Places, Healthy Children journey, supported the funding application process and soon their ideas were being sent to a bespoke play equipment designer. Within a two year period, the school grounds have been transformed and pupils now enjoy a range of fixed outdoor learning and play structures, creative benched areas to chat, relax and eat, a Multi-Use Games Area, a magnificent climbing frame area and a wide range of sports and play equipment.

Seeing Results and Benefits

The hard work of the P4 pupils and staff at St Kevin's Primary School resulted in a great legacy project which currently benefits the whole school and will continue to do so for years to come. The benefit to the pupils' health and mental wellbeing through the increased opportunity for physical exercise, outdoor learning and socialising outdoors is immense, as is the sense of fun the project has brought to the playground. The pupils who participated developed a wide range of life skills and have a great sense of accomplishment and pride in what they achieved. From their perspective, they instigated and designed the project, their voices were heard and their ideas were acted on and that is a very empowering experience. A neighbouring playgroup also makes use of the play equipment which helps develop the children's fine and gross motor skills.

PRIMARY FOUR

Miss Tierney said "As a teacher who was involved in piloting the first version of the teaching resource, I found the resource easy to use and adaptable for the year group I was teaching.

The resource itself was child friendly and creative in its approach to encourage all children to take part.

The children were able to explore and examine the relationship between local built environments, their lives and the impact a place can have on a child's wellbeing. Parents were also encouraged to give their views in a questionnaire.

The resource supported the statutory requirements for the World Around Us and provided children with opportunities to develop their creative and problem solving skills."

GLENVEAGH SCHOOL

Healthy Places, Healthy Children Proposal

The pupils at Glenveagh School spent time exploring their local environment and what makes a healthy place. They chose to focus on the lack of open space within their school grounds, which meant a lack of opportunity for physical activity, and the whole school was recorded assembling in the playground to perfectly illustrate how limited the space is. To solve this problem, pupils investigated the potential of utlising local open spaces which they discovered were rarely used by their peers because of accessibility issues. They finally agreed that developing a safe cycle path in Strangford Park was a realistic proposal. The identified space was not currently being used and the class believed it would be possible to link the park to the school with an accessible path. Pupils also felt an accessible outdoor gym would be a great addition to the park.

Making it Happen

Using contacts made at the Celebration Event, where the pupils presented their ideas, the school requested a meeting with their local Councillor who gave support and advice and provided a link to Council planners. The school is now engaged with the right individuals to undertake a feasibility study and hope to turn the pupils' ideas into reality.

To deliver the programme teachers adapted each downloadable exercise to suit the needs of their pupils, using pictures of familiar locations and simple language. The school now have a set of revised resources, that are in line with the teaching aims of the programme, and can be used again in future years.

Seeing Results and Benefits

Glenveagh School pupils benefited from an increased awareness and focus on physical activity and their immediate and local environment and enjoyed thinking creatively to solve the problem of accessing open green space. There was shared learning and sense of purpose between classes who joined up to undertake surveys and guided walks and teachers felt the programme provided an excellent framework to evaluate the school environment and encourage pupils to think about and speak up for what would make their daily lives better. The process instilled a sense of accomplishment in the pupils and also offered them the chance to engage with individuals, with whom they would not normally meet e.g. planners and Councillors, in new and exciting situations such as the Celebration event.

12-14 AGE GROUP

Ms Williams said "Healthy Places, Healthy Children was a fantastic opportunity for our students to engage in their local area and share their opinions on how to improve it. Keeping them involved in every step of the process gives them a sense of ownership of the proposal we put forward and presenting it makes them feel like their voices are being heard".

OUR LADY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Healthy Places, Healthy Children Proposal

P5 pupils in Our Lady's Primary School identified a number of issues within their immediate surroundings and their local community. As not everyone in the class lived locally, they chose a project based within the school grounds which would benefit all. The pupils observed that the school had a number of spaces for play but these were all concrete or tarmac surfaces and there was a great desire for green space and particularly a comfortable outdoor learning area. They researched what had worked well in outdoor classrooms within other schools and even learned from projects in other countries to put together ideas for their dream space.

Making it Happen

The P5 pupils involved will be in P7 when the project is completely finished and being involved in the various stages of researching, developing and budgeting for a large capital project such as this has been a huge learning experience for them. The reward for their patience will be spending their final year in Primary school as the new outdoor classroom prefects and the pride they will have in the part they played in delivering such a legacy resource.

The programme, because of the nature of the project, gave the pupils first-hand experience of engaging with individuals from a wide range of industries and has inspired interest in careers (not all of which are traditional pathways for females) such as Planning, Construction, Joinery and Technical Design.

When complete the benefits of learning and spending more time in the outdoor spaces will be to increase confidence, promote mindfulness and encourage good mental health from a young age.

Miss Bradley & Miss McCusker, the class teachers, said "Our girls are so excited to see their plans come to life. It has allowed them to open their minds to careers they may not have considered before. The Healthy Cities programme was enjoyed thoroughly by both staff and pupils and we would really recommend this resource!"

Seeing Results and Benefits

Coincidently at this time the school secured a piece of adjacent land which had already been partially earmarked for an Eco-Schools project. When the class discovered this they pitched their proposal to the teacher managing the project

PRIMARY FIVE

who was so impressed they were allocated half of the remaining plot! The class had also impressed with their presentation at the Celebration Event and were contacted afterwards by a local councillor who offered support, funding advice and connections to local businesses. A 'Time to Read' volunteer within the school heard about their proposal and as she works with a local construction company, she petitioned to them to help make the proposal a reality. The company's connections with Women's Tec, an organization who provides training for women in non-traditional skills, have proved invaluable with the development of the proposal. Just a year later and the design is finalised, construction work is about to start and woodwork workshops are organised for the pupils to make their own wooden stump seats for the area. When finished the outdoor classroom will house a blackboard, seating, a stage, games and work stations and a sensory garden and the school will have forged invaluable links with the local community that will be of benefit for years to come.

ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Healthy Places, Healthy Children Proposal

To identify a project the pupils at St Mary's undertook extensive research both in the local community through guided walks and online. They interviewed P1 and P2 children and teachers as well as the school principal and the school council. While they appreciated the open spaces surrounding their school they felt a lack of facilities and constructive play areas within those spaces was an issue and so identified an overgrown space within their school grounds which could be transformed. On investigation they discovered that budget constraints had recently prevented plans to redevelop the space and this made the class even more determined to 're-claim' the land. They researched and created a design which included a stage, blackboard for outdoor learning, a mud kitchen, music and water walls, balancing beams and art and flower displays. Ambitious, but in their opinion achievable.

Making it Happen

This programme created unique opportunities for pupils to build their self-esteem and confidence through meeting the Lord Mayor and engaging with and presenting to professionals who they would not have encountered in normal school-life. They also had the privilege of witnessing a community pull together to turn an idea they created into reality. Their voices were truly heard and valued and their hard work will be immortalised in a plaque of the participating pupil's handprints to be erected at the site.

The outdoor space will have a massively positive effect on mental health and wellbeing, especially for pupils with additional needs within the school. It will create a space for play, reflection and learning and will also allow the development of a parent / grandparent reading programme, continuing the engagement with families and the local community.

It has inspired new relationships with the local Council and other partners who have already been supportive on other projects and has allowed the pupils to see tangible results from partnership working.

Mr Gilmore said "'The Healthy Cities resource pack is of the highest quality. The whole experience helped my pupils understand that they do have a voice and that they can make a difference in their local community. Our outdoor classroom is nearly finished and the pupils are delighted with what they have achieved".

PRIMARY SIX

Seeing Results and Benefits

The school, because of its relatively isolated location, decided to organise their own celebration event which was a massive success. The Lord Mayor, local Councillors and local Council staff (from a number of departments) attended and were blown away by the quality of the proposal and the effort put in to its design by the young people themselves. A programme of support was quickly established. Council staff transformed the pupils ideas into a CAD drawing and other assistance was provided including support to access a Live Here Love Here grant of £5,000 to transform the space. As the majority of the funding was needed to resurface the area the pupils researched upcycling and a call out on social media for support from the local community led to generous donations of skilled labourers offering time, local companies providing sleepers and wooden crates and local people giving recyclable objects which could be used as explorative play equipment and plant pots. The project inspired real community spirit and a year after the pupils began working on their ideas the new outdoor space is almost complete.

ST PAUL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Healthy Places, Healthy Children Proposal

The pupils at St Paul's Primary School saw the programme as an opportunity to improve the lives of everyone who lives within their community. They identified several issues within and around the school grounds including littering and busy traffic. Through surveying they found that litter volume was high on the schools' boundary street at weekends and early mornings which led to rubbish also being thrown through their school railings. The pupils felt this could be resolved easily by installing bins on the street, however, on further investigation and following a meeting with a local Councillor discovered that there were no bins in the area due to previously high rates of vandalism and a perceived difficulty for bin lorries to gain access to the narrow street.

Making it Happen

The pupils believed that the benefits to them and their local community in having bins far outweighed the reasons why there were none currently and so they built a strong case which they presented to the local Council. Their voices were heard and new bins were installed in both the school grounds and the boundary street. Over a year later all bins continue to be well used, are emptied regularly and there have been no incidents of vandalism!

On the back of the great success of this campaign, the school plans to develop other pupil ideas including a traffic calming measure outside the school which will significantly reduce hazards caused by a busy traffic flow in a narrow space.

Seeing Results and Benefits

St Paul's Primary School found that going through the Healthy Places, Healthy Children process with Primary 5 also allowed them, as a school, to critically assess the deficiencies of their current built environment and practical changes, not necessarily identified by pupils, have been implemented as a result e.g. installation of new traffic signage. The pupils formed a committee to lobby for their ideas which taught discipline and commitment and the experience has brilliantly demonstrated to them the power of the collective voice. Pupils also gained a sense of empowerment from being involved and developed a pride in their local community and strong citizenship skills.

PRIMARY FIVE

Principal McNamee said "The Belfast Healthy Cities programme came at a very good time for us. We had a significant change in school leadership and personnel and this 'new start' encouraged us to look for a new way to involve the pupils in the leadership of and planning for the whole school community.

They established a new Healthy Cities Committee, examining and identifying areas in need of improvement for the wider community health and wellbeing. They formulated arguments in favour of change and responded to queries of practicality and sustainability. This was a fantastic exercise in active citizenship to which our pupils responded tremendously. The scheme was a wonderful addition to our Personal Development & Mutual Understanding curriculum and gave the pupils an opportunity to see, first hand, the results they can achieve when they work together."

Special thanks

to the staff and pupils from:

Nettlefield Primary School
St Kevin's Primary School
Glenveagh School
Our Lady's Primary School
St Mary's Primary School
St Paul's Primary School

for sharing their
Healthy Places, Healthy Children
stories.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Public Health Agency