



# Banning weedkiller use

## Ferryden Primary School



Ferryden Primary School would like to tell you their story about how they got their local council to stop using weedkillers in their school grounds. This is a fantastic achievement and will be a big boost for biodiversity in their grounds.

It started back in early March, when a few of our classes did a biodiversity check for plants. It was very disappointing, even with it being only early spring we would have expected green seedlings to start. It was also very hard to find any bugs.



When we came back after the Spring Holidays, later in April...



It was even worse! Nothing was growing along every border. Our newly planted sapling was struggling to survive. There was nothing growing along all the fences, where our infants play and dig in the mud. Why where there no plants? Why was the grass brown and dead? Around every tree, along the football field, and even around the bird table something weird had happened. Most children didn't realise, they thought that this was what the playgrounds are supposed to look like. They suggested there wasn't enough water, or that the animals had eaten the plants, or that plants simply don't like to grow around fences.

It was time for a few lessons on weeds... and weedkillers. We did lots of research to find out about plants that are called weeds and what is done to control them. We learned weeds are vital for our biodiversity, without them we starve pollinators. Without pollinators it will become increasingly difficult to grow our own food. They are an essential part of food chains and food webs. They provide shelter, and food, for a host of creatures, (including us). They provide us with medical remedies. And they are often very beautiful.

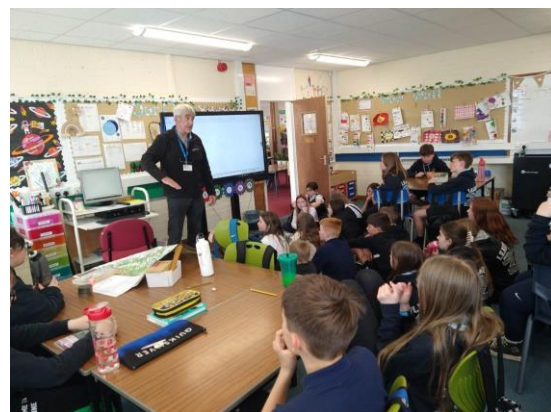


We decided it was time for action! We created our own slogans:  
"Give us back our weeds"  
"Free the Weeds!"  
"You spray, we pay!"  
"Stop the war on weeds!"  
We created posters and banners. We created a protest area.





And we invited Willie Falconer from the Parks Department of Angus Council. The class asked him questions:  
How often do you spray the weeds? *3 times a year*  
What do you use? *Roundup*  
How do you know it is safe? *We only do it in the holidays*  
How do you feel about killing the weeds? *I'm old fashioned, I like it looking tidy, but I realise I have something to learn.*  
Willie also told us that there are areas in Montrose where weeds are allowed to grow, but that some people complain as they think it looks untidy. He told us 'We talk to people from Buglife to help us with this.'



Finally we asked Willie: 'Can you stop weed spraying in our playgrounds?' And he said yes! Fantastic Result Ferryden Primary!!



But that wasn't the end of the story. We are now all working very hard to grow wildflowers and other plants to fast track the increase of biodiversity in our playgrounds, and attract wildlife, so we can actually start learning about it! Pupils are working hard to sow and replant the

borders that have been weed killed. It is obvious how depleted this area looks after the council had sprayed with the weedkiller. Pupils are raking, sowing seeds and watering to encourage new growth of a variety of wildflowers. We are putting bark down as a weed suppressant, where it is needed. The edges of the garden are filled with planters (we used old tyres) that will have strawberries, redcurrants and raspberry bushes. Some pupils took an old sunflower head and used all the seeds to create a 'sunflower farm' in a mud patch that had been completely wiped out by weedkiller - brilliant idea! We are looking forward to seeing the biodiversity in our grounds improve.

