

TREES FOR LEARNING



How 11,000 children planted 66,000 new trees

Trees for Learning is a major project to encourage schools to plant trees within school grounds and local green spaces. It forms part of DEFRA's pledge to support schools to plant 1 million trees by 2020.

England's Community Forests are working together to hit the target of helping primary schools plant 164,000 trees.

We help schools decide what to plant and where by providing expert design advice, we provide support on planting days and ensure that plans are in place for long-term management and use by children.

The project has completed two of a planned four years. Read on for a short summary of our work in 2017/18.

Five steps to learning with trees

1

Promotion

We started with getting the message out. Each Community Forest promoted the scheme to schools through emails, websites and social media, phone calls, attendance at local events and more.

2

Planning

The right tree needs to be planted in the right place! Community Forest staff assess each site to check soil type, drainage, existing nature habitats, the presence of underground services etc. Then a plan for the planting sessions can be created.

3

Planting

Children love the planting sessions! We show staff, children and parents how to plant the trees and make sure the trees are planted according to the agreed design. We encourage schools to buddy up children with their older peers as we've found this boosts learning.

4

Curriculum-based learning

A follow up educational session later in the year when the trees are in leaf links into the Primary National Curriculum. This can include a survey activity where children identify trees and assess their health and size. We explain the role that trees and woodlands play in providing us with clean air and water and habitats for wildlife, as well as helping to reduce the impacts of climate change.

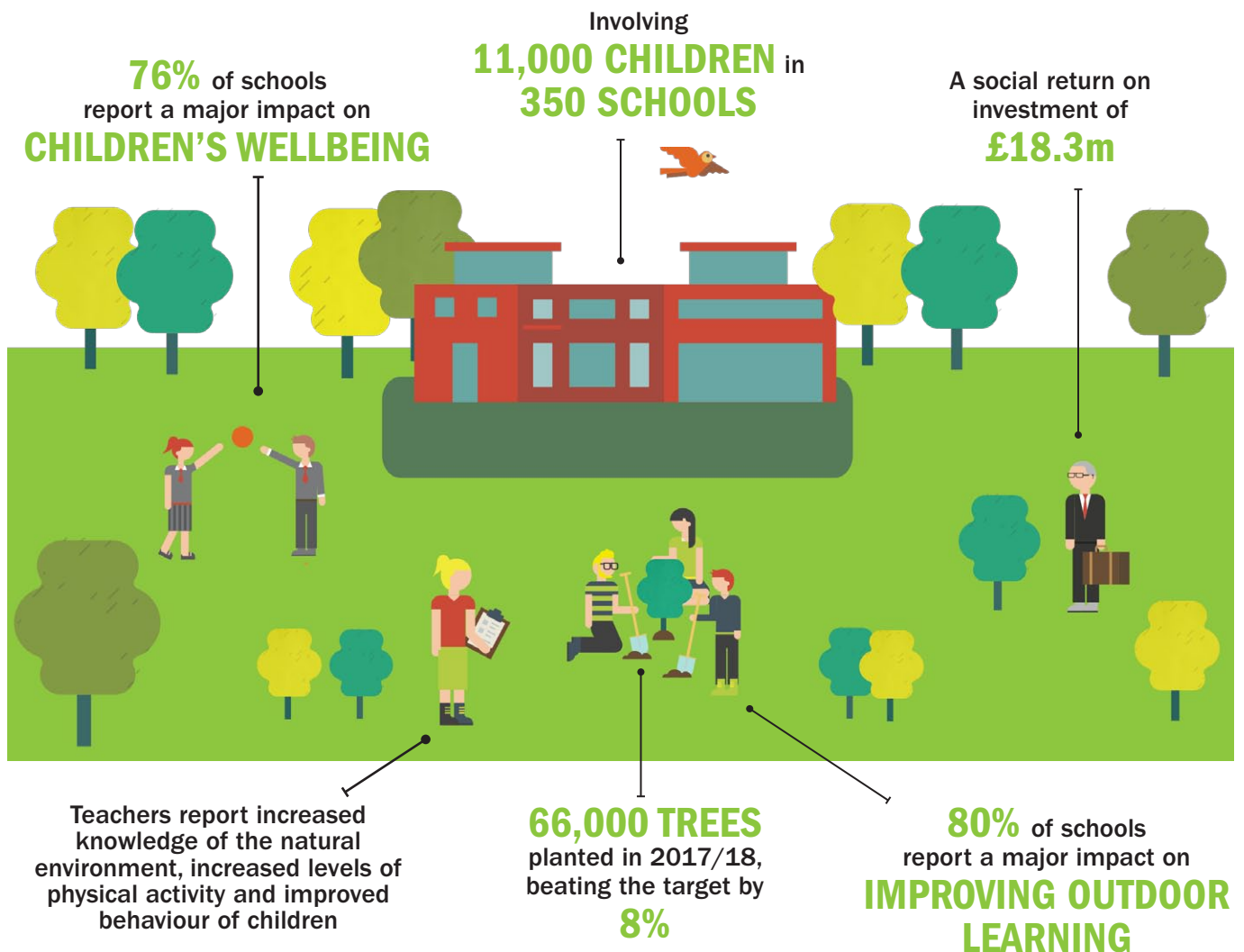
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Aftercare

We give schools an aftercare leaflet and advice on maintenance to ensure the saplings grow up into mature trees. Aftercare is discussed early in the process so trees chosen can easily fit with the school grounds usual maintenance plan.



Achievements 2017/18



WHAT WE PLANTED...



Native broadleaves

The majority of trees planted. We choose trees best suited for the ground conditions – for example, varieties of willow, alder, hazel and downy birch for sites with poor drainage.



Fruit trees

Apple, damson, plum, cherry, pear and crab apple – planted on sites with a sunny aspect – set to provide fruit to children in years to come.



Conifers

A small number of Scots pine, Norway spruce, lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce, and western red cedar to create variety, winter colour and shelter.



Useful trees

Willow and dogwood are great resources for crafts – whether in art lessons or part of Forest School.

Feedback

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“The children can struggle with resilience during activities that require effort and can often lack motivation. All of the children were engaged with the session for the majority of the afternoon.”

“The whole experience was very enjoyable; the children learnt so much and thoroughly enjoyed planting the trees, even in the snow! Thanks for a real learning experience!”

“The practical nature of the sessions was great. We were looking at the buds on the trees the other day and the children were so excited and interested in what they had planted were now starting to bloom.”

“I really noticed a change in one boy in particular who struggles with motor skills. He doesn't enjoy activities such as PE and handwriting but was really enthusiastic about the tree planting. He chose to plant one of the bigger trees which meant digging a bigger hole and did not stop until he had achieved this.”

“It was a fabulous experience for the children and staff, as in class we had been learning about plants and how they grow.”



Department
for Environment
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England's community forests