



Education for Sustainable Development

Keep Wales Tidy 2016



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gymru'n wales
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Education for Sustainable Development

The purpose of this document is to give an overview of the Eco-Schools Programme and the potential for expansion in the field of education for sustainable development in Wales. It provides a concise summary of considerations and suggests some recommended actions which would create further impact based on our experience and learning to date. Links to further information is included at the end of this document but if more information is required, please contact us.

Keep Wales Tidy's Action Paper on Education for Sustainable development provides an overview of the Eco-Schools programme which has been running in Wales for over 20 years.

It makes five recommendations that would firmly embed the programme as a methodology to deliver schools' obligations under the Successful Futures Curriculum and provide performance indicators for Local Authority delivery of the Well-Being and Future Generations Act goals within the education sector.

The Eco-Schools Programme, developed by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in response to the UN Conference on Environment & Development in 1994 and now run in over 60 countries World-wide, is an action based learning model; pupil-led, with an adult co-ordinator.

It provides a structure which acts as a vehicle for delivering environmental education within the school curriculum, and provides the learners with the real-life experiences of influencing their school and community's impact on the environment.

It's the pupils who drive the changes and monitor the results, providing a clear sense of action and consequence. Those actions make the learning experience much more meaningful and makes environmental awareness and action a full part of the life and ethos of individual young people, their families and the school, as evidenced in two independent studies by Uned Pobl a Gwaith and the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David.

About 450,000 Welsh pupils currently attend an Eco-School (in 92% of Welsh Schools), across all sectors, with a significant percentage having made a long-term commitment to the programme.

Keep Wales tidy proposes the following five recommendations in the action paper:

- In addition to the funding from Natural Resources and Food department, consider that support should be received from other government departments in view of the learning development through the programme, to further support the delivery of national targets.
- Use support of Eco-Schools to evidence implementation of the requirements of the Future Generations Bill and Carbon Reduction Commitments.
- Increase awareness and understanding for all school personnel of how the Eco-Schools Programme supports the fostering and application of sustainable development principles.
- Promote to schools the opportunities provided by the Eco-Schools Programme to a) motivate pupils' reading, writing and practical understanding of maths; b) support pupil understanding of ESD; and, c) use the outdoors for learning across the curriculum.
- Keep Wales Tidy would also welcome support for an Eco-Campus programme pilot in Wales to capture learning and experience with a view to extending to all FE and HE institutions.

Description

Eco-Schools is an international programme designed to promote sustainable development through education and awareness-raising that leads to taking action locally. Keep Wales Tidy, which manages the programme in Wales, state that:

'Our mission is to encourage local action to protect and enhance our environment contributing towards a sustainable future...working to encourage people to value their environment and take responsibility for their local area'

The Eco-Schools Programme was developed by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in response to the UN Conference on Environment & Development in 1994. Since then, the Eco-Schools Programme has been working with school staff, children and young people to achieve these aims of sustainability awareness and responsibility. The programme now includes nearly 90% of all Schools in Wales, with 50% of those achieving Green Flag or Platinum status.

The programme is an action based learning model; pupil-led, with an adult co-ordinator. It highlights the importance of actively involving the wider community in the work. It provides a structure which acts as a vehicle for delivering environmental education, and also provides the learners with the real-life experiences of influencing their school's impact on the environment. It's the pupils who drive the changes and monitor the results, providing them with a clear sense of action and consequence. Those actions; through participation, campaigns, active communication and activity days, makes the learning experience much more meaningful than simply learning about the theory alone and makes environmental awareness and action a full part of the life and ethos of the school.

Funding has come from the Welsh Government (from the People and Environment Division), and from the Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) and Waste Awareness Wales.

Impact and Considerations

Keep Wales Tidy firmly believes that the Eco-Schools Wales programme inspires and empowers pupils to be leaders of change in their communities and contributes to the aspiration of showing how Wales can lead the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Since the programme's launch in Wales in 1994, Keep Wales Tidy's strategic emphasis has been its introduction across the majority of Welsh schools, ensuring the programme is firmly embedded in school life and is progressing schools towards attainment of the International Eco-Schools Green Flag Award. Currently, around 450,000 Welsh pupils attend an Eco-School. Schools that are encouraged to highlight examples of sustainable development in action, with a long-term approach and a focus on preventative action. This level of engagement will create the critical mass which is necessary for delivering the 'Wales We Want' in the future.

Eco-Schools is an International Programme, now run in 60 countries, involving around 15 million students. It benefits from significant transnational experience and learning. For example, the USA website has clear links to research supporting the academic benefits of environmental education programmes on literacy, numeracy, critical thinking skills, science achievement, behaviour and attitudes toward learning. There is further evidence that Eco-Schools contributes to engaging socially excluded children and young people.¹

What our schools say:

"Pontycymer Primary has managed to develop a big impact approach to environmental improvement through the programme. Energy projects have culminated in solar panels being fitted. Waste projects have now moved up the hierarchy to actions such as making briquettes from waste materials for the local community".

"Pupils from Rhydyppennau Primary visited the Hilton Hotel in Cardiff to give them some advice on reducing their impact. They suggested sensor lights in bedrooms, labelling the half flush on toilets, replacing bottles with jugs of water and much more - reducing hotel electricity use by 30% and water consumption by 8%"

"Meadowbank Special School has been revelling in the glory of our achievements! Needless to say, the boosting of self-esteem and self-confidence are paramount to positive learning...By its very nature it is a multi-sensory, hands on experience that our children learn best from. The fact that pupils can see the results of their hard work, whether in real terms or in the visual image of charts and graphs is very important."

The 2007 Uned Pobl a Gwaith report revealed, most schools and stakeholders, including parents, felt that the Eco-Schools Wales programme had positively influenced both attitudes, behaviour, and had had a positive outcome in terms of environmental audit results.² An independent review in 2013 by the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David concluded the following aspects of the Eco-Schools programme:

Environmental

The programme makes a significant contribution to the aims of sustainability by targeting climate change, biodiversity, waste minimization and litter, transport, water and energy, local and global citizenship. Most schools indicated that they were having an improved environmental impact, which they attributed to the Programme.

Socio Economic

Eco-Schools provides opportunities for those facing social and economic deprivation across Wales. Teachers report an increase in positive social and economic effects on whole families and communities by the transference of skills and learning to the wider community and the opportunities it affords pupils to participate and feel empowered for change.

Lifelong Learning and Wider Skills Development

Eco-Schools was found to provide multiple opportunities for engagement in learning and wider skills development, not only for students but for their families and communities. The Programme stimulates community involvement and skill sharing, provides 'real-life' learning through problem solving and project-based activities, and can be easily adapted to all ages and abilities.

Delivery of Curriculum and ESDGC

Teachers at primary school level and in special education schools are able to deliver the programme with a whole school, cross curricular approach which supports learning and development. Secondary schools in Wales use the Programme within several subjects such as science, design and technology, PSE and geography, bringing those areas to life with 'real-world' learning.

An Taisce, in the Republic of Ireland have taken their Eco-schools programme further and have developed Eco-Campus as an extension of the Eco-Schools principle to Further and Higher Education institutions. As with the Eco-Schools programme, a campus will approach each award from a thematic (topic) point of view and actions are expected to be cumulative and continuous. The Green-Campus Programme has been in operation in Ireland since 2007. At present, over 20 Campuses are formally registered on the Programme, with nine awarded the Green Flag. The Foundation for Environmental Education are in the process of formally adopting the Eco-Campus programme in order to standardise the approach internationally. An International Panel of current participating countries and representation from relevant stakeholders has been established to develop and standardise the programme for formal FEE adoption by 2017.

Spotlight: An Taisce Eco-Campus

According to the Carbon Trust, annual energy costs for the Further and higher education (FHE) sector are around £400 million, resulting in CO₂ emissions of around 3 million tonnes per year. There is therefore both economic and environmental incentive for these institutions to engage in effective sustainability programmes. Green Campus (Eco-Campus) in the Republic of Ireland has seen substantial savings since its launch in 2007. The impact of FE and HE institution involvement in the programme has been significant in terms of waste and energy reduction, cost savings, student community involvement and sustainability awareness on a whole organisation level.

University College Cork was the first third level institution in the world to be awarded the Green-Flag. The intake of the university is around 30,000 students which is similar to the annual figures from the University of Cardiff and the University of South Wales respectively.

Initial results for the university programme showed a saving of €300,000 in waste management costs, reduction of waste to landfill by nearly 400 tonnes and an improvement in recycling levels from 21% to 60%. Furthermore, UCC also conserved around 20 million litres of Water.

The University Hospital Cork Campus includes an 850 Bed hospital and Maternity hospital and employs 3,500 staff with a student intake of an average 19,000 per year.

In 2 years (2012-14), through the Eco-Campus programme and the hospital's network of 120 Green Advocates, the hospital achieved:

- Reduced Gas consumption of 860mWh
- Electricity reduced by 1,185mWh - a 785 tonne reductions in their CO₂ emissions
- Water consumption reduced by 9.5 million litres
- 205 Tonnes of waste re-directed from landfill
- 5 Tonne increase in food waste recycling
- 77 Tonne increase in general recycling
- 21 Tonne decrease in Clinical Waste - through refining the recycling regime (Recycling cost: 1000 euro/tonne) - with further reductions identified in this area.

See:

Video Report, University Hospital Cork:

<https://media.heanet.ie/page/ef0a544d9d25c2258ac13cfe8da2cf2a>

Green Campus Ireland, (An Taisce): <http://www.greencampusireland.org/about-green-campus.php>

Recommended Actions

In the Eco-Schools programme, Wales is second only to Scotland where nearly 100% of schools are in the programme. The success in Scotland has been put down to the Scottish Executive Education Department adopting the programme as a performance measure within the framework for school improvement. According to the Eco-Schools Evaluation, several Project Officers in Wales asserted that the Programme would benefit from the government making “another push” for Eco-Schools as an effective way of delivering not only an environmental or sustainability agenda, but as an educational tool for lifelong and ‘real life’ learning skills.³

The Eco-Schools Programme provides an ideal platform to facilitate schools’ delivery of the Successful Futures Curriculum whilst also providing useful performance indicators for Local Authority delivery of the Well-Being and Future Generations Act goals within the education sector

The following recommendations were included in the 2014 evaluation report on Eco-Schools in Wales:

- In addition to the funding from Natural Resources and Food department, consider that support should be received from other government departments in view of the learning development through the programme, to further support the delivery of national targets.
- Use support of Eco-Schools to evidence implementation of the requirements of the Future Generations Bill and Carbon Reduction Commitments.
- Increase awareness and understanding for all school personnel of how the Eco-Schools Programme supports the fostering and application of sustainable development principles.
- Promote to schools the opportunities provided by the Eco-Schools Programme to a) motivate pupils’ reading, writing and practical understanding of maths; b) support pupil understanding of ESD; and, c) use the outdoors for learning across the curriculum.
- Keep Wales Tidy would also welcome support for an Eco-Campus programme pilot in Wales to capture learning and experience with a view to extending to all FE and HE institutions.

Policy Links:

Programme for Government in Wales

- [A curriculum for Wales – A curriculum for life](#)
- [Towards Zero Waste Strategy \(2010\)](#)
- [Climate Change Strategy for Wales \(2011\)](#)
- [Wellbeing and Future Generations Act \(2015\)](#)
- [National Curriculum for Wales](#)
- [National Literacy and Numeracy Framework](#)
- [Child Poverty Strategy \(2015\)](#)
- Recommendations contained in the [‘Successful Futures report’](#) released February 2015

Further Information:

Eco-Schools Wales: www.keepwalestidy.cymru/eco-schools

Eco- Schools International: www.eco-schools.org.uk

Foundation for Environmental Education: www.fee-international.org

References

¹ University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2014, *An Evaluation of the Eco-Schools Programme in Wales*

² University of Wales Trinity Saint David (2014), *Ibid*

³ University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2014, *Ibid*

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