

## 'Roots & Shoots' awards 2023.

On 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2021, Goat Lees Primary School joined the Jane Goodall Roots & Shoots Programme which is part of the Jane Goodall Institute. Roots & Shoots is guided by the founding principles and extraordinary vision of Dr Jane Goodall, renowned primatologist, environmentalist and humanitarian. Her firm belief that young people, when informed and empowered, when they realise that what they do truly makes a difference, can indeed change the world. With tens of thousands of young people in over 65 countries, the Roots & Shoots network branches out across the globe, connecting youth of all ages who share a common desire to help make our world a better place.

Since joining this amazing project, we have endeavoured to increase the biodiversity of our own school grounds, take part in as many projects as we can as a school to help the environment, and tried to also create areas where the children can let nature help their mental wellbeing. We have also been able to achieve many awards from organisations like RSPB (Wild Challenge), Woodland Trust (Green Schools) Eco School Green Flag (Distinction) and Kent Wildlife Trust (Wilder Kent).



This year, we had the amazing news that we had been chosen to be one of the nine schools selected to be part of the Jane Goodall, Roots & Shoots Awards, 2023. To be one of the chosen schools, was a huge achievement as there are well over 1000 schools in the UK alone who are part of this education programme. We were lucky enough to be chosen back in 2021 but, due to the Covid Pandemic, that was a virtual award ceremony. This time we had to travel up to the Barbican Centre in London to be there in person.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, four lucky children who take part in all things environmental in school, joined two members of staff to travel up to the awards ceremony. After a long but fun journey, we found our way to the venue, set up our display area and then spent the morning discussing our projects and campaigns to everything who visited our stand (Aquasmart - saving water, Recyclabots and EMR - recycling scrap metal, The Ironman - upcycling crisp packets, (Pre)Loved Clothes Sale - reducing clothes into landfill, Green Tree School Status - planting trees, Toilet Twinning Scheme - raising funds to build toilets in Uganda & Mawali, SwitchOff Fortnight - saving energy, and then achieving our Eco School Green Flag status with Distinctions). The children did a fantastic job; eagerly explaining to every visitor about all the exciting things we have achieved, present and past. We also had the great honour of having a visit from Dr Jane Goodall, who was extremely interested in what we had been doing and spent time talking to all the staff and children to find out more.



After a delicious lunch, everyone went to the theatre area to watch all the schools' video presentations, and the wonderful Trashion Show of recycled and upcycled outfits presented by the Accrington St Christopher's girls. It was so inspiring seeing what all the other schools had been doing and we came away with even more ideas for the future.



Then it was time for the award ceremony itself. First, we received our trophy, alongside all the other schools, for being chosen for the Roots & Shoots Awards which was very exciting as the prizes were handed out by Dr Jane Goodall, herself. Then came the prizes for the Action Climate: Race to Zero Award where The Do Schools sponsored three prizes of £1,500 and we were one of the lucky schools to receive one of these prizes. Whilst we were getting over this completely unexpected accolade, we found out we had also won the overall 'Most Outstanding Group' Award sponsored by the RSPCA - we were overjoyed but in shock. It was extremely overwhelming to be recognised for our efforts by such prestigious groups.



Award photos by Rubin Besureis

The whole day was totally amazing, and such a fantastic experience for us all.