**The Blackbird Environmental Trust**

**Rationale**

At a time when children and society are ever less connected with their natural environment the aim of the Blackbird Environmental Trust – BET - is to open both the physical and emotional doors for school children into the natural world that is on their doorstep, in their school.

With climate change and the loss of biodiversity impacting all our lives, our aim is simply to plant a seed. A seed that may influence or change the relationship of a child with nature.

Connectivity with the environment has been found by numerous studies to enhance both physical and emotional wellbeing. The evidence is abundant – when children are given opportunities in school to learn outdoors, it has a positive impact on their engagement and attitude to learning and improves school attendance and behaviour. It can be life changing.

By default, the grant application process will elevate those projects that nurture a love of nature and become integral to future generations of children. A single apple tree in the school playground that will grow and change with the seasons and promote a sense of wonder and shelter for countless games is to be preferred to equipment that is neglected and under used at the back of a teacher’s cupboard!

Generally, grants of up to £500 will be awarded, but for exceptional projects grants of up to £1000 will also be considered. In return, we require a commitment to report periodically to the Blackbird Environmental Trust - BET - and the Schools Environmental Education Network - SEEN - as the project unfolds; to allow a BET representative to occasionally and informally attend your school to give helpful advice; for the school to actively acknowledge and promote the activity internally, and to provide BET and SEEN with some evidence of impact in order that the wider school group can benefit from your experience, professionalism and enthusiasm … we want to spread the word!

Grants do not need to impact on large groups. They may - but equally your project may be targeted at a small group. Perhaps those children with behavioural or attendance issues? Or those who do not have homes that give them access to an outdoor space? Will your project allow the children and school community to climb into the natural world?

The application will examine the scope and rationale behind your project based on your estimated costs. The BET team will assess and make initial contact to talk through and refine the project before approval. Applications can only be made by Southampton schools and by school employees and will require your Headteacher’s signature.

The BET team have many years of experience in school environmental work and projects and in senior school leadership roles, so we may have a few good ideas to contribute … or to learn from yours!

**May 8, 2025.**