

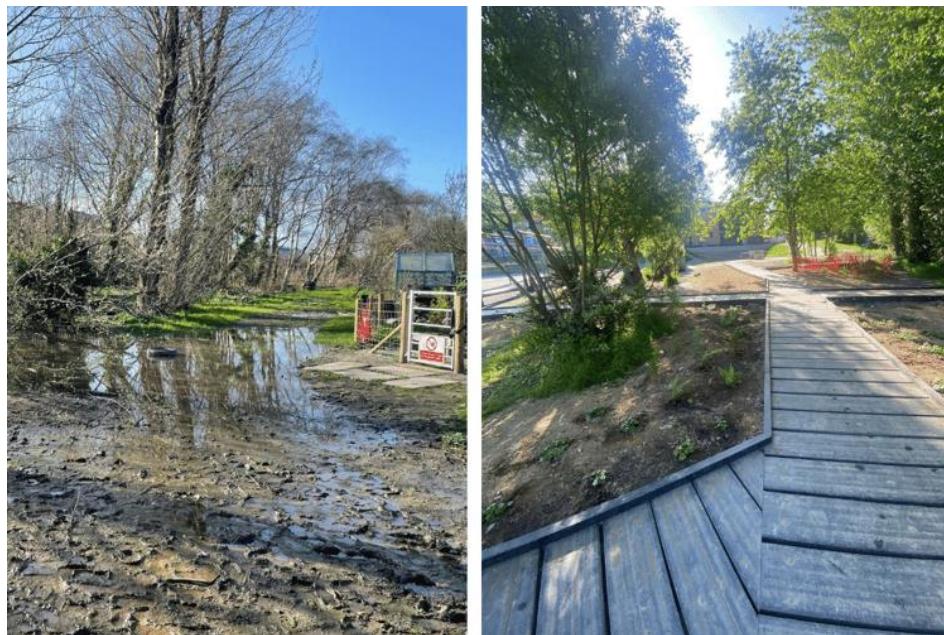
## **YSGOL PLASCRUG'S OUTDOOR TRANSFORMATION**

Ysgol Gynradd Gymunedol Plascrug serves more than 400 children from an incredibly diverse community, with over 40 home languages. The school is fortunate to have its own playing field, pond, and small woodland, all of which offer pupils and multiple community groups a safe traffic-free place to connect with nature, within a short walk from Aberystwyth town, as well as a much-needed outdoor space for families without gardens. However, for decades, the access route to the wooded area and school field had been compacted, waterlogged, and inaccessible for much of the year, with no meaningful biodiversity. The Year 1 yard, used daily by families during drop off and pick up, was predominantly concrete.

Over the last 18 months, the PTA has led a major effort, combining over £40k of fundraising (primarily from grants) with significant in-kind contributions to transform the school grounds into a nationally award-winning nature area for the benefit of the town.

### **UNITING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Drainage of the access route was impossible due to a high water table from the river once running through the grounds. The PTA decided to “work with the water”, and – enabled by successfully applying for several grants – in December 2024, commissioned a local landscape gardener, ML Landscapes, to construct a 100m boardwalk connecting the concrete area near the main school buildings and the field. The project has successfully combined in-kind contributions of wildflower seeds and plants from local allotments, and over 200 people – spanning three generations – from the local community volunteering at weekend “tidy-up” events.



Before and after photographs illustrate some of the dramatic transformation of Ysgol Plascrug's outdoor area.

Pupils take great pride and ownership in their school grounds through planting and watering schedules, forest school, and participating in tidy-ups. The new polytunnel enables children, many of whom do not have gardens, to observe plants grow from seed to plate through hands-on involvement.



Plascrug pupils grow their own tomatoes in their new polytunnel!

The nature area was officially opened by Elin Jones MS at Ysgol Plascrug's summer fayre in June 2025. Elin said

*"It opens up nature and it opens up outdoor activities [which is] more important in busy towns such as Aberystwyth, and [so that people] in the centre of those towns have the access they need to outdoor spaces and to access nature. This work is going to make that activity accessible for all."*



Michael Allman, Chair of Plascrug School's governing body, Hannah Lee and Joanna Jordan from the PTA, Headteacher Carol Macy, Elin Jones MS, Steve Williams, Aberystwyth Town Council Assets and Facilities Manager, and Cllr Alun Williams. (Photo: Julie McNicholls Vale).

The project also motivated a visit by Ceredigion Preseli MP Ben Lake, to view the transformation first hand, in October 2025. Ben Lake said

*"It's been lovely to visit Ysgol Plascrug today and to see the new boardwalk which is fantastic. Members of the Eco Council have shown us around and have explained just how much of a difference it has made to their ability to enjoy this wonderful piece of nature they have on the school grounds".*



Headteacher Carol Macy, centre, was delighted to welcome Ben Lake MP, Cllr Wyn Thomas, and Ceredigion Council staff to Ysgol Plascrug. (Photo: Julie McNicholls Vale).

### **NATIONAL RECOGNITION**

Ysgol Plascrug's innovative project was recognised at the [Tidy Wales Awards 2025](#), winning the "Uniting for Environmental Impact" award, the only organisation in Ceredigion to win a Tidy Wales award in 2025. The citation reads:

*"Ysgol Plascrug's community garden has united people from all walks of life. More than 200 volunteers – including students, parents, teachers, and other local groups – worked together to turn a muddy, hard-to-reach area into a vibrant, accessible green space. By building a boardwalk and polytunnel, they have created a place for outdoor learning and enjoying nature all year round. The project demonstrates how a shared vision can build a cohesive community and a welcoming space for everyone."*

Headteacher Carol Macy said:

*"Our new boardwalk and nature area have been pivotal in empowering us to get our hundreds of children outside – for both play and learning – amongst nature as often as possible, as well as providing a substantially-improved resource for local community groups. We gratefully acknowledge funding from the Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature Grant Scheme – through the Ceredigion Nature Partnership, Aberystwyth Town Council, CKs, Aberystwyth War Memorial Trust, and Learning Through Landscapes which has made this transformative work possible."*

In November 2025, Plascrug won Primary School PTA of the Year at Parentkind's UK-wide PTA Awards for developing its outdoor environments with pupil input, involving volunteers, and promoting environmental education. The Parentkind charity is the largest membership body of Parent Teacher Associations and other parent groups across the UK, comprising over 12,500 PTAs. Alex Peace-Gadsby OBE, Parentkind's Chair of Trustees who hosted the awards commented:

*"The school follows the Eco Schools initiative that encourages student engagement with sustainability, and achieved Platinum Status for this in 2016 so you can see how seriously it takes this ongoing work."*



Volunteers planting at an Ysgol Plascrug weekend “tidy-up” event.

Headteacher Carol Macy said:

*“The transformation of Ysgol Plascrug’s outdoor environment has had an enormous positive impact, and we’re delighted the hard work of our school community has received national recognition! With many of our pupils living within town, these developments provide a unique opportunity for children to build continuous relationships with a natural space over a number of years. In a time when more and more children are not being introduced to the outdoors, the benefits of this project are far reaching and long lasting. Our school grounds provide opportunities for community groups beyond our diverse school community to benefit from a green and wooded space within easy walking distance of town!”*

Ysgol Plascrug’s outdoor area was featured on S4C’s *Prynhawn Da* (13 November 2025) and can be watched from the [Cambrian News article](#), courtesy of Tinopolis/S4C.

More recently, Plascrug’s Eco Council has been successful with its application to the Woodland Trust to fund 60 trees, and Plascrug has secured Keep Wales Tidy “School Orchard” and “Food Growing Garden” packages to develop the outdoor area further. It was also shortlisted for a Ceredigion Council Caru Ceredigion Community Organisation Award in December 2025.