Ferguslie Pre-five Centre - Dragon’s Allotments project

This project was supported by the CSGN Community Projects Fund 2013-14. The Fund is focused on projects undertaken for the benefit of, and/or involving children and young people under 16 years of age and is intended to support small-scale, community led projects that deliver green network improvements on the ground; increase community use of the green network and/or increase community involvement in the maintenance and enhancement of the green network locally.

Where: Ferguslie, Renfrewshire

What: The Centre has been awarded £1,992 to further develop a piece of waste ground which the community has begun to transform into a growing space and outdoor learning area. The grant has been used to purchase waterproofs and wellington boots as access to outdoor clothing was recognised as a barrier to use. Ferguslie Housing Association owns the land and is very supportive of the project.

Why: The Centre was inspired by the Forest School initiative and was looking for an outdoor learning area nearby. Ferguslie is a very urban area and it was not possible to find suitable woodland in walking distance.

Who: Children, families and staff from the Ferguslie pre-five centre, local residents and companies

1. **What are you most proud of?**

We are proud that we have been able to develop the land, keeping going and making it available to others. The allotments project has made a big difference to the children's understanding of growing and where vegetables come from. We have made and sold soup made with produce from the allotment. Parents tell us that the children have also been trying vegetables that they would not eat before because they have grown them.

The site was cleared up by parents and we had a community day where 16 raised beds were built. A local timber company donated wood and soil and B&Q donated seeds. The key for the site is at the nursery, but Scouts and other local groups have beds that they look after.

2. **What was hard?**

It is a challenge not to be able to go everyday and look after the plots. We are restricted due to staff-ratios, but can add in students and parents when they are able to help out. We probably manage up there twice a week. In the beginning it was hard to get the parents involved, but now they are.

Unfortunately, the site gets vandalised. We have encouraged the community and people living in houses overlooking the site to take action and phone the community warden if they see anything and it is beginning to work.
3. **What happened that you didn’t anticipate?**

We didn’t think so many local companies would come onboard and support the project both by getting involved and making donations. We were also surprised by the recognition we have received in terms of awards from COsLA and Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce. The children’s interest and enthusiasm has also been second to none.

4. **What would you do differently?**

No, although there is a lot we can still do with the land, a lot of potential. We recognise the barriers and try to address them. We knew access to outdoor clothing was a barrier and now children, staff and parents can all borrow the appropriate clothing.

5. **What advice would you give others?**

Don’t give up, keep going. Involve others locally also local companies and try to find solutions to barriers. Make sure the staff team are onboard – motivation leads to motivation and support.

6. **What next/More information**

We have made contacts to the local primary schools about making use for the site as we would like the learning of the children to extend into primary school. There are few primary schools within walking distance to the site.

We would also like for the nursery children to be able to spend a full session on site and for parents to be able to drop their children off/pick up there. To that end we need to build a shelter and develop a waiting area on site.

We currently have a local engineering company carrying out a survey into the water supply on site for us.

*This case study was prepared by greenspace scotland in conversation with Ferguslie Pre-five Centre for the Central Scotland Green Network Trust*