



GROWING SCHOOLS GARDENS ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

1. Introduction

This self evaluating scheme looks for evidence that indicates that you, the provider, are offering adequate and appropriate training and/or advice to all those who are seeking to use planting schemes and the growing and nurturing of plants as part of their Growing Schools initiatives. Likely recipients of your training and/or advice would include: classroom teachers, teaching assistants, gardening club or environmental club leaders or initial teacher trainees. Gaining this award is intended to demonstrate to schools that you have the necessary skills and resources to provide a high quality and appropriate service. It can also be a way of sharing best practice with other providers, thereby developing your own skills and awareness and improving your service provision.

An accredited Growing School Gardens site will include the following elements:

- Accessible high quality plant/habitat/landscape displays.
- Sound knowledge and practical skills relating to the successful propagation of plants and their incorporation into appropriately designed planting schemes for teaching and learning situations.
- Ideas and opportunities for teaching with plants, in realistic and achievable ways, that also meet the needs of schools and clubs and the curricula or schemes of work they are working to.
- Suitable capacity-building opportunities and/or reference resources that might include: accurately produced in-house materials, information and resources made available by current local and national schemes, expert guidance on relevant matters.

2. Eligibility

Eligibility is restricted to those sites/organisations in England who have already received the LOtC badge or are working towards it. It is expected that those applying for Growing Schools Garden site status will be organisations or sites where established plant/garden/landscape displays already exist. This is likely to include the following sites, although applications from other sites will be considered

- Food and farming sites – City Farms and Gardens, Country Parks, National Trust properties, school farms sites, CEVAS accredited sites.
- Garden sites – Botanic Gardens, RHS gardens, Garden Organic, National Trust gardens, historic house gardens.
- Centres for wildlife and the natural environment – Local Authority Environmental Centres, County Wildlife Trust Centres.

3. Guidance notes

The LOtC Quality Badge provides a national accreditation combining the essential elements of provision – learning and safety – into one easily recognisable and trusted Quality Badge for all types of Learning Outside the Classroom provider organisations. The Department for Children, Schools and Families developed the LOtC Quality Badge in partnership with the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom. Widespread consultation with those involved with children and young people's services resulted in this nationally approved and Government-endorsed scheme, which provides an assurance on the quality of the educational experiences on offer. The guidelines here do not detail requirements of the LOtC badging system – for further information on this matter please visit <http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/home>.



These guidelines are provided to avoid any ambiguity in respect of the further requirements of the GSGs Site award and to clarify the application and assessment process .

4. GSGs Site award scheme; Assessment and Administration

The management and administration of the scheme will be conducted through the Botanic Garden Educational Network (BGEN), in association with the Growing Schools Partnership. It is overseen by Farming and Countryside Education (FACE). Assessment will be carried out by trained BGEN staff or agreed GS Partner assessors.

5. GSGs Site award application procedure

To apply for the site award, the relevant documentation and information required in the application form must be provided. The application form acts as a Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to establish whether sites meet the award criteria.

The form includes sections requiring documentation and evidence for:

- The award of the LOtC quality badge to the site (and date of award).
- Information on the plant/garden/landscape displays accessible to target audience.
- Information about the expertise/knowledge of staff interacting with target audience.
- Type of access for target audience.

In addition to this information, the applicant should complete the ‘further information’ section for the BGEN and GSG data-bases. This will provide additional details of the activities and facilities available for Teaching and Learning on-site.

Once the application has been submitted, together with the required information, BGEN will verify the information against the accreditation criteria. If there is need for clarification on any aspect of the form, the applicant may be contacted and asked to provide further information.

If the applicant meets all the required criteria, the Growing Schools Gardens site status will be awarded. Successful applicants will be sent a confirmation letter, a support pack and the GSGs site plaque. In the event that an applicant site does not meet the criteria for the award, they will receive a letter detailing any non-compliance. Applicants who fail to achieve GSGs accredited status will not be prejudiced in any way and may reapply for accreditation at a later date, if they feel their circumstances have changed and the criteria for the award are likely to be met in full.

A sample of applicant sites will be visited by an assessor through a ‘random audit’ system. Any site selected for the random audit will be contacted to arrange an appointment. The assessor will check the application details and assess these against the criteria for the award. If the assessment validates the required application details, the site will be awarded GSGs site status.

The GSGs site accreditation is granted for a term of four years, towards the end of which applicants will be eligible to re-apply for a further term.

All sites awarded the GSGs accreditation will be required to complete and return an annual monitoring form, supplied in the award pack and available on-line. This will support the evaluation of the GSG

scheme. The form should be completed and sent on the anniversary of the award date – a reminder will be sent to the GSGs site, prior to the anniversary, by the scheme administrator.

6. Random Audits of GSGs sites

From time to time, during the GSGs scheme, random audits of GSGs accredited sites will be undertaken, to ensure consistency of support provision and maintenance of display and demonstration areas. The randomly selected sites will receive a request for an appointment with the agreed responsible person on-site and will be given up to 7 working-days notice of the visit. Apart from where exceptional circumstances occur (booked holiday periods, sickness, etc), the appointment will be accepted and the responsible person will make themselves available for the audit.

7. Appeals

Sites that do not achieve GSGs accreditation following their application have the right to appeal if they believe they have been unjustly assessed and rejected. Details of the appeals process will be provided on application to the scheme administrator.

8. Complaints

Complaints about GSGs accredited sites in respect of GSGs services will be referred in the first instance to the relevant site for response and, where appropriate, remedial action. In the event that further action is required, the matter will be referred to the GS partnership who will undertake an investigation. If any complaint is upheld, the GSGs site concerned will be responsible for re-imbursing any costs that are incurred in the investigative process.