

Learning in Nature Research Programme



Autumn Newsletter 2025



Welcome to our first newsletter!

As we approach the end of our first term, I wanted to take a moment to share a snapshot of where we are now as a group of 85 schools and a team of researchers and coordinators. Now that the implementation dust has settled, it feels like an ideal time to firmly shift our focus from registration paperwork and tasks to the purpose and practicality of our learning and research. We are hoping that our termly newsletters will help to bring the LiNRP to life and will enable all schools involved to gain a greater insight into what is happening in other schools across the country, a sense of your valuable place within the whole and opportunities to share good practice.

Those who are familiar with the work of The Harmony Project will know that our work is underpinned by Nature's 'Principles of Harmony' and looking through this first newsletter it has become clear that the LiNRP is evolving as a perfect example of these principles in action. For example, in the **diversity** of schools and contexts and the approaches taken, the **interdependence** that is growing within clusters, **adaptation** in thinking and curriculum design as schools explore their own challenges and solutions and the anecdotal evidence that we are already seeing of the impact of Nature connection on child and adult **health**.

I hope that you will find these termly snapshots useful and that you will contribute to future newsletters in a way that will ensure that they remain both relevant and inspiring to all. I am incredibly grateful for the contributions from schools and project coordinators that have bravely helped us to create this first one.

On a personal note, thank you for all that you have done this term to ensure that Nature secures its rightful and valued place in your curriculum. Thank you for the patience that you have shown when we have faced a few logistical challenges and for reminding me regularly of the creativity, commitment, energy, talent and humour that remains at the heart of all good schools.

I wish you a well-deserved break and look forward to taking our next LiNRP steps together in 2026.

Catherine Smith

Head of schools & outreach
at The Harmony Project



"When we do science outside, I understand things better because I can actually see everything happening. When we tested shadows and tracked the Sun, it felt like the lesson was alive. I learn more when I'm outdoors."

Year 5 Pupil, New Park Primary School, Harrogate.

A big thank you to the Aurora Trust for their generous support of the Learning in Nature Research Programme.



Meet the team



Thank you so much for responding to my requests!

We are delighted that so many schools now have their funds and are working hard to ensure all schools have their funding in place for January. Soon the only emails you'll get from me will be requests to hear about all the wonderful progress you are seeing, with your projects.

Hearing the anecdotes from staff, pupils and other participants involved with LiNRP, is certainly one of the things Catherine and I enjoy the most about our roles. It inspires me to see Nature being integrated into the curriculum and outdoor learning only growing in importance – something I had pined for all those years ago, when I taught Year 5s and Years 3s in Essex.

Now though, living vicariously through all your stories, I'm reminded daily of the vital role the natural world plays in creating well-rounded, aspirational young people, who understand the importance of harmony. Something that keeps me warm and content, when exploring my adopted home (Scotland), one of the UK's last, true wildernesses.

Chris Platt

Schools administrator
at The Harmony Project



Season's Greetings from Canterbury Christ Church University

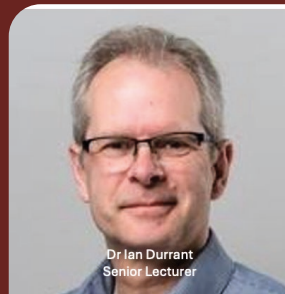
We are excited to partner with The Harmony Project in evaluating the LiNRP. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the enthusiastic way you have engaged in the project so far. Already we have been able to visit several of the schools who have volunteered to be case studies. We are pleased to say the case study schools span the country including Kent, Cornwall, Herefordshire, Nottinghamshire, Manchester and Lancashire. Please continue to record information about your various projects and the impact it is having.

Through our analysis and reports, we are hoping to show the impact of learning in nature and share best practice. In this spirit, we thought it might be useful to highlight some resources you might find of interest later in the newsletter. We look forward to continuing our work with you throughout 2026.

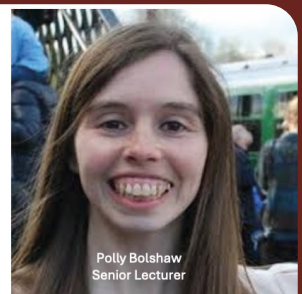
Dr Ian Durrant & Dr Tansy Watts



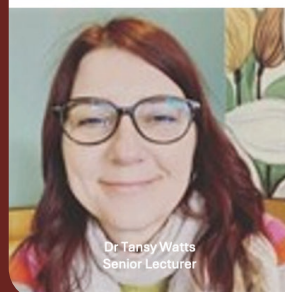
Canterbury
Christ Church
University



Dr Ian Durrant
Senior Lecturer



Polly Bolshaw
Senior Lecturer



Dr Tansy Watts
Senior Lecturer



Julia Ulber
Head of Psychology

Introducing our LiNRP project coordinators

The LiNRP consists of 11 regional clusters and each of these clusters is supported by a Project Coordinator. We are grateful to this invaluable group who form the initial point of contact for the schools within your cluster, and a communication link between The Harmony Project and your schools.



Emma Vyvyan
Headteacher
Sky Primary and
Eden Project Nursery,
Cornwall



Rachel O'Sullivan
Senior lecturer
School of Education
Manchester Metropolitan
University



Beth Whibley
Teacher
Long Mead
Community Primary
School, Tonbridge



Brad Meadows
Assistant
Headteacher
Leyland Methodist
Schools, Lancashire

Epworth Trust



Jane Warwick
Primary PGCE
partnership and
wellbeing lead
University of
Cambridge Faculty of
Education

**University of
Cambridge (Anglia)**



Guy Underwood
Headteacher
Great Abington
Primary School,
Cambridge

**University of
Cambridge
(Cambridge)**



Sandra Gaudan
Learning development
and partnerships
manager
Primary Advantage
Federation

**Primary Advantage
Federation**



Deborah Saunders
Director of learning
An Daras Trust
(Gateway to Cornwall)

**An Daras
Cornwall**



Catherine Wright
Environmental
and sustainability
officer Northern Star
Academies Trust

**Northern Star
Academy Trust**



Anna Iliffe
Primary curriculum
lead
Cornwall Education
Learning Trust

Kent

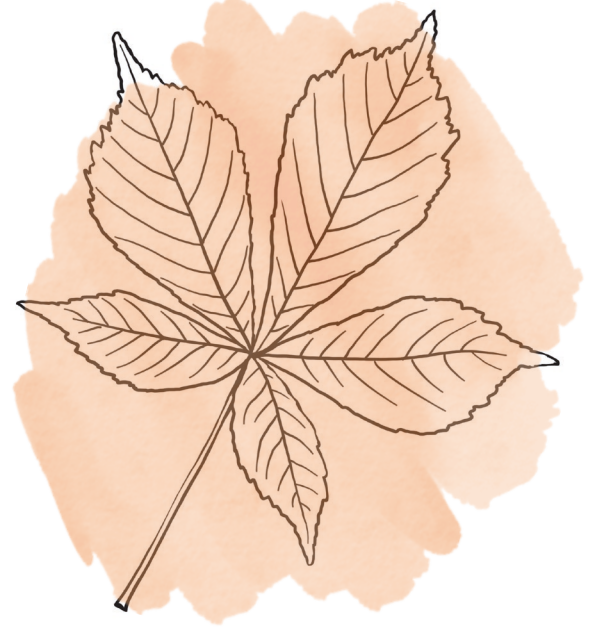


Nic Gorry
Headteacher
Leintwardine Endowed
CE Primary School,
Herefordshire

Herefordshire

Finding a place for nature connection

In each of our newsletters we will be highlighting some of the ways in which teachers have found a valuable place for Nature connection within the curriculum. For this first one we asked our Project Coordinators to suggest any children's books that they would recommend to share the awe and wonder of Nature through story.

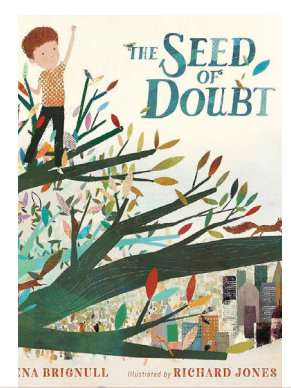
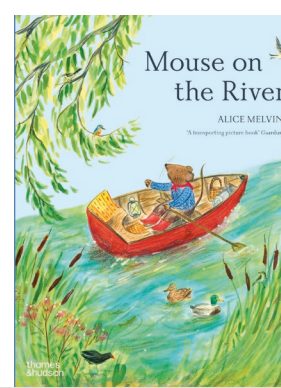
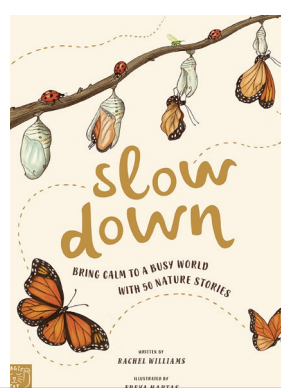
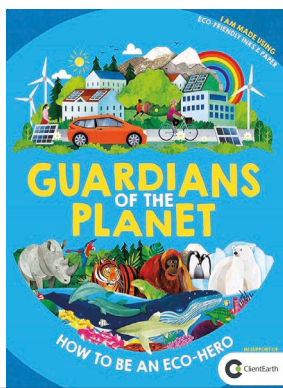
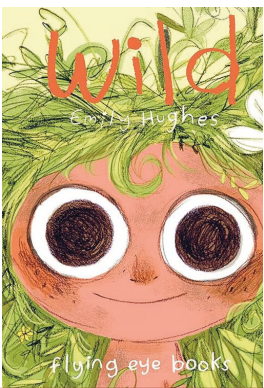
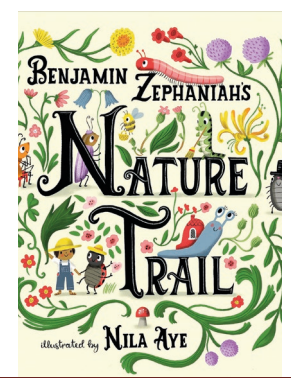
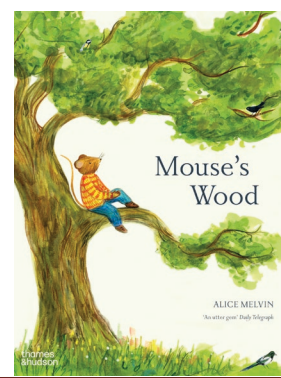
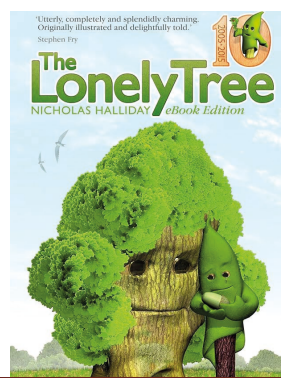
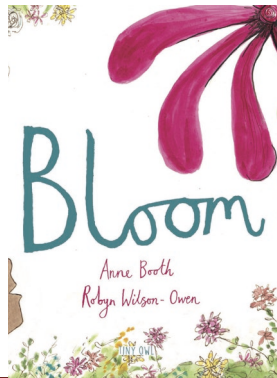
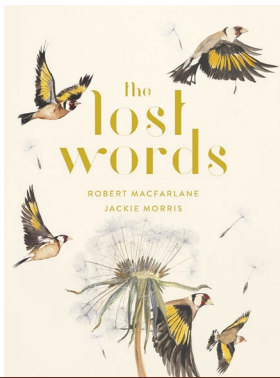


"We love The Lost Words by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris - an inspiring illustrated book which develops curiosity, exploration and talk. Using this book, we worked with a dance company and the Sensory Trust's Happy Wanderers group (elders who have dementia) and developed a creative piece which is likely to contribute to a performance at Heligan Gardens in Summer 2026."

Emma Vyvyan

"Packed with animals and minibeasts galore, this imaginative rhyming text is perfect for reading aloud and inspiring small children to go on their own Nature Trail."

Catherine Wright



"Wild is a take on 'Where the Wild Things Are'. This beautiful picture book is about a little girl who has known nothing but nature from birth. She was taught to talk by birds, to eat by bears and to play by foxes. It is awash with colour and full of atmosphere it offers visual treats to enchant children and indulge their wilder tendencies."

"The Seeds of Doubt is a beautiful picture book about believing in yourself - so good from a wellbeing point of view."

Jane Warwick

Spotlight on... Manchester

What is happening in other clusters?

In each newsletter we will share an insight into what is happening within different LiNRP clusters across the country. For this first newsletter, we wanted to highlight how the programme is structured. We are grateful to our colleagues in Manchester who illustrate this below.



Meet the Manchester coordinator

"I am very pleased to say 'hello' and delighted to be part of the fabulous LiNRP.

My name is Rachel O'Sullivan and I am co-ordinating a small but perfectly formed cluster of schools in the North-West, specifically in and around Manchester. I am a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University.

I love our precious and beautiful planet and the wonderous nature that surrounds us. I live in the Forest of Bowland which is a very beautiful, rural landscape. If you happen to bump into me on any day, in any weather, I can guarantee I will be out on an adventure with my binoculars and a magnifying glass, accompanied by my dogs Bluebell and Dolly.

I am so happy to be part of the LiNRP. We have to love something if we are to preserve it and teaching children to love nature seems the most beautiful and natural way to save it and them."



News and views from Manchester schools

"Year 1 at The Friars have loved learning about the life cycle of an oak tree, and in the spirit of Learning in Nature did this learning outside by getting into their waterproof jumpsuits and planting their very own acorns in a quiet area of our school grounds."

The Friars Primary School, Salford

"Our STEM ambassadors have been hard at work with the Spring Bulb project. We hope that we can monitor these and watch them grow. We have plans to build an allotment on site, which will be fantastic for when the St Mary's children begin our LiNR Project in the Spring! So many opportunities will come out of this new project and will allow our community to get involved too!"

St Mary's CE Primary School, Moss Side

Research from our case studies

One of the ways that CCCU and The Harmony Project will be capturing outcomes within the LiNRP will be through individual school case studies. We are so grateful to the 11 schools across the country that have put themselves forward as volunteers, including **The Friars Primary School**, Salford and **St Mary's CE Primary**, Moss Side.



Autumn term learning in the Sky cluster

"We have loved the science linked curriculum plans. We really enjoyed making skeletons from natural resources, it has sparked interest and helped keep the children engaged. I am finding that the children really look forward to nature based learning each week, even when we are going outside in the cold and rain. It has definitely had such an impact already!"

**Jennett's Park CE Primary School
Bracknell**



"We have been working on our enquiry 'How can I identify native trees through the seasons?' The children have learnt about different types of native trees and enjoyed using their leaf and twig dials to identify and map different trees during their fieldwork. They also visited Restormel Farm's glow worms conservation project."

**Sky Primary and Eden
Project Nursery**



**Cooking with
the
ingredients
that we
collected.**



**Eating
crumble!**



**We're going
on a leaf
hunt. Using
maths
vocabulary;
over, under,
through.**



**Comparing
leaves and
making leaf
rubbings.**



An example of a weekly log from St Kenelm's CE Primary School, Oxfordshire

What was the best thing about today?
Getting muddy / looking for and holding worms / being outside / making the wormery / having fun / adding fruit waste / ripping newspaper.

What did you learn today?
How to make the layers in the wormery and what is needed to make good compost.

Anything surprise you?
How many worms we found.

Gorran School, Cornwall



Autumn term learning in the Northern Star Academy Trust

“Learning in nature is a new and exciting journey for us as a school! For one of our very first sessions, we set off on a walk around the school grounds to discover what treasures we already have. To everyone’s delight, the class found apple trees growing right here at school! The children were thrilled to pick the apples, and we shared them with parents at the end of the day—a lovely surprise for all. To capture the moment, the children recorded their experience in their nature journals, making this a memorable start to our outdoor learning adventure.”

Byron Primary School, Bradford



“We went out to explore our local area with a focus on using our senses. We listened carefully as we stood next to the beck. We could hear rushing water, some cars and heard a bird singing. We saw different types of trees, a squirrel, a dog and some berries on a bush.”

Greatwood Community Primary and Nursery School, Skipton



Autumn term learning in the An Daras Trust

Wonderful Wild Tribe at Boyton Primary School

“Chestnuts Class have enjoyed an incredible half term of Wild Tribe, with sessions carefully designed to enrich the science curriculum while providing unforgettable outdoor experiences. The main focus of the lessons was learning about the parts and functions of a plant, understanding why plants are vital to life, and exploring the impact we have when we care for them.

Alongside these scientific concepts, pupils developed practical skills and confidence in the great outdoors. One of the highlights was using their fire-lighting skills to cook food—a memorable experience that combined teamwork and resilience with a sense of adventure.

The activities linked closely to the science curriculum, covering topics such as the functions of a plant, how water is transported through plants, seed dispersal, and the role of pollination and pollinators. These concepts were brought to life through hands-on learning that made science tangible and exciting.

Children took part in a wide range of creative and practical tasks. They made and labelled a flower using loose parts, experimented with water transport using celery sticks, and extracted seeds from sunflower heads before inserting them into apples to create bird feeders. They also built terrariums, crafted medallions using palm drills, lit fires with flint and steel, and whittled sticks for toasting marshmallows. Each activity encouraged curiosity and problem-solving while developing fine motor skills and independence.

Beyond the science curriculum, these sessions nurtured leadership, teamwork, resilience, and creativity. Wild Tribe provides a safe space where “the loud find calm and the quiet find confidence.” It has been wonderful to see Chestnuts Class thrive outdoors, learning skills that will stay with them for life.”

Boyton Primary School, Launceston



Autumn term learning in the Primary Advantage Federation

Autumn Adventures!

"Year 2 have been exploring the Dalston Curve Garden on an autumn scavenger hunt! The children loved searching for colourful leaves, tiny mushrooms, and all the seasonal surprises hiding around the garden. After their adventure, they got creative with tissue paper, making bright autumn trees and leafy artwork inspired by everything they found. It was a fun-filled afternoon of exploring, creating, and celebrating autumn!"

Holy Trinity CE Primary School, Hackney




Autumn term learning in Herefordshire

Reception Class have loved their LiNRP sessions.

"We've had an incredible time exploring the outdoors! The children have crafted instruments from natural materials, shaped creations from found objects, and gathered a wonderful collection of nature's treasures to use back in class. Along the way, we even met some friendly sheep living in our outdoor learning field!"

Storytime under the open sky has been a real highlight, and our curiosity led us to plant seeds discovered while investigating apples. Both children and staff have loved diving into our Diversity topic and can't wait for the more adventures!"

Leintwardine Endowed CE Primary School, Herefordshire



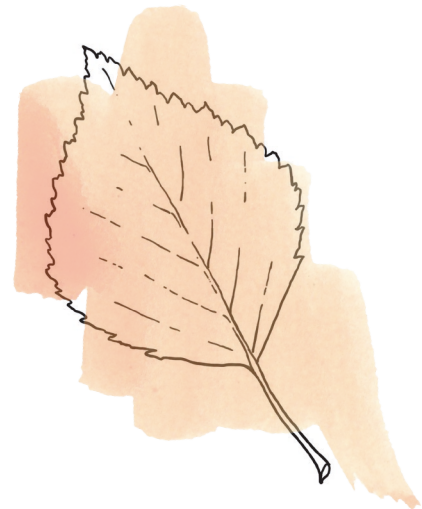
Which birds made this nest?
Bonnie

If a bird comes back and finds its nest has gone, will it be sad?
Finley

Are the birds safe now?
Nora

How did the birds make that nest?
Grace

How did the nest come down?
Zac



"We launched our 'growing site' with parents and families this term with Year 6 planning and leading sessions for their younger peers as well as guests across the whole day. The children harvested the produce grown over the summer and worked with a real chef to produce some vegetable delights for everyone.

Our whole school work at our forest school site continues and particular highlights have been Year 3 making their own 'stone age tools' to link with their theme.

Year 5 have been busy at our forest school site using tools to build Wikis related to their North American theme. This also links to our values of 'ultimate trust' using a variety of saws and tools in the woods safely and not damaging living trees or the landscape."

Madley Primary School, Hereford



Autumn term learning in the Cambridge cluster

“Reception pupils have been exploring nature through their senses; being curious about all the biodiversity they can find on our site and in their local area.

Through their Science work they have been exploring the following areas: identifying, grouping and classifying whilst observing over time how areas change. Developing their vocabulary and learning from experts in the groups developed confidence, cooperation and responsibility.”

Great Abingdon Primary School, Cambridge



Tuning in to the positive impact of Nature on our wellbeing

To hear more listen to a [podcast](#) about the science of being in Nature by the Van Tulleken brothers. It provides really convincing evidence.



Autumn term learning at The Epworth Trust

“As part of our LiNRP work with The Harmony Project, the children took part in a learning walk to explore the school’s nature areas. This experience was closely linked to our science unit on living things and their habitats, allowing pupils to observe and reflect on the natural environment around them.

The children then presented their findings creatively using Keynote, showcasing both their knowledge and their digital presentation skills.”

Leyland Methodist Schools, Lancashire



Autumn learning at Doubletrees School

We are delighted to welcome a small group of specialist schools to the LiNRP, including **Doubletrees School** and **Bosvena School** in Cornwall. Lisa Woodhouse and James Illiffe will be leading the research in their school settings and will undoubtedly make a valuable contribution to our research.

“Maple Class have thoroughly enjoyed their outdoor learning sessions, with many of our learners showing growing confidence and independence each week.

The children explored our sensory garden and took part in a scavenger hunt, carefully seeking out different natural items using their own problem-solving skills. They have been clearing the old plants from the polytunnel to prepare the soil for spring, working independently with tools, demonstrating great perseverance, and taking part in discussions about nature’s recycling process. They then used natural materials to design and create their own faces, inspired by the artist Andy Goldsworthy.

Maple Class also planted spring bulbs in their new outdoor area, with pupils taking ownership of their planting spaces and proudly completing the task with minimal support.”

Doubletrees School, St Blazey



Research, Reading and Resources

You will be aware that there is now a wealth of research around wellbeing and Nature connection in general and we very much hope that our findings from the LiNRP will make a valuable contribution to this, with our particular focus on children and curriculum. Some of our LiNRP colleagues have shared suggestions of research, reading and resources that they have found particularly useful.

Two [reports](#) published by *The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom* confirm that high quality learning in natural environments can deliver a wide range of positive health and learning outcomes.

Recommendation from Sky Primary and Eden Project Nursery

Waterways, Wildlife and Wellbeing School Impact Report

An impact report from the Waterways, Wildlife and Wellbeing project that was designed collaboratively by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOTC) and the Canal & River Trust, with advice from University of Derby's Nature Connectedness Research Group.

Over an 18 month period, CLOTC and Canal & River Trust supported schools in the West Midlands to help students connect with the natural environment, enhance wellbeing, and embed learning beyond the classroom across the curriculum (LOTC).

This project was funded through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (by Defra, Environmental Agency, Natural England and National Lottery Heritage Fund).

Impact Report created by Canal & River Trust with input from CLOTC. Published June 2024.



Learning Outside the Classroom: in natural environments

Two new (2022) reports published by Natural England confirm that high quality learning outside the classroom in natural environments can deliver a wide range of positive health and learning outcomes.

Summary created by CLOTC. Published November 2022

[Read the summary](#)



Recommendations from Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)

Wellbeing focused research:

[*Psychological benefits of a biodiversity-focussed outdoor learning program for primary school children \(Harvey, Montgomery, Harvey, Hall, Gange and Watling, 2020\).*](#)

Attainment focused research:

[*Getting more from getting out: increasing achievement in literacy and science through ecological fieldwork: Education 3-13: Vol 44 , No 6*](#)

Happy By Nature

Bringing a daily dose of nature into the school day and beyond.

Happy By Nature is our brand-new schools programme, created especially for primary-aged children. Our ambition is to reach 1 million children across the UK by 2028, helping schools embed nature into everyday learning and play. Join us on a joyful journey around the world from the depths of the rainforest to the icy poles, across our oceans and through the wild spaces of the UK.



Wildflower seed bombs

Age: 7-14

Topic: Conservation and Biology

Time: 1 hour (plus time to dry)



Science resources to support outdoor learning



Year 1 Science lessons pack
What kind of superhero do I want to be?



Year 2 Science lessons pack
What do I need to be healthy?



Year 3 Science lessons pack
How can we identify native trees in autumn?



Autumn 1

Year 1 – [What kind of superhero do I want to be?](#)

Year 2 – [What do I need to be healthy?](#)

Year 3 – [How can we identify native trees in autumn?](#)

Year 4 – [How did the Anglo-Saxons farm and how was it different from today?](#)

Year 5 – [What journey does our river take?](#)

Year 6 – [What would it have been like to live in World War II?](#)

Autumn 2

Year 1 – [What stories could our toys and games tell?](#)

Year 2 – [Why should we change the way we travel?](#)

Year 3 – [How did life change from the Stone Age to the Iron Age?](#)

Year 4 – [How can we prepare for a Tudor banquet?](#)

Year 5 – [How can we ensure our seas and oceans stay amazing?](#)

Year 6 – [How can we learn to live in peace?](#)



Year 5 Science lessons pack
How can we ensure our seas and oceans stay amazing?



We are about to share our science resources for Spring 1.. If you would like to receive a copy, or would welcome our Spring EYFS resources, please email Catherine: catherine@theharmonyproject.org.uk



Year 6 Science lessons pack
How can we learn to live in peace?



Next steps

If your focus class took part in Learning in Nature provision during Half Term 1, you will need to ensure that you have completed the questionnaire below.

[Review of Half Term 1 \(Sept - Oct 2025\)](#)

If your focus class took part in Learning in Nature provision during Half Term 2, you will need to ensure that you have completed the questionnaire below before Friday 2 January 2026.

[Review of Half Term 2 \(Nov - Dec 2025\)](#)

(Please remember that you can use some of your LiNRP grant funding to facilitate release time to enable staff to complete the questionnaires if needed).

In January 2026 we will launch the CCCU portal – further details will be shared once all LiNRP colleagues have had a restful and well-deserved break ...