



Green-Schools

An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland

Summary

An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland operates the Green-Schools programme in Ireland on behalf of FEE. Green-Schools, (internationally known as Eco-Schools), is an international environmental education programme, environmental management system and award scheme that promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole school action for the environment. In Ireland, Green-Schools is operated as a three-way partnership between An Taisce, Local Authorities and the schools. This partnership has proved very successful, with Local Authorities working closely with schools on the ground and the Green-Schools Office of An Taisce running the administration, coordination, and development of the programme. Local Authorities, Greenstar (Ireland's leading integrated waste management company), Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland and The Wrigley Company Ltd. provide financial support for the Green-Schools programme in Ireland. The programme is also financially supported the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. Currently, (June 2006), there are 2,330 schools (Montessori, pre-school, primary, secondary & special) in Ireland registered for the programme. This represents over 55% of all schools in Ireland. 895 schools in Ireland have received the Green-Flag.

Irish schools participating in the programme are introduced to the themes on a phased basis. Schools are encouraged to focus on one theme at a time, rather than trying to address a wide range of environmental topics in one go. Schools in Ireland initially address the theme of Litter & Waste, working through the seven steps and are awarded their first Green Flag on this basis. Awarded schools have to renew their award every two years and in this time they have to add a new theme to their programme. So, after Litter and Waste, they introduce Energy to their programmes, then Water and then Travel. Therefore, a school working on the Travel theme will be participating in the Green-Schools programme a minimum of 6-7 years. At present 895 Irish schools are at various stages of working on the energy theme.

End-user area	Target Audience	Technical
New buildings	Citizens	Energy efficiency
Refurbishment of buildings	Households	Heating
Transport and mobility	Property owners	Cooling
Financial instruments	Schools and universities	Appliances
Industry	Decision makers	Lighting
Legal initiatives (regulations, directives, etc)	Local and regional authorities	CHP
Planning issues	Transport companies	District Heating
Sustainable communities	Utilities	Solar energy
User behaviour	ESCOs	Biomass
Education	Architects and engineers	Wind
Other	Financial institutions	Geothermal
	Other	Hydro power
		Other

Context

Unlike a once-off project, it is a long-term programme that introduces participants (students, teachers, parents and the wider community) to the concept of an environmental management system. However, Green-Schools is far more than just an environmental management system. It fosters a strong sense of citizenship and leadership among participants that spreads far outside the school into the wider community. It also promotes a strong sense of teamwork among teachers, students and the wider community to reach a common high level goal. It flattens and democratises school management structures. It brings children into the decision-making



process and makes them responsible for their decision and actions. In fact it could be best described as being 'more than the sum of its parts'.

To successfully implement the Green-Schools programme for Energy, a school will be expected to:

- Establish the seven steps of the programme for Energy (i.e. Committee, Environmental Review, Action Plan, Monitoring and Evaluation, Curriculum Work, Informing and Involving, and Green Code), and
- To have made demonstrable progress in reducing energy consumption in the school and in the wider community.

An Energy handbook is provided by the Green-Schools Office of An Taisce as a resource for teachers and students aiming to inform and guide the successful implementation of the Green-Schools programme in relation to the Energy theme. Teacher training seminars are also held on a regular basis to upskill teachers and practitioners. A dynamic case study and best practice based website is also provided to all involved in the programme (www.greenschoolsireland.org).

Objectives

The aim of the Green-Schools programme in relation to the Energy theme is to increase the awareness of energy issues (esp. climate change) among the whole school and wider community and to improve energy efficiency and consumption within the school and the wider community. Implementing a few simple "no cost" and "low cost" ideas for conserving energy has dramatically reduced electricity and heating bills within the school (and home) and consequentially reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Schools involved in the programme are more aware of energy efficiency and occupant behaviour when it comes to buildings and have been demanding and investing in such qualities in new buildings and refurbishments. Furthermore, these schools are switching to renewable energy suppliers and are investigating renewable energy production on site.

Process

The key process to the Energy theme is the Seven Step EU EMAS/IOS14000 type process of the Green-Schools programme itself. The key factor to the success of Green-Schools is its universal adaptability. Schools fit the seven steps of the programme to their needs and circumstances and **do not try** and fit themselves to a prescribed set of targets. Schools review and measure their own impact and energy consumption and then develop and implement their own solutions. Monitoring and evaluation of progress is also part of the programme. Furthermore, informing and involving the wider is a very large part of the programme and has proved a very successful aspect to the programme. The seven steps of the programme are outlined below:



Schools that establish all seven elements and achieve recorded improvements in their environment are eligible to apply for the Green-Schools award, the Green-Flag.



Financial resources and partners

As mentioned above funding for Green-Schools in Ireland is from:

- Local Authorities – 130,000 Euro per annum
- Sponsors – 180,000 Euro per annum
- Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government – 50,000 Euro once off contribution to date

Costs - 5 full time staff and associated expenses (office costs, travel expenses, day to day administration, etc.), Green-Flags, award ceremonies.

N.B. It should be noted that costs and resources are for the whole Green-Schools i.e. all themes (waste & litter, water, energy)

Currently, there is a pilot partnership programme between the Green-Schools Office and Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) for teacher training seminars. This will contribute 5,500 Euro to the Green-Schools programme.

There is also a pilot Schools Travel programme between the Green-Schools Office and the Dublin Transportation Office (DTO). This is funded under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 and will provide 435,000 Euro funding for two years. However, this funding is only allocated for the development of the Green-Schools Travel programme.

Results

To date 2,330 Irish schools are involved in the Green-Schools programme. This represents 55% of all schools in Ireland and equates to 550,000 students and over 30,000 teachers. 895 schools have achieved the Green-Flag. These schools will all be at various stages of the Energy theme. Research into the impact of the Green-schools programme in 2001, indicated that when it comes to diversion of waste from landfill awarded Green-Schools were showing an average reduction of 45% waste to landfill in comparison to schools only starting the programme. Recent updating of this work is indicating that this reduction of waste to landfill is now at well over 60%. This equates to a direct diversion of waste from landfill from Green-Schools in Ireland of around 5 tonnes per day. Estimates of the indirect diversion from landfill achieved by Green-Schools i.e. in students' homes and in the wider community is probably a factor of tens times the direct level. This equates to thousands of tonnes diverted from landfill every year.

From an energy anecdotal evidence and individual case studies and examples would indicate 40-50% decreases in energy consumption and consequently in Carbon emissions achieved by Green-Schools.

The 2001 research also looked at impacts of the Green-Schools programme on student environmental knowledge-awareness, behaviour and opinion leadership. This work indicated a significant behaviour change associated with the programme and also indicated that the change is associated with opinion leadership and not awareness. The role and leadership of the teacher was also found to be pivotal.

The full report is available at:

www.greenschoolsireland.org/Javascript/tiny_mce/plugins/filemanager_net/files/materials/ireland_research_report_2001.pdf

Lessons learned and repeatability

Green-Schools is an international programme. It is currently operating in 37 countries world-wide and has been and continues to be very successful in Ireland. As mentioned above it is universally adaptable. Research indicates that this success is very much associated with well-trained and motivated teachers acting as opinion leaders within the schools and this leadership cascading into the community. Therefore, a programme based on teacher training, upskilling and motivation will be strongly effective and sustainable.



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