

***“It really is the most phenomenal gift that will be enjoyed by so many children” – Rachel Simmonds, Head Teacher***

West Blatchington Primary and Nursery School, Hove, East Sussex is a RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) 5 star gardening school. However, for the past year they have been unable to use their outside garden due to it being inaccessible, so the area fell into disrepair and became unsafe for children to use.



West Blatchington Primary and Nursery School believe in the incredible learning experiences children have when working outdoors and engaging with nature. From 2013 they began their journey, working through the RHS Gardening Awards. This involved demonstrating a range of skills and learning opportunities for the children from using basic gardening tools and vocabulary



through to workshops and treasure hunts in the garden, growing sunflowers, potatoes and beetroot, and then in 2019, starting a school gardening and outdoor learning magazine. This ensured that the garden continued as a focus for the school: with many more children, parents and teachers being involved.

However, after the construction of, and move to, a new school building, along with the subsequent National lockdowns, and the ever-challenging financial crisis facing schools, the wildlife garden became inaccessible and fell into disrepair becoming unsafe.

- Fencing / wooden barrier around walkway into garden and around pond collapsing / rotten
- Decking slippery and broken at the edges
- The stairs by main flower bed / ‘bridge’ decking rotten and unsafe
- Walkways/inside the ‘shelter’ are covered in brambles/ weeds/ uneven
- Stinging nettles / brambles – around and in the pond, in the areas at the back of the garden
- Forest schools – area planned at bottom of field – needed a fire pit area/ shelter



KBH Building Services Ltd recognised the importance of the garden to the school, being in a city area where many of the local children do not have access to a garden of their own and therefore would benefit greatly from the use of the outside space.



*"We would also like to commend the quality and detail of the risk assessments and operational plans that you provided. These assisted the school greatly, providing assurances that the work would be conducted safely in accordance with all regulations and best practice." - Rachel Simmonds, Head Teacher*

KBH Building Services Limited visited the school in December 2020, to complete a survey of the area and noted the school's requirements. They then issued subsequent Method Statements, Risk Assessments and Project Plans to the school, providing reassurance of the safety considerations and approach to the work being undertaken. As the work was to be completed during the pandemic, KBH wanted to demonstrate the measures which would be put in place including PPE, staff tracing and register, additional hygiene considerations and social distancing during the works. With many people in a small area, they had to be well coordinated too.

In the New Year KBH arranged (and funded) multiple materials to be delivered to the school the week prior to the work taking place.

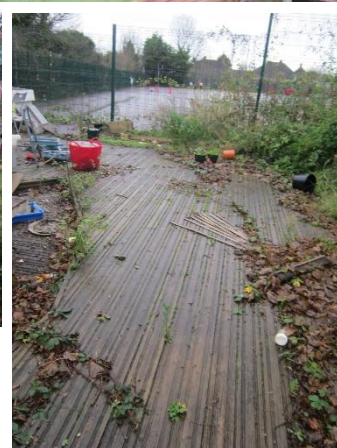
Materials included –

- 12 tonnes of shingle
- Timber fencing
- Railway sleepers
- Handrails
- Various fixing kits
- Two skips for all the existing materials which were rotten or not fit for use.



A local carpenter and the School Premises Manager worked with KBH to coordinate these deliveries and allocate an area at the school for them to be safely received.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021 the School's Eco & Gardening



*A lot of children will have a lot of happy years in the garden; it's just wonderful...especially wonderful in these times-some true light at the end of the tunnel. – Kate Heym Teacher and Eco & Gardening Leader*

Leader and nearly 50 volunteers from KBH Building Services Ltd arrived, travelling from all over the South East of England. Starting early in the morning, they set about clearing the site - removing the old decking, old handrails and posts (filling several skips in the process!), then installing new





handrails and fencing around a new perimeter walkway. KBH repaired and secured the roof on the lean to and then made railway sleeper steps to a new viewing area. They put down new membrane and moved a massive 12 tonnes of shingle on top to make the paths.



The new design makes the flower bed maintenance more workable, providing triple handrails around water areas and rope barriers across all other

areas. The rope barriers can also be moved to restrict access to certain areas if required. The benches have been repositioned to create a lovely viewing space.

Everyone worked in sub-zero temperatures and as you can see from the photos, were incredibly proud of what they achieved whilst the school Parent Teacher Association funded pizza for a well-earned hot lunch. The garden was not to be finished on this day but the intention was for it to be safe and serviceable for the school to continue to make improvements moving forwards.

During the half term several representatives from the school were then excited to get to work making new flower beds and planting bulbs.



The children had a virtual “celebration assembly” where they thanked KBH Building Services Ltd representatives and read out personal Thank You letters outlining how excited they were to use the new facilities.

The plan is for a handful of the team to return in the summer and take some more photos once the flowers are out. The school will be contacting local media to publicise the extreme generosity KBH Building Services Ltd have shown.





*I am writing to say a huge thank you for the amazing transformation of our wildlife garden. Both yourself and your team of volunteers have provided us with a very*

*special gift - the use of an incredible outdoor classroom that had sadly become inaccessible. It is an area that our children and wider school community have loved in the past and will now, thanks to your incredible generosity, be able to cherish again. – Rachel Simmonds, Head Teacher*