

## The Swans Student Council Mindfulness Garden

We built the vertical garden last year with the aim of creating a green space and supporting local bee populations. This year, we wanted to develop the space so that our community could enjoy it. This was how we got the idea to respond to a need that had been identified for a quiet reflection space.

There are many occasions upon which the need for that quiet space had become obvious. Our learning support department delivers one-on-one or small group mentoring for much of the day, and often has to do so in the library. There are also those times that students have been upset or overwhelmed due to personal issues, and they have often had to choose between the medical office or the library, both of which can be public and not quite provide the environment required. Added to this, there is an increasing appreciation of the importance of mindful moments in a busy day - for students, for teachers, for our whole community - and so we decided on our purpose for our space.

We knew we would need seating, a table and shade (our location is very sunny). We also wanted to make the garden calming and positive in a sensory way so we decided to increase and upgrade our planting, and create mobiles/windchimes. We also decided on a mural to state purpose and to make the place even more attractive.

When it came to materials we wanted to recycle wherever possible. For new planters, we asked the kitchen to save all their big containers for us. We acquired pallets from the maintenance cupboard and from a parent's business as raw materials for our seating and table which we planned to make ourselves. We knew we would have to find money to pay for plants, shade (an umbrella), screws/nails and paint. We raised this money by running a karaoke stall at the school Christmas Fair, and we asked the school management team to match-fund us, which they did.

We set a build day - March 10th. The whole council contributed by planting, potting, painting, cutting and painting cans for our windchimes, and building the table and chairs. All designs (windchimes, picnic table and mural) had been created and submitted ahead of time by council members. We kept our colour scheme calming.

The day was a great success - with all council members learning new skills that usually lie outside of the curriculum, and working together to achieve a common goal. The rest of the school were aware of the project and enjoyed checking in on it throughout the course of the day, as well as seeing the final result.

As you may know, the full lockdown of Spain on March 13th meant an enforced closure of the school. There were therefore only two days during which we were able to measure the impact of the project. But measure it we did! Twenty four students (in ones and twos) used the space exactly as we had anticipated. In fact, at a time of great stress, the garden was able to provide solace just when our community needed it most.

Student Council members scrambled quickly to salvage what we could of our planting before abandoning it to the Andalucian sun. The tomato plants and chilli plants are being looked after in members' gardens until such time as they can be returned to where they belong!

We look forward to using and tending to our garden for many years to come!

NB We were addressing the following of the UN Global Goals:

- 3 - Good Health and Well Being
- 4 - Quality Education
- 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 13 - Climate Action
- 15 - Life on Land