

The Community Growers' Guide

to Working with Primary Schools and Nurseries



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Introduction

This tool was developed following a pilot project and six **Taste & Grow** grants from **Lanarkshire Climate Action Hub** in 2025, involving 7 schools/nurseries and 6 community growing groups. The grant aimed to help schools and nurseries improve food growing in partnership with local groups, ensuring continued support through advice, resources and site visits beyond the grant period.

Many growing groups would like to engage with a younger audience as they recognise the importance of sharing this knowledge and experience at an early age, but they have reservations or concerns about doing so. This guide and accompanying resources aim to reassure and support growing groups so they feel empowered to take on this kind of project.



The Benefits of Connecting with Schools and Nurseries

Creating partnerships with local schools and nurseries has benefits such as:

- **Wider community engagement** and participation leading to greater awareness of your organisation.
- **Fosters volunteer and staff skills** through designing and delivering activities and workshops across a wide range of age groups. Plus you could be gaining future volunteers too!
- **Sharing the benefits of growing and greenspaces** with a new generation of potential growers, investing in their future and the planet.
- **Developing their understanding** of the food system.

Common Questions and Concerns

“We’re not sure we have the skillset” – this usually comes from a lack of confidence of volunteers and staff in supporting children and young people to ensure their safety and engagement.

“What regulations do we have to meet?” – It’s important to ensure appropriate safeguarding regulations are in place for children and young people. More details on the PVG scheme below. It is also important to make sure that risk is appropriately assessed and managed through risk assessments. More details on risk assessments are below.

“Do we have suitable tools and equipment?” – Sometimes a lack of resources to support activities with children and young people are a barrier to engagement.

“We don’t know what children need to know.” – Insight into the national curriculum and how the activities of the growing group can support this are useful to help plan sessions.

“What level of support do we need to offer?” – Insight into the growing/capacity of local schools/nurseries can help with the planning of support.

“We’re worried about damage.” – Concern about the potential of large groups or individuals to damage crops/plants/structures are entirely valid and can be addressed through communication with the visiting group and their teachers.



Checklist: Mandatory Requirements

Please note that these are suggestions only and may not be comprehensive. Please refer to your organisations' governance documents and board of directors to ensure compliance.

Safeguarding Policies & PVG Membership

To find out what your organisation and members involved in running activities with children and young people need by contacting [SCVO](#) or [Disclosure Scotland](#) for further advice.

Insurance

Please refer to your insurer for their requirements relating to the hosting of visits with activities for children and young people, and school staff.



Risk Assessments

This may be a requirement from your insurer – refer to their guidance if a particular format is required.

Schools/nurseries are responsible for carrying out and submitting a risk assessment to their local authority for any visit they make outside of their setting, which may require a pre-visit from school staff to your site.

We have provided a suggested risk assessment template which can be found [here](#).

Photographic Consent Forms

If taking photos during sessions when the school/nursery pupils are visiting, it is important to ensure consent has been provided from their parent/guardian. Often the school staff will be aware of who is and isn't allowed to be in photographs so it is advised you check with them in the first instance.



Checklist: What to Know Before you Begin

Numbers - How many pupils and staff will attend on the day? Are there enough staff to supervise smaller group activities? How many volunteers/growing groups staff are needed? Who will be the lead teacher/staff member?

Schedule - What time will the school/nursery arrive and leave? Will there be a break between activities?

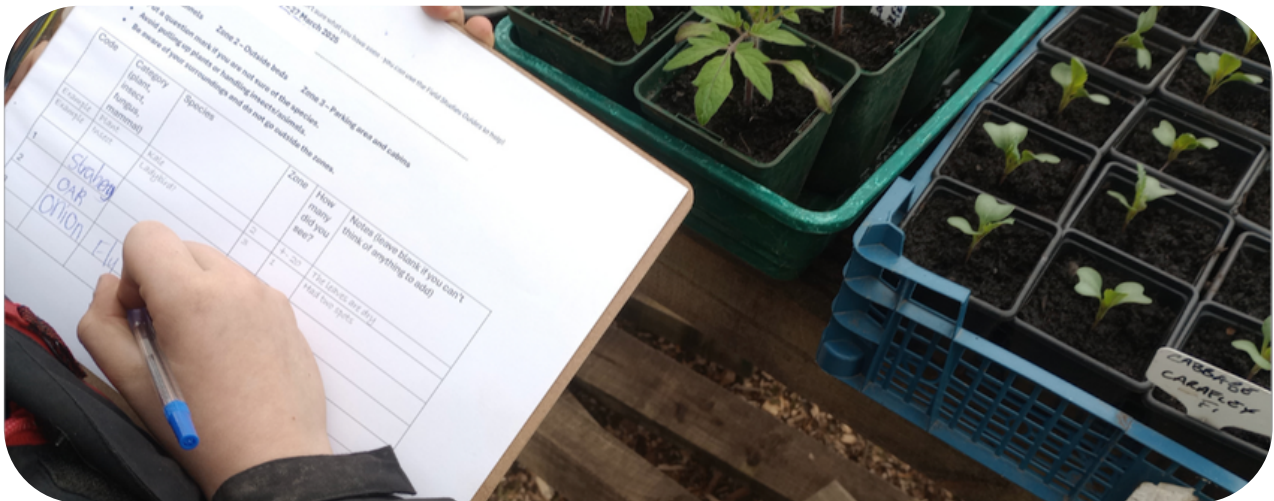
Location - Where will the drop off and pick up point be (if not arriving on foot)? Do the attendees need to be aware of traffic? Is there a designated sheltered area if raining? Where is the first aid kit? Where is the assembly point? Where can the children go and where is out of bounds? Where can children go to the toilet and wash their hands? Where can they have a break/snack/lunch? Can you designate a 'quiet zone' for those who need it?

Activities - How many activities do you plan to run? How long does each activity need? Do you need to ask the staff to organise children into smaller groups for activities?

Inclusion and accessibility - Do any of the children have additional support needs such as health, mobility,

audio/visual, or sensory support? Will they be accompanied by a parent/carer/support staff? Are there any allergies?

Other – What clothing do you recommend for attendees? What plants can the children pick/taste/explore?



Additional Support Needs and Accessibility

Have conversations with staff in advance of visits around how best to support the children. They may or may not provide details on individuals, but you can find out more about how you can offer support, whether individuals will be accompanied by support staff/parent/carer and if having a designated 'quiet/time out of space' is useful. Additional needs may include:

- Neurodivergence such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia
- Physical or sensory - mobility, sight or hearing impairments
- Social/emotional such as anxiety, mental health conditions
- Circumstantial such as being a young carer, bereavement or English as an additional language.

Suggested Activities

Spring/summer

Planting seeds such as:

- Peas or broad beans in cardboard tubes
- Basil, leeks, onions, courgette, sunflowers, nasturtium, calendula, tomatoes, radishes, lettuce in seed trays or pots, potatoes in plastic bag/pot
- Strawberry runners

Autumn/winter

- Christmas potatoes in a plastic bag/pot
- Harvesting seeds, sorting and labelling them
- Taking cuttings (rosemary, lavender, basil, sage)
- Planting garlic



All year round

- Beastie scavenger hunt activity
- Bioblitz/plant ID activity
- Making seed bombs with edible flowers (camomile, calendula, nasturtium)
- Making fat balls - some recipes use hot fat so extra supervision is recommended
- Making plant labels (painting rocks or from large yogurt pots)
- Collecting leaves/cardboard/sticks for compost
- Collecting branches/sticks for a 'dead hedge'
- Making pots from newspaper/brown paper
- Drawing/post-it notes: what would you add to our space to improve it for children and young people?



How to Make your Visit Memorable, Engaging and Positive

1. **Plan your activities** with the lead teacher/staff member - they can advise on suitability for the age ranges involved.

2. Build **flexibility** into your activities such as extra time, spare materials and equipment plus some back-up activities (particularly where weather is concerned).
3. Build in time for children to **explore and engage in play** in designated areas.
4. Agree in advance with school staff where the children **can and can't go** on your growing site and make this clear on arrival.
5. Consider wearing **name labels** so that children know who you are and introduce the growing group staff on arrival. planting seeds or making seed bombs in groups of around 5-6.



6. Keep introductions to activities very **brief** (less than 5 minutes). **Demonstrate** what you want them to do and break-up in stages if appropriate.
7. Think about how you will get children to **use all of their senses** across activities.
8. Plan **practical activities** like planting seeds or making seed bombs in groups of around 5-6.

9. When explaining, give children **opportunities to tell you why you are doing something.**
10. Link your activities to **Big Questions: Why** do you think everyone should know how to grow plants for food?
Why is it important to eat fresh fruit and vegetables?
Why is it important to save seeds?
11. Keep an eye on **timing** of activities so you don't run over.
12. Suggest that children **work in pairs/threes** for exploring activities such as scavenger hunts.
13. **Invite questions** but if running short on time, give children the opportunity to write them down (or ask a teacher/support staff to do this) and take some time to read and answer them before they leave.
14. Keep 20 mins at the end to **answer questions** and get **feedback** from the children.
15. Consider at least one activity that will allow each of the children to **take something home**, e.g. a seed in a pot with their name, or even simply a participation sticker each!



Maintaining Connections

Should you wish to, this can be a great way to establish an ongoing partnership with local educators, who are often looking for support and expertise with their own growing projects.

Here are some ways to keep that mutually beneficial link in place:

- **Develop a growing plan** (see template) in partnership with the school/nursery and identify where you can support them and plan visits.
- **Take photos of seeds** the children have planted/areas they tended to/ make a video and send these from time to time.
- **Ask for updates** from the school/nursery on their growing areas - request a video or photos via the lead teacher/staff.
- **Grow extra seeds** you can donate to the school/nursery for them to sell at a summer fair/fundraising event.
- **Share growing resources** such as 'how to grow' guides with the school/nursery that they can share with the school community/parents/carers.
- Consider how you can support your school/nursery with their growing areas over **summer holidays**, such as

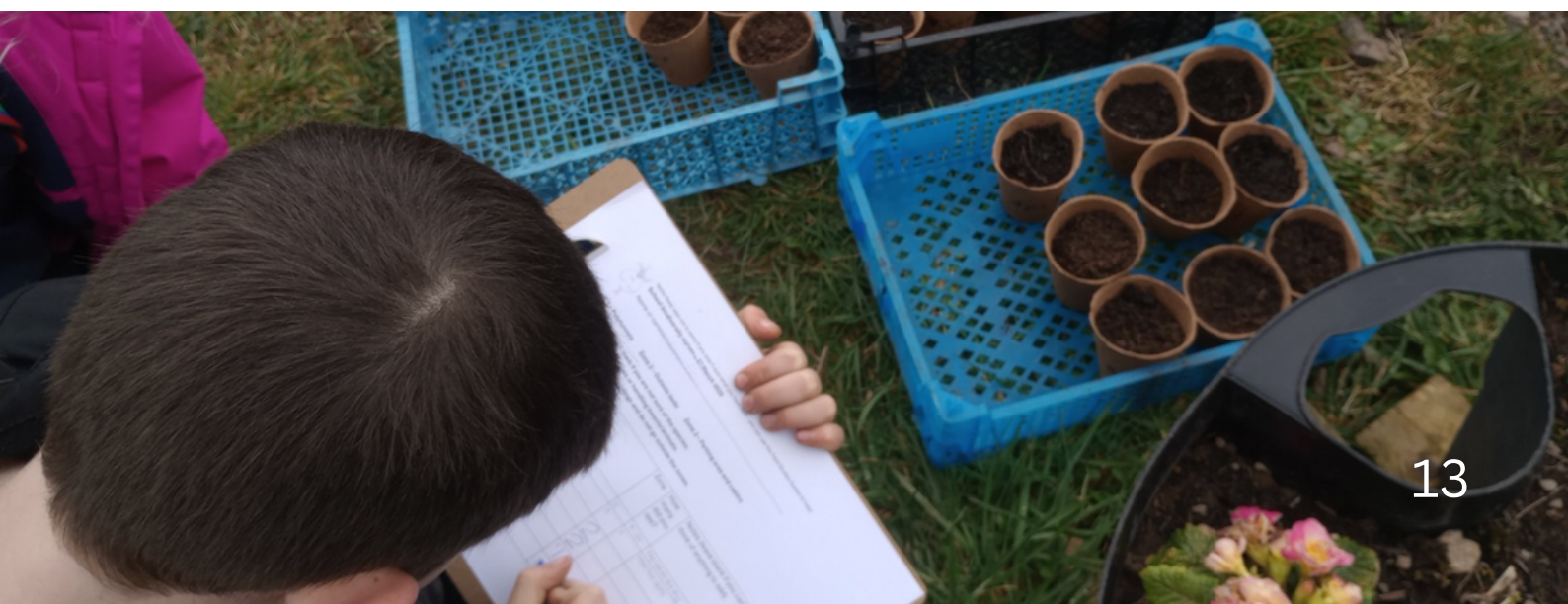


documenting harvesting and watering and tending growing beds in the absence of children/school staff.

- **Designate an area** of your own growing site for the development of beds specifically for the **school/nursery's use** if they don't have their own.
- **Designate an area** of the growing site and plan and **develop a sensory area** in partnership with the school/nursery.

Useful Kit and Materials

- Smaller tables/ benches - sometimes an area of cleared ground can be suitable
- Child-sized gloves, spades, trowels, forks
- Hand washing/sanitising stations
- Clipboards
- Permanent markers
- Pens, pencils, felt tip pens
- Paint pens and smooth pebbles/rocks
- A board and post-it notes for children to ask questions



and give feedback

- Colouring and other activity sheets
- Plain paper for drawing
- A selection of field study guides (native insects, plants, birds)
- A selection of children's books
- Magnifying glasses and specimen pots for beastie identification
- Name labels/stickers (also useful for naming and seedling pots the children can take home)
- Reward stickers
- Bottles of water
- A spare activity such as scavenger hunt if there's extra time
- Safety scissors (including left-handed scissors)



Recommended Kids' Books

[Supertato series](#) - Sue Hendra & Paul Linnet

[When Cucumber Lost His Cool](#) - Michelle Robinson

[Plants Need Friends Too!](#) - Jamie Walton

[Too Many Carrots](#) - Katy Hudson

[Runaway Pea series](#) - Kjartan Poskitt & Alex Wilmore

Useful Resources

[Mental health information: Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

Information on mental health needs for school children

[Downloadable activities](#) across school ages

[Countryside Classroom](#) - resources and activities for connecting children with food, farming and the natural environment

[Buglife](#) - Activities for school age children

[RSPB](#) - Conservation activities across age ranges

[Scottish Wildlife Trust](#) - Resources including colouring/activity sheets for children

[RHS](#) - children's activity ideas

[Field Studies Council](#) - Field Study Guides

[The Curious Caterpillar](#) - plastic-free lucky dip/prizes

[NHBS](#) - bioblitz/biodiversity study equipment/tools

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