The seeds of my project were planted as I was inspired by a pupil group of environmental champions in our school: the Year 10 Climate Change Group. Their commitment to implementing eco-friendly initiatives had already driven tangible change in our school: more recycling bins, the eradication of single-use plastic from our canteen and the introduction of a school logo embossed re-useable water bottle to buy. The motto of the Climate Change Group, 'Think Smart; Waste Less' was being rooted into the culture of our Catholic school community by this pioneering group; the foundations of whose success were being dug by our school's Director of Ethos.

Scattering the Seeds

My project idea blossomed from this pioneering group's flourishing community purpose. I asked: Could I support further growth of environmental responsibility within our school culture? Could I extend their hopeful
branches of care for our common home beyond our school gates and into our local community? From this seed of inspiration, underpinned by our school's Catholic ethos of stewardship, grew the roots of my project: 'Growing a Culture of 'Care of Our Common Home".

I felt the "connect and co-create" principles of Mark Robinson's 'Multiplying Leadership' model applied to my project as I began scattering the seeds of collaboration and connection. As a leader of a Character Education team, I began to plan a five week unit devoted to the growth of environmental responsibility and stewardship amongst year 9 pupils. It was fundamental that I empowered the pupil Climate Change Group to create activities to further embed a culture of environmental responsibility and grow Catholic stewardship within the soil of our school community.

Growing Cultural Capital

I organised a talk for year 9 from charity CAFOD.

Mark spoke to the year group about the global climate crisis and CAFOD’s response in disaster zones. He linked his talk to our responsibility of stewardship.
A Blossoming of Ideas

Over the 5 week block, all pupils in year 9 took part in a range of learning activities to **grow their knowledge** of the global climate change crisis and an appreciation of how the 'Laudato Si' bestows them with a special responsibility to **exercise stewardship**. The synthesis of ideas led to pupils measuring their own growth in environmental responsibility against a 'Character Toolkit' and concluded in a **creative challenge** to design a new page for 2023-24 pupil planners which promoted the 'Think Smart; Waste Less' slogan. From this core unit further shoots have continued to grow including a library display promoting a selection of eco-reads in advance of 'Earth Day' by the Climate Change Group in collaboration with our school librarian.

1. **Scattering the Seeds of Change: Pupils’ Creations**
2. Stations of Creation: Our own Pledges to the Earth.

The Community Branches

To nurture the care for our common home beyond our school gates, I connected with a colleague with a passion for community volunteering. We identified pupils in years 9 and 10 whose self-esteem and sense of achievement could flourish through gifting service to others. This discrete unit of 'Volunteering and Service to Others' for these pupils coincided with Character Education IAG. Two of our local parish churches agreed to welcome our pupils over a number of Friday afternoons to tidy the church grounds and gardens; building an appreciation amongst the pupils of how selfless acts of caring for the environment can instil within us gratitude and growth of joy and pride within the community.
3. Growing Pride and Joy: St Joseph’s Church, Birtley and article published in ‘Cardinal’s Virtues’: our community ethos newsletter.

'My Toolkit': Reflections on My Leadership

My project was rooted firmly in the principle that cultural education must have meaning for young people. Collaborating with the pupil Climate Change Group ensured the project inspired enthusiasm for their work amongst younger pupils; therefore leading to further growth of environmental responsibility in our school culture. As I included more voices and more skills from across our staff, from charity representation and from wider community links, I felt I was tending a net reminiscent of that embodied in Madeleine Church's 'Knots and Threads' model.

Undoubtedly, the 'Cultural Leadership in Education' course has strengthened my leadership toolkit and resolve to implement meaningful cultural opportunities for young people.

Jenny Holywell