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AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

## How To Engage Your Local School On Environmental Issues

[www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk)

# How To Engage Your Local School On Environmental Issues

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think



Schoolchildren can be the change our sustainable world needs. All they need is the encouragement to engage in fun, action-orientated learning. Your church could encourage that process.

Follow the model set by A Rocha UK's environmental education team. Think about forming relationships with local schools with a view to providing them with ideas and resources for eco-lessons.

Environmental Education Officer David Melville and his team have run such initiatives as – a teaching event about owls called 'Things That Go Screech In The Night' which took place at Minet Country Park, Hayes.

'While Hallowe'en celebrates fear and superstition, we celebrate the goodness of creation,' David explained. 'Owls used to be regarded with doom and danger, but we regard them with respect and awe, because of how they've been made.'

Mrs Tiggy-Winkle and Shere Khan jumped off the page when schoolchildren took part in A Rocha UK's summer programme of 'eco-literacy'. The children converged on the charity's Southall centre for the 'Book Characters Go Wild' event. The week-long playscheme ended with a family barbecue.

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HUNT FOR HALLOWEEN  
HORROR

[arocha.org.uk/half-termers-to-hunt-for-halloween-horror](http://arocha.org.uk/half-termers-to-hunt-for-halloween-horror)

GO WILD WEST IN LONDON

[arocha.org.uk/book-characters-go-wild-in-west-london](http://arocha.org.uk/book-characters-go-wild-in-west-london)

do



## Consider buying some trees as a gift to your local school

Ask them to plant a tree or two. Hampshire schools have been planting trees – and watching their influence grow.

Andover Trees United was set up to encourage local young people to plant a tree in their school nursery bed. The idea was to move it later to a dedicated woodland space. The scheme was set up in 2011 by teacher Wendy Davis, according to a report in The Observer.

Andover Trees United made the headlines by scooping the Observer Ethical Awards 2015 in the Ecover Young Green Champions Category. Since then, 4,000 trees have been planted in Andover's seven-acre Harmony Wood, and things show no sign of slowing down. Many trees are donated by the Earth Restoration Service.

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EARTH RESTORATION SERVICE  
[earthrestorationservice.org](http://earthrestorationservice.org)

ANDOVER TREES UNITED  
[http://www.theguardian.com/  
environment/2015/jul/02/observer-ethical-  
awards-winners-2015-andover-trees-united](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/02/observer-ethical-awards-winners-2015-andover-trees-united)



## Plan activities promoting creation care

Education is a key component of A Rocha UK's ministry to church and community. The charity provides people and resources to help schools teach about the environment. Environmental Education Officer David Melville spearheads this part of A Rocha UK's work. He offers the following guidance...

Celebrate biodiversity in churchyards. Such a programme could promote ecology across the curriculum:

### Plants and animals

Identifying, naming varieties of different groups, exploring, comparing living and dead things, offspring, habitats including micro-habitats, food chains, how changes to environments can cause problems, identify producers, predators and prey, adaptation, classification, seasonal changes, lifecycles of plants and animals, carnivores, herbivores and omnivores.

### Science skills

Encouraging questions, observing, recording scientifically, doing a fair test, using equipment, reporting results, making predications based on data.

### Humanities

Sense of place, history and heritage, changes over time, current and future uses, multi purpose use and resolving conflicts, zones, citizenship.

### Religious education

There are many angles from Genesis to Psalms, and from Colossians to Revelation. Use memory verses. Talk about concepts of Stewardship, awe and wonder, forgiveness and redemption.

### English

Creative writing and poetry would be inspired by visiting a churchyard.

### Art

Show a variety of styles from botanical artists in the Victorian era (which is really scientific art in detail) to more contemporary impressionists, let them choose and then give space and time to do the pencil starter (follow up inside with water colour if not enough time).

### Music

There are many good songs to sing about creation care. In a multi-faith setting, it is best to stick to God the Creator. If working with a Christian school, songs about Jesus would be appropriate. Children could make percussion instruments with items found from what is around them.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

[arocha.org.uk/our-activities/environmental-education](http://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/environmental-education)

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## Research grant-making bodies for your schools work

An enterprising staff member from a church school in Cheshire developed some woodland in their grounds as a place for children to observe and learn about wildlife. They received a grant from Barclays Bank to help with paths and bird boxes. A church in East Sussex received a grant to link local schools to their churchyard for heritage and environmental work.

## Offer ready-to-use resources and ideas

For example, encourage your local primary school to make their own little eco-home. It's great fun – and teaches children important lessons about environmentally-friendly construction techniques.

Surrey schoolchildren engaged with the environment in a meaningful way when they saved an existing timber playhouse from demolition – by repairing and refurbishing it as an eco resource.

According to the Engaging Places initiative, pupils at Holy Trinity Pewley Down School, Guildford, took part in the planning, design, construction and decoration of the eco playhouse. 'Using play as a starting point,' said the report, 'the project cleverly engaged young children in environmental issues and allowed them to experience scaled-down versions of real green products.'

### ENGAGING PLACES

[www.engagingplaces.org.uk/news/art78664](http://www.engagingplaces.org.uk/news/art78664)

do



## Encourage out-of-school activities

Helping youngsters to engage with the environment doesn't stop at the school gate. Encourage pupils to get out and about in nature, after lessons have finished.

For example, Somerset Outdoor Play offers ideas that churches can use to engage with schools. This has been set up as an online guide to places where children can engage with creation freely and without fear.

'We aim for children to experience true free play,' said Kristen Lambert, who runs the PlayRanger service, 'play that's not set up according to an adult agenda – in forests and open spaces, not designated play areas.'

## Help schoolchildren take positive steps

Studies have shown that primary schoolchildren experience high levels of anxiety about climate change. So they need to respond in positive ways.

Christian Aid have produced resources that educators can use in lessons and assemblies, to encourage pupils to think about the environmental impact of their actions – and how they can help.

The resources include stories of children from Mali and India who've suffered food shortages and flooding as a result of climate change. Examples are shared of how positive steps are being taken to cope with a changing climate.

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### FREE PLAY

[www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/aug/16/childre-nature-outside-play-health](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/aug/16/childre-nature-outside-play-health)

### SOMERSET OUTDOOR PLAY

[www.somersetoutdoorplay.org.uk](http://www.somersetoutdoorplay.org.uk)

### CLIMATE CHANGE TEACHERS' RESOURCES

<http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/TeachersResources/Default.aspx>