



## Danbury Park Community Primary School

Our project *Our World, Our Future* started over two years ago with a group of older children seeking a meeting with me at lunchtime to discuss their concerns about the environment and asking for help to do more. They had taken the discussions from our School Council meetings when we had looked at reducing our use of single-use plastic and carried out their own research. They had been meeting together at break times and after school and had undertaken a lot of research.

I was impressed by the depth of their concern and their desire to make real changes and realised from talking to other children that this was a much bigger issue. As an individual, I have always sought to reduce waste, to reuse, to recycle and to repair and I have always shared this approach with staff and children throughout my career. I therefore saw the children's concerns as our responsibility as educators to support them in looking after their future. At the same time we were coincidentally approached by Mr Gary Hicks, a grandfather of one of our former pupils, who was embarking on a PhD investigating energy usage in schools and communities. He installed equipment to monitor our school electricity usage with a view to helping staff and pupil understand where we were wasting electricity so that we could take small steps to address this thereby saving us money but also our reducing our impact on the environment.

Essex County Council heard about what we were trying to do as a school and then approached us regarding the possibility of installing solar panels and developing this into an education project to share with other establishments. I saw this as an exceptional opportunity to make a major change and fortunately the governing body was supportive and could see the benefits for us quickly coming on board. We were fortunate that ECC handled the entire project from seeking the necessary permissions, to liaising with different suppliers and to the installation. Everything was installed smoothly and efficiently to coincide with a half-term break so there was little disruption to our everyday working.

We were delighted that our school project had been recognised and that through ECC funding the installation, we could take *Our World, Our Future* to a completely new level. As a school, we could not have funded this, so we were anxious to capitalise on such a worthwhile venture. The children were excited to see the panels installed on the roofs, to hear about the potential benefits and now when they see the sun shine, they point out that we are generating electricity to help our school, our community and our planet. We have already seen savings on our electricity bills and we have recently had a display installed in the main hall so that we have a constant visual reminder and can monitor what the panels are producing.

Through whole school assemblies and follow-up class work, the children have learned about sustainability, why it is so important to their future and what changes we can make. Crucially though, we are finding ways to measure the impact of our actions and this is being built into our curriculum. Each class in the school has responsibility for a different area of our project, which is broad and reflects current research and ideas. The children's knowledge is systematically built upon and developed but is part of life at Danbury Park. Our aim is that after seven years, the children move onto secondary school with firm knowledgeable foundations and ingrained good habits so that they can continue to develop their understanding of sustainability and global issues and become responsible active adults.

We are currently working with ECC and the solar panel installers to develop teaching resources so that the older children can understand in more detail how the panels work. We want them to be able to build simple small-scale solar panels to power models and projects. We have a long term view of then sharing this teaching resource with other schools. We believe that the children need to have this first-hand experience to fully understand the power of what we are doing.

We are very proud of the children and that our approach that grew directly from them and their recognition and motivation that we all need to make a change to affect the future.

Carol Gooding  
Press Release  
August 2021