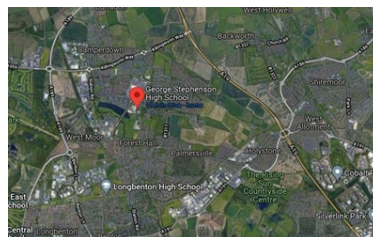


Developing a wellbeing garden to support student transition from Primary to Secondary School

Context

School location	George Stephenson High School, Killingworth, North Tyneside, North of England, UK
Details about students	Age range: 11-18 (Year 7-13) Approximate number on roll: 1200 (Dec 2019) Almost all pupils are White British with very few speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through Pupil Premium (UK assessment to identify the lowest income families) is average and the proportion of Special Educational Needs and Disability is below average.
School premises	1970s build with more recent extension; split into several 'blocks' some of which are freestanding buildings and others are attached by an interconnecting corridor (see photographs below). The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school for the UK.
School context	Town, sub-urban; larger than average sized secondary school.
Type of activity	Outdoor learning space design with emphasis on wellbeing
Stage in design process:	Planning



Tool used: Diamond Ranking (DR): What makes a good outdoor learning space?

[Diamond Ranking - CoReD - Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#)

Rationale for activity and tool adopted

At the back of the Design Department in the school is an overgrown outdoor space, currently unused and very unattractive. It surrounds the building and can be seen through a number of the classroom windows.

The Design Technology Curriculum Leader and the Design Technology Technician want to create a green peaceful wellbeing garden/outdoor classroom for staff and students that can also be used for students studying art and design (textiles, photography, drawing). The plants and objects would be used to stimulate ideas and create actual content. It is further intended that the space could support student and staff wellbeing and be used for nurture groups as well as curriculum.

The school decided to use the diamond ranking activity with a Year 7 class as a starting activity to get them thinking about the use of outdoor space.



Case study description: Process

The project was instigated by the Design Technology Curriculum Leader and the Design Technology Technician. Senior management were aware and supportive although the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in additional workload pressures and a number of restrictions (including the closing of schools over two lockdown periods) that have been barriers to progress.

2020/2021 school year

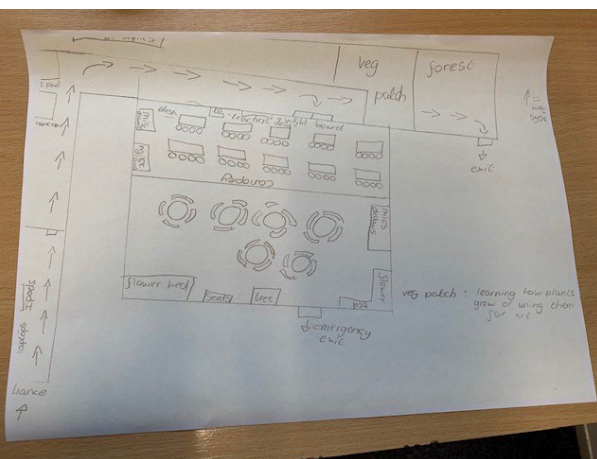
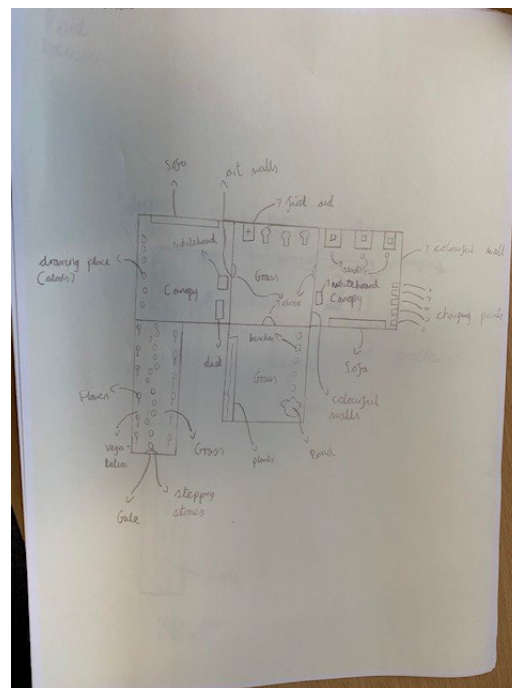
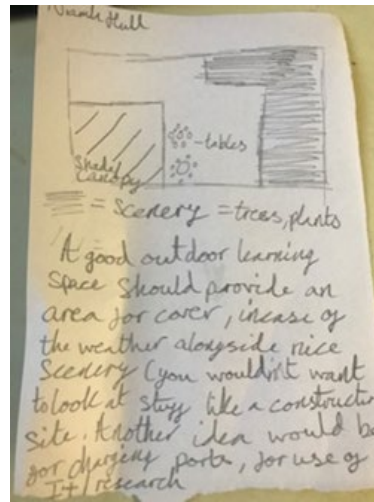
Step 1 - Diamond Ranking: What makes a good outdoor learning space?

A class of students in Year 7 undertook the diamond ranking activity in groups of two, three or four students as they explored the question: What makes a good outdoor learning space?



The class teacher reported that the activity had been well received, the students were familiar with the concept of diamond ranking and some had used blank squares which they had completed with new ideas. The class had 40 minutes for the activity which she felt was a suitable amount of time and that the activity had worked well as a group activity, particularly in the groups with four students as this had facilitated more discussion. Following the activity the class teacher commented that '*some of them (the students) were really engaged, there was an excitement*'. The teacher chose not to carry out a quantitative analysis on the positioning of the pictures but rather to use the activity as a discussion exercise to generate ideas for students designing their own outdoor classroom.

Step 2: students produced their own designs for the outdoor classroom



This activity generated a range of ideas such as a fire-pit area, chill out or nurture zones with bean bags and wind chimes, murals, areas for drawing and using IT. There was also discussion of social distancing and how that might be achieved in the space. Unfortunately due to a second period of school closures in January-March 2021 the project was suspended at this stage.

2021/2022 school year

The project was re-started with a targeted group of Year 7 students supported by a smaller number of Year 12 students. The intention of the group was to support the Year 7 students in their transition to secondary school and for them to develop relationships and social and emotional skills. The group met weekly as an after-school activity and began their sessions by engaging in the outdoor learning diamond rank activity.



Feedback from the school staff, Year 12 and Year 7 students suggested that the activity had been easy to follow, *It was easy to do* (Year 7 student), provided ideas, *Gave us ideas about the outside space* (Year 12 student), been good at stimulating discussion, *Good for you to discuss* (Year 12 student). Discussions between students had included analysis, *Most of them (the pictures) looked good but then you noticed some detail that completely changed your opinion* (Year 7 student), and creative thinking, *It helped you to think about different paths to explore* (Year 7 student). Some students and staff felt that it would have been beneficial to use their own images, which could be easily arranged as a follow-on activity if desired.

The group went onto use the Stories of Educational Spaces tool in order to encourage the students to think about how the space had been used in the past, how it was being used currently and how they would like to see it developed in future, along with some gardening and pottery activities. Please see <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/case-studies/stories-of-educational-spaces/item/primary-to-secondary-transition/>

Due to the disruptions of Covid-19 and budget constraints the school had not moved forward with its plans to develop the outside space further at this time, but they hope to continue this work in the near future.

The diamond ranking activity proved to be easy for school staff to use independently and was well received by participating students.

Case study description: Outcomes

Including any data (e.g. from questionnaires, interviews, observations, links to videos, images, specific tool analysis results etc.)

Following the activity in 2021/2022, the school staff and students were asked to identify what they felt had worked well (plus) what did not work or could improve the activity (minus) and what had been interesting, comments can be seen below:

Plus	Minus	Interesting
<i>Gave us ideas about the outside space (Year 12 student)</i>	<i>Was hard to decide where to put each one (Year 12 student)</i>	<i>To see what other environments outside areas for sixth form (Year 12 student)</i>
<i>Good for you to discuss (Year 12 student)</i>	<i>Would be better if photos were from our school (Year 12 student)</i>	<i>It helped you to think about different paths to explore (Year 7 student)</i>
<i>I liked the picture of the open area (Year 7 student)</i>	<i>It was hard to choose sometimes (Year 7 student)</i>	<i>Thinking about outside areas for secondary schools (school staff)</i>
<i>It was easy to do (Year 7 student)</i>	<i>I think it would have been good to focus more on our environment, photos from around school (school staff)</i>	
<i>Most of them (the pictures) looked good but then you noticed some detail that completely changed your opinion (Year 7 student)</i>		
<i>It was good to think about new ideas (Year 7 student)</i>		
<i>The pictures gave ideas and so it's a good starting point (school staff)</i>		
<i>Good for group discussion (school staff)</i>		



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