

# CASE STUDY

THE GROWING SCHOOLS GARDEN

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

School Grounds Sector

Oak Grove College,  
Worthing, West Sussex

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## Why we got involved

We were involved with the previous Growing Schools Garden when at our last school and were contacted by LTL.

## What we made for the garden, to represent Schools Grounds

A musical pergola made from large poles with branded insect shapes. The top is made of metal with metal tear-drop shapes to symbolise falling rain, the sides to include musical elements. (See the Film in the Woodland and Willow Nest garden zone.)

Pond weather vane with floating shapes based on microscopic pollen.

Murals for the cob centre with paintings of insects and leaves

Large meadow sculpture made from metal with clay seed heads.

Dream-catcher tree dressings

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Gabion basket to hold flint, chalk and pebbles, with deckchair-type seat

Bedding plants grown from seed.

## What we learned

Practical learning is an important part of Oak Grove College, as the learning is in the doing. Having an opportunity to work with an artist and a blacksmith led to enriching experiences for our students such as cutting, shaping and spraying metal and using a branding iron to imprint their own designs. It is very special for our students to know that thousands of people will look at their work. That makes us very proud.

## Photo gallery



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## Quotes

*'It was fun putting the animal brands on the pole. I liked putting goggles on and working with a blacksmith'. Matthew, aged 11*

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*'I enjoyed making the clay flowers for the Hampton Court Flower Show'.*  
Lucy, aged 12

*'I liked spray-painting my bugs green'.* Louis, aged 12

## Other information

Our school opened in October 2005 after a re-shuffle of special schools in West Sussex. We came to a brand-new building but a bare landscape and no budget for the grounds. In less than two years much of the school grounds has been transformed. Many projects are underway and it is very exciting for the students to shape their own environment. Oak Grove College is currently putting in a bid to become a school with specialist status in 'Creative Arts with a Rural Focus'. The work we have done for the show has been very much in line with our belief in the importance of creativity.

We have an outdoor curriculum at our school. This is a description of what we have done so far. On the corner of the entrance to the school there is a dry garden, with plants to tolerate hot dry summers. At the front a large bed that is full of bulbs in the spring and lots of cosmos grown from seed. We are developing a conservation and wildlife area, have reclaimed the woodland, made animal shelters and bird boxes, and created a bog garden. We have started to dig out a large pond.

In the large central courtyard there we are developing sensory areas including raised boxes, seating areas, landscaping paths, wooden decking, living-willow sculptures and large areas of planting. At the back of the school we are developing a food-growing area with two polytunnels, 12 veg boxes, a compost and pot store area, a greenhouse and a spiral herb garden.

There is also a Sculpture Area. This is an enclosed area where land art is based. Creative work is a large part of our outdoor curriculum. This is where much of our work for the Hampton Court Flower Show has taken place. We also have two memorial gardens, a wild-flower mound, fruit trees and extensive tree and native-hedge planting. We also work closely with Palatine School, which many of our students used to attend, and where we worked for eight years to develop the school grounds.

## Contact details

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