



Yorkshire Gardens Trust
School Visit Report

Name of Committee Member or Trustee	Christine Wood
Date of Visit:	21.11.2025
Name of School & Contact	Nields Academy, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield Karen Hill
YGT Support Received	Nields have been members of YGT since 2023 and received a welcome gift of garden tools. They are proactive in securing our offers and grants, which have included 2 books, animal log planter, spring bulbs, a watering can, resilient plants, a wormery and were successful in receiving a GDA in 2025.

Purpose/Focus of visit:

To see the establishment of a sensory garden, funded by the GDA, which links with the science curriculum and the topic 'The Senses'.

Karen is a volunteer at Nields and began her volunteering in 2020 as her two boys attended Nields – her youngest son is now in Year 6.

Nields has a large outdoor area, which had been an old Kirklees allotment. This green space is very important in the lives of pupils as most families don't have gardens as they live in traditional back-to-back houses with 'backyards'.



The garden area has been developed over a number of years. £21,000 had been raised by parents and match-funding with local businesses. Hundreds of trees have been planted adjacent to the school field through offers from The Woodland Trust and other similar organisations.

Karen had created much of her own resources for teaching in the garden, based on seasonal changes and exciting things happening in the garden. However, there is now a new curriculum for the school, encompassing the outdoor space they have and the school has an Eco-Committee. Year 6 pupils are given responsibilities within the school, including work in the garden. There are plans to establish a gardening club.

Nields are a Level 5 RHS garden. This is the highest level that can be achieved. The school had to achieve various criteria to be awarded this. Through being an RHS school garden, the school receives certificates, seeds and vouchers. Nields recently displayed a small garden display at Wentworth Woodhouse RHS Flower Show.

One of Nields' values is sustainability and during my visit I spoke to the Principal, Ms Mahon, who thanked YGT for the support offered schools. She also told me how valued Karen's work was as the garden now plays a very important role in school life.

Karen particularly works and supports staff with the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes, who access the garden each week. Books are often used as a starting point for lessons and are kept in a special library.

The Sensory Garden, funded by the YGT's award is now fully established. Pupils helped to categorise the plants and Year 6 created the colourful signs for each of the beds. I met with Scarlett, Georgia, Mason, Caleb and Henry, Year 6 who regularly help in the garden and love being outdoors! Despite being Year 6, they still enjoy accessing the mud kitchen and den building!

Learning about the senses was a recent Year 1 class topic, so when Karen heard this, she found a range of plants that felt different to touch, or you could smell. The children were so engaged with it! Now they have a garden where they can learn and explore!





The school has 11 wormeries of varying sizes and types! The YGT wormery is fully established and creating good quality compost.



The school has an outdoor classroom and recently acquired poly tunnel.



The school had been requested by the National Trust to help them with the conservation of Marsden Moor. They have grown sphagnum moss, which has now been collected by the National Trust and taken away to grow further, in readiness to be planted on the moor.

A range of recycling takes place, and local businesses support the school in helping them to purchase tools and other equipment.



The next area to be refurbished in the garden is an old chicken coop, which they hope to develop into a community allotment. This, Karen hopes will encourage more parents to become involved in the garden.

Nields has a huge commitment to outdoor learning, in developing their garden and giving pupils a range of opportunities. Karen and staff have seen a transformation in pupil behaviour when they have the opportunity to work outdoors. Nields is well-resourced, with compost bins, water butts, wormeries and a range of equipment.

What would help Nields?

- **Seed potatoes of different colours (the different colours intrigue pupils!)**
- **Plug vegetable plants;**
- **Bird feeders and feed;**
- **Watering cans with an unbreakable rose!**
- **An outdoor rug for pupils to sit on, outdoor cushions, outdoor seats.**

Extra notes:

Karen believes that a £30 joining fee would be perfectly acceptable.

Karen purchases safety gloves instead of gardening gloves as they are much cheaper – she can buy them for 50p per pair.

Karen would like to know more about the Yorkshire Horticultural Society and their school garden competition.

