Green-Schools Handbook
The Green-Schools Handbook provides information on the practical implementation of the Green-Schools programme. The Handbook is divided into 3 main sections:

Section 1 looks at the main aims, objectives and themes of the Green-Schools programme, examines its success both nationally and internationally and how it may be of benefit to your school, and explains how to register your school for the programme;

Section 2 looks at the seven steps involved in implementing the programme and provides examples for each step from schools both in Ireland and abroad;

Section 3 gives information on how and when the award should be applied for and renewed. Some important additional elements of the Green-Schools programme are also examined and details of useful contacts providing further resources and information are given.

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Section 1 WHAT IS ‘GREEN-SCHOOLS’?

Most young people care deeply about environmental issues, and wish to make a positive change in the environment around them. The Green-Schools programme provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in the entire school in a way that links to many curriculum subjects. The programme is based on the EU EMAS (Eco-Management and Auditing System) approach, and encompasses four principle aspects:

**Green-Schools is an international environmental education programme,** offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues from the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of the school. The Green-Schools programme is run by FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education), and is known internationally as ‘Eco-Schools’. Green-Schools is now represented in almost all European Union Member States, and various countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, South America, Oceania, and Asia. There are also some pilot projects taking place in other parts of the world.

For more information about the international programme: www.eco-schools.org

**Green-Schools is holistic.** It aims to make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and ethos of a school. This should include the students, teachers, non-teaching staff, and parents, as well as the Local Authority, the media, and local business. Green-Schools endeavours to extend learning beyond the classroom and develop responsible attitudes and commitment, both at home and in the wider community.

**Green-Schools is both a programme and an award scheme.** Any school using the guidelines given in this Handbook can adapt the programme to their needs. While the Green Flag award will be given to schools that complete all the essential elements of the Green-Schools programme, it should be remembered that the programme is flexible, and that different schools will find different routes to achieving Green-Schools status. Have a look at some of the case studies on our website (www.greenschoolsireland.org) to see how these schools have implemented their programmes. The Green Flag award is now established as a well respected and recognised eco-label.

**Green-Schools is a long-term programme.** The Green-Schools award as outlined above takes the form of a Green Flag. This can be flown outside school or displayed in the foyer. However, it is important to remember that the programme is one of continual reduction of the school’s environmental impacts. Therefore, the award requires renewal every two years. This links in with the themed nature of the Green-Schools programme as outlined in Section 1.3.
1.1 International and National Aspects of ‘Green-Schools’

International ‘Eco-Schools’

‘Eco-Schools’ is an initiative of FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education), and is referred to by a number of different names in member countries e.g. ‘Eco-Scholen’ in Belgium, ‘Eco-Schools’ in the UK and ‘Umweltshule’ in Germany (see www.eco-schools.org for more information). Green-Schools is the name used in Denmark and Ireland. ‘Eco-Schools’ began in 1994 as a pilot project in the UK, Denmark, Germany, France, and Portugal. In 2001, ‘Eco-Schools’ moved from a European initiative to one of international dimensions with the inclusion of South Africa in the programme. There are currently forty three countries from Europe, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America and Oceania participating in the Eco-Schools programme. ‘Eco-Schools’ is very much based on the principles of sustainable development (i.e. ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future’) and Local Agenda 21 (‘acting locally, thinking globally’). It is important for all schools to realise that their contribution and efforts, irrespective of scale, are part of a bigger programme with some 21,000 schools working towards similar ideals.

‘Green-Schools’ Ireland

Green-Schools is operated by the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that are the FEE members in each of the participating countries. An Taisce, as the FEE member for Ireland, co-ordinates the programme in this country. The programme was introduced to Ireland in 1997 and has enjoyed sustained growth each year. By the end of the school year 2007-2008 there were 3,000 schools in Ireland registered for the programme, representing over 70% of Irish schools. Of these, 1,400 schools have successfully achieved Green Flag status, making the Irish Green-Schools programme among the most successful internationally.

In Ireland Green-Schools is operated in partnership with Local Authorities. 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. Since 2001 Green-Schools has been a fully national programme, with all 34 County and City Councils involved. The Green-Schools programme is therefore part of a three-way collaboration involving schools, An Taisce and Local Authorities.

‘Green-Schools’ Sponsorship and Support

The Green-Schools programme is supported by a number of sponsors. Repak Ltd., an industry funded organization set up to facilitate and grow packaging recycling became new lead sponsors of the programme in 2008 and will provide essential support as we expand further. Coca Cola Bottlers Ireland have provided crucial support to the programme since its introduction to Ireland in 1997. The Wrigley Company have supported Green-Schools since 2002, when they initially sponsored the Green-Schools Video along with Coca-Cola, and have continued their support since then. Green-Schools Travel is supported by the Department of Transport and the Dublin Transportation Office. We welcome ESBIE, as they come on board to sponsor the Energy Theme. Green-Schools also acknowledges the support of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
1.2 Does ‘Green-Schools’ Make a Difference? Results from Research

Since the introduction of the Green-Schools programme in Ireland in 1997, there was significant anecdotal evidence of a substantial reduction of levels of litter and waste in participating schools. In 2001, a Green-Schools research project was undertaken to accurately record and measure the performance of the programme. Two aspects of the Green-Schools programme were investigated:

- The diversion of waste from landfill achieved by schools participating in the programme.
- The effect of the programme on the levels of student environmental awareness, behaviour towards the environment, and opinion leadership towards the environment.

Schools that had been awarded the Green Flag were diverting on average 45% of their waste away from landfill in comparison to schools that were not participating in the programme. In fact, several of the awarded schools were very close to achieving zero waste, with some producing as little as 2 grams of waste per person per day.

Over 1,300 4th and 5th class students from awarded Green-Schools and schools that were not participating in the programme were surveyed across the country. The results of this work are as follows:

- Awareness and knowledge levels of the environment were very similar among both types of student (i.e. Green-Schools and non-Green-Schools).
- Behaviour towards the environment was significantly different. Students from awarded Green-Schools drop less litter, take part in more local environmental projects, conserve more water and more electricity, and are more conscious of the environment when making a purchase than their non-Green-Schools counterparts.
- Green-Schools students are better “opinion leaders” for the environment, i.e. they discuss the environment with more people and in more settings, particularly the classroom, and provide more encouragement to their peers than their non-Green-Schools counterparts.
- Green-Schools students indicated that their teachers were their main source of information and motivation regarding environmental issues.
- Recycling levels of glass, paper, cardboard, and aluminium, as well as the levels of home composting were significantly higher within the homes of Green-Schools students.
- A total of 91% of students within non-Green-Schools felt they could do something about the state of the environment. However, this concern was even higher among Green-Schools students at a level of 96%.
- The main environmental concern indicated by both types of student was litter.

Further research carried out in 2006 indicated that the awarded schools had improved their performance and on average were diverting just over 60% of their waste from landfill. Out of a sample of 160 schools, over 8% (13 schools) were diverting in excess of 90% of their waste from landfill. Calculations indicate that around 5 tonnes of waste is directly diverted from landfills per school day in Ireland due to the work of Green-Schools. Check www.greenschoolsireland.org for results of further research!

Overall, both sets of research show that the Green-Schools programme is having a very significant effect on environmental behaviour and attitudes in Ireland.
1.3 ‘Green-Schools’ Themes

Green-Schools covers a number of different themes, beginning with litter and waste minimisation and followed by themes such as energy, water, travel, and healthy living. As your Green-Schools programme evolves further themes will be introduced.

In order to implement the Green-Schools programme most effectively, the Green-Schools Office encourages schools to resist taking on all themes at the same time. Schools begin by examining the litter and waste theme and will receive materials providing information on how best to implement the Green-Schools programme for litter and waste. Upon renewal of the award subsequent themes may then be tackled. The sequence of the initial themes is outlined below:

Litter and Waste
Examines the impact of litter and waste on the environment and explores practical means for reducing and minimising the amount of litter and waste produced by the school.

Energy
Suggests ways in which all members of the school can work together to increase awareness of energy issues and to improve energy efficiency within the school.

Water
Provides an introduction to the importance of water both locally and globally and raises awareness of how simple actions can substantially cut down water use.

Travel
Suggests ways for students, staff, and local government to work together to raise awareness of travel issues and come up with practical solutions that will make a real difference to students’ everyday lives.

Climate Change
Introduces the topic of climate change, by outlining the science and evidence supporting the phenomenon, the forces behind it and the likely impacts both globally and here in Ireland. Suggests many actions we can take as individuals (and as schools) to help reduce our climate impact. Climate change also ties together the themes of Litter & Waste, Energy, Water and Travel.
1.4 Benefits and Requirements of the ‘Green-Schools’ Programme

Green-Schools offers your school opportunities:

- To help develop children’s decision-making skills.
- To build students’ confidence and sense of citizenship through participation.
- To supply curriculum materials and ideas for projects and events.
- To gain access to a network of support agencies.
- To link with other schools in Ireland and internationally.
- To gain a prestigious award.
- To provide local and national publicity.
- To make financial savings.
- To reduce waste and litter.
- To improve the school environment.
- To reduce energy and water consumption levels.
- To tackle and improve travel issues within the school.
- To involve the local community.

It requires:

- The support of the Principal and Board of Management.
- The willingness to involve children in decision-making and action at every stage.
- Active involvement of staff and support from parents and the local community.
- The willingness to take action to instigate long-term change.

1.5 Four Stages of the Award Scheme

The award has four main stages

1. Registration.
2. Implementation of Green-Schools Programme.
3. Applying for your Award.
4. Award Renewal.

Note that there are minimum requirements that must be fulfilled and that the school must have implemented all of the seven steps before applying for an award. The following pages cover each of these seven steps in detail. Further information on the awards system and how to apply is covered in Section 3.
1.6 Registration

Before you register your school you need to be sure you have sufficient support from the Principal and other staff. We suggest that one or more core members of staff read this Handbook and present an outline of the Green-Schools programme to colleagues and the school’s Board of Management. The presentation should cover:

- The benefits to the school.
- The seven essential elements as described on the following pages.
- The scheme’s flexibility.
- The intention to start with small, achievable targets.
- The long-term nature of the programme.
- And the programme’s potential to act as a focus for developing a whole-school policy for environmental education.

Note: There is a short power point presentation outlining the Green-Schools programme available on www.greenschoolsireland.org.

If the idea is received with sufficient enthusiasm for it to continue you will need to register your school formally by filling in and returning the enclosed Green-Schools registration form.

Returning the registration form will confirm your participation in the programme and your intention to apply for an award in the future. You can register at any time of year. You will receive notification of your school’s registration into the Green-Schools programme. You will also be eligible for the school linking service (see below) and your Green-Schools theme booklet pack.

1.7 National and International Linking

One of the most exciting aspects of Green-Schools that is currently being developed is its potential to generate national and international links between schools. School linking is an ideal way to broaden children’s appreciation of other countries and different lifestyles. You might like to correspond with a school in another area of Ireland or in one of the other participating countries. If you are interested in this aspect of the programme please contact the Green-Schools Office, Environmental Education Unit, An Taisce, Unit 5A, Swift’s Alley, Francis Street, Dublin 8, Tel: 01- 4002222, Email – greenschools@antaisce.org for further information. A demonstration of the linking programme and further information is also available on the international website at www.eco-schools.net.

In addition to support for schools at a national level, schools can benefit from the international dimension in the following ways:

- Newsletters with information on Eco-Schools throughout the world and innovative projects and activities by schools themselves, interesting initiatives, new contacts, etc.
- Website with updates, news, school activities, contacts, etc.
- Involvement in joint initiatives being developed by FEE and Eco-Schools together with other organisations or programmes.
The aim of the Green-Schools programme is to move from environmental awareness in the curriculum to environmental action in the school and wider community.

As with any environmental management system, a structure is required to help it run smoothly. Pilot testing showed that a programme including the seven essential elements listed here provided a structure successful in achieving this aim.

It should be remembered that this process is intended to be flexible enough to accommodate any school and that each should be implemented to the best of the schools ability at that point in time. The nature of the seven steps also allows for the programme to be continually updated as the environmental status and requirements of the school change.

Section 2  IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME:

Seven Steps of the Green-Schools Programme

6 Informing and Involving
A publicity programme keeps the school and wider community involved and informed through displays, assemblies, and press coverage.

7 Green Code
This is a statement of the school’s commitment to environmental good habits.
THE SEVEN STEPS’

1. *Green-Schools Committee*
   This directs the school’s involvement in the programme. Ideally, the committee includes students, teachers, non-teaching staff, management, and parents.

2. Environmental Review
   A process of examining the school’s environmental impacts in order to identify targets for action and improvement.

3. Action Plan
   This gives specific and achievable targets with proposed completion dates that will show real success.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation
   This will ensure that progress towards targets is checked, amendments made where necessary, and success celebrated.

5. Curriculum Work
   Curriculum materials are provided that give ideas on how to integrate environmental issues into lessons.
2.1 Step 1: ‘Green-Schools’ Committee

Aim: The Green-Schools committee aims to direct and address all phases of the Green-Schools programme. It is the driving force of the programme and should ensure that the other elements are carried out.

Composition and Selection

Ideally, the committee should be as representative of the whole school as possible. It should primarily be made up of students (making up the majority of the committee members whenever possible) and could also incorporate a combination of teachers, the Principal or a member of the Board of Management, non-teaching staff (particularly the school caretaker), parents, and any other interested and applicable members of the local community. You may also wish to co-opt a local environmentalist or a Local Authority representative. Regarding size and operation, it should be remembered that there is no set formula or rules for a successful committee.

Often the committee is made up of volunteers from the student body as well as teachers and other interested members of the community. In some cases schools will go through a full election process with manifestos, election speeches, canvassing, election posters, and ballots in order to fill the various positions on the committee! Many secondary schools select the committee members from the CSPE or transition year classes that are undertaking the Green-Schools programme or a similar module as part of their course work. It is important, however, to ensure that the student members of the committee are as representative as possible of the different classes and age groups in the school. This will also ensure greater continuity in your programme over the years.

The committee may take different forms depending on the age and ability of the students. A formal committee has worked well even with young students but less formal committees are fine if they achieve the same purpose. However informal it is, the committee should be representative of all and should keep records of meetings held and decisions made.

The purpose of the committee is:

- To ensure the six other steps are successfully adopted and implemented.
- To give students responsibility and to make them recognise that their ideas are valued.
- To ensure the views of all members of the school community are heard and acted upon where possible.
- To ensure the continuity of the programme.
- To link with school management and the local community.

**TOP TIP**

To get things started on the right track might be to invite your Local Authority Environmental Awareness Officer where possible to one of your meetings to give advice and help you to get your Green-Schools programme underway successfully.

In summary, your committee should:

- Be as representative of the whole school as possible.
- Have regular meetings to successfully keep up-to-date with the development of your Green-Schools programme.
- Record the minutes of each meeting.
- Disseminate the points and decisions of each meeting to the school when relevant.
2.2 Step 2: Environmental Review

Aim: The aim of the review is to identify the initial situation within the school regarding the environmental theme under investigation (e.g. litter and waste, energy, etc.).

If we envisage the Green-Schools programme as using a map to undertake a successful road trip, the review enables us to locate our starting point on the map. Once you know where you are starting from, you can then set realistic targets and measure your success. The review process also helps to raise awareness of the programme throughout the school, whereby results of the review can be publicised by means of a notice board, school newsletter, or through assembly or public announcements. It is important that the students are involved in the review process.

The Environmental Review section at the back of each theme-specific booklet provides a checklist designed to help you to carry out a review. It can be adapted for your school’s particular needs. It can help identify areas for further study and specific improvement targets for the action plan, as well as identifying areas that require little or no improvement. Remember, the review is a tool to ascertain issues, not an end in itself.

By thoroughly checking all potential environmental impacts of the school for the theme under investigation, the environmental review will:

- Give a clear view of the range of the school’s impacts.
- Make sure that no significant areas are overlooked.
- Identify areas where little or no improvement is needed.
- Help students and the rest of the school community understand the impacts.
- Help to prioritise the actions to be taken.

**St. Feichín’s N.S. in Galway** carried out waste surveys in their classrooms and recorded what type of waste was going into the bins each day. They found that 70% of their waste was paper from the post and wrappers. The students also did a school walkabout with a camera and found several areas of the school that required attention as regards litter and tidiness.

**St. Cronan’s N.S. in Co. Tipperary** carried out a number of surveys for the Energy theme. They undertook a hot water survey, a sun survey to assist them in cutting back on artificial light usage, and an oil survey. They also recorded electricity meter readings, usage of lights, and how long computers were used each day. The students carried out all of these surveys and continue to do so regularly to identify those areas that require further attention in order to save energy.

**Our Lady of Victories Boys N.S. in Dublin** carried out a baseline survey to determine: how children travel to school; how children travel from school; how they would like to travel; levels of bike ownership in the school; reasons for not walking/cycling. In addition to this, they carried out a Traffic Survey, where they observed the number of cars passing their school, and how many people were in each car. They compared this with the number of people carried on a bus.

**TOP TIP** It is important to quantify your review using a unit of environmental performance that is applicable to your school, e.g. number/volume of bins going to landfill weekly, units of electricity consumed per month, average cost of water consumption per student per month, etc. You can use this indicator throughout the Green-Schools programme as a benchmark against which future monitoring can be compared.

In summary, your environmental review should:

- Give a clear indication of the school’s environmental impact for the specific theme (e.g. the amount of waste produced, the amount of energy consumed, etc.) before the Green-Schools programme is implemented.
- Be undertaken by the students when and where possible.

Use, where possible, the environmental review materials provided at the end of each theme book. Remember, any results from your environmental review should be displayed on your Green-Schools notice board, and if possible publicised elsewhere (e.g. school newsletter, local paper, etc.).
2.3 Step 3: Action Plan

Aim: The action plan aims to identify goals and provide a structured timetable for the reduction of the environmental impacts identified in the review.

The action plan is the core of the Green-Schools programme. It is a timetabled series of specific goals for improvement over a fixed time scale. Quantifiable targets should be set where possible e.g. 50% reduction in waste in 6 months, 100% recycling of cans sold in 8 months, 10% reduction on electricity consumption from previous year, etc. Using our map and road-trip analogy, the action plan is our route planner, giving the finer details on how we aim to reach our destination. It should always be developed from the results of the review. The sample action plan excerpt given describes the actions taken by a school to achieve their goal (i.e. recycle all cans sold in the school by July of that year) in a clearly defined step by step process.

The action plan should, if possible, be linked to curriculum work and have realistic and achievable goals. These goals should be specific and quantifiable where possible, with proposed completion dates that will show real success. Success increases confidence and builds enthusiasm for setting subsequent targets for your Green-Schools programme. Do not be tempted to be too ambitious at first as failure is very demotivating.

It is crucial to work out how you will monitor and measure your progress and this should be integrated into your action plan. Try to involve all the committee members in the development of the action plan, and as much of the school as possible in its implementation.

**TOP TIP** The action plan is not a review of the work that has already been carried out, but a list of future targets and goals of your programme and a detailed description of the actions to be implemented (and by whom) within specific time frames in order to achieve those goals and targets.

### Sample action plan excerpt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal: Recycle all cans sold in school by July</th>
<th>Steps: By Jan 50% recycled; by April 75% recycled.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person/ Group Responsible</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find someone to take cans.</td>
<td>Anne Byrnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devise way of monitoring can numbers.</td>
<td>4th Class Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey students to find best place for recycling bins.</td>
<td>6th Class English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Bins.</td>
<td>Brian Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicise scheme to all students and staff.</td>
<td>6th Class Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculate percentage recycled, display results on notice board.</td>
<td>5th Class Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide on remedial action if targets not reached.</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org) for more examples of action plans for litter & waste, energy, water and travel themes.

**In summary, your action plan should:**

- Be developed from the results of your review.
- Contain realistic and quantifiable goals and targets with time frames, where possible. These goals should be displayed at the top of the action plan.
- Be in table format (as above), identifying action, person or group responsible, and the time frame for completion.
- Be displayed on your Green-Schools notice board.
- Include regular monitoring, and be updated if and when necessary.
2.4 Step 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

Aim: Monitoring and evaluation aims to check your progress and indicates areas for change if necessary.

Number of bags of waste going to landfill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your monitoring and evaluation gives your Green-Schools programme its credibility. As mentioned previously, it should be developed in parallel with your action plan. Again, using our road-trip analogy, monitoring allows you to evaluate how far you have travelled towards your final destination and also how quickly this has been achieved. As far as possible, the students should do the monitoring. This will help give them a greater sense of ownership of the programme. (Also, teachers have more than enough to do themselves).

Monitoring is vital for identifying areas in your action plan that can be improved upon and amended. This aids performance and feeds back to further actions and new goals. It also enhances whole-school awareness by highlighting the successes of your Green-Schools programme. This can provide a ‘feel good’ factor about the achievements and progress to date and continue motivation and participation at a whole-school level.

Publicise your results

Make sure the whole school is aware of your progress by displaying any results and figures prominently in the school (e.g. on your Green-Schools notice board, school newsletter, assembly, school website, etc.). Remember, successes should be celebrated loudly!

Ashbourne Community School in County Meath developed a ‘can-window’ when they discovered that the can collection system they had in place was both labour intensive and poorly supported. The can window comprised of a pre-existing sectioned area between a wall and a window along a corridor. This allowed the students to easily deposit the cans for recycling while also keeping the total number of cans clearly visible to the whole school. This resulted in an increase in the number of cans recycled in the school from 18% to 50%.

TOP TIP A simple way of envisaging your monitoring programme is to think of it as a number of ‘mini’ reviews. The unit of performance chosen for your environmental review may now also be used in your monitoring process (e.g. number/volume of bins going to landfill weekly, units of electricity consumed per month, average cost of water consumption per student per month, etc.). This allows easy comparisons with the initial results of your review and thus proper evaluation of the rate of success of your action plan.

In summary, your monitoring and evaluation programme should:

- Be developed in parallel with your action plan.
- Be carried out by the students when and where possible.
- Use the same unit of performance as for your environmental review to allow comparison with initial figures.
- Feed back into your action plan to identify areas for adjustments and improvements to be made when and where necessary.
- Increase the likelihood (or reduce time required) for achieving goals formulated in your action plan.
- Be publicised (e.g. display graphs, charts, etc. on your Green-Schools notice board, newsletter, etc.).
For primary schools the SESE (Social, Environmental & Scientific Education) section of the new curriculum contains a number of core strands that are identical to the objectives and ethos of the Green-Schools programme (e.g. the environmental awareness & care strand, the energy & forces strand). Therefore, Green-Schools is an ideal way of implementing this section of the curriculum throughout the whole school.

The above examples are for direct links to the curriculum. However, there are an infinite number of indirect links to all the other areas of the curriculum. Details of other organisations that publish excellent curriculum materials on a variety of themes are listed in ‘Useful Contacts’, located at the back of this booklet.

TOP TIP Each themed booklet shows in greater detail how and where the Green-Schools programme can link with the curriculum.

In summary, the Green-Schools programme should:

- Be integrated with the curriculum through as many subjects and levels as possible.
- Be used to inform the whole school of environmental issues and instigate action in the school community.

### SUBJECT | LINKING TO THE CURRICULUM
--- | ---
SPHE (Primary), CSPE (Secondary) | • Promote personal development and well being.  
• Develop citizenship and a sense of personal and social responsibility.  
• Promote communication, co-operation, and working with others.  
• Encourage media awareness.

SESE (Primary), SCIENCES, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY (Secondary) | • Study of materials and their properties.  
• Develop a scientific approach to problem-solving.  
• Promote communication of ideas, report writing, and presentation.  
• Develop a critical understanding of environmental issues at local and global level.  
• Study of human and natural environments (sustainable management of resources, etc.)  
• Examine the impact of the environment on people’s health in different historical periods.

LANGUAGES | • Source of topics for essays, poetry, etc.  
• Promote communication skills, public speaking, debates, etc.  
• Potential for many activities involving speaking and writing.

MATHS | • Provide real life situations for mathematical analysis.  
• Use of charts and graphs, introduction to database management and IT.

ART | • Creation of posters/murals/fashion to aid environmental awareness.

MUSIC | • Reusing old materials to create musical instruments.
2.6 Step 6: Informing and Involving the School and Wider Community

Aim: To spread the Green-Schools message throughout the whole school and the wider community through ongoing publicity and a ‘Day of Action’.

It is important to ensure that actions and events organised for the Green-Schools programme are well publicised. This helps ensure maximum participation from the different groups involved. Methods of informing the school and wider community could include:

- A special Green-Schools notice board in a prominent position for students and visitors.
- The use of a school or parish newsletter to publicise the programme, or if possible create a specific Green-Schools newsletter.
- The use of assemblies to announce success in achieving targets or for students to present their research and results.
- Exhibitions of project work, both in school and in the wider community.
- Making use of local press and radio.

Students at St. Feichín’s National School, Co. Galway wrote a letter to Granada Television Ltd. who produce the TV series “Coronation Street” informing them of the poor environmental practices being undertaken by one of the show’s characters. They received a reply outlining that the scriptwriters were going to take this into consideration in future episodes. They also wrote to a food-producing company outlining that the plastic packaging they were providing was not recyclable and enquiring if any alternatives were available.

The ‘Day of Action’ is an opportunity for students, staff and the wider community to get together to work towards achieving some of the targets set out in your action plan. In some cases it may be carried out in conjunction with local or national projects (e.g. Tidy Towns, National Spring Clean, Energy Awareness Week, Clean Coast, Tree Week, etc.). Benefits of the ‘Day of Action’ include:

- Raising awareness of Green-Schools within and beyond the school.
- Involving the wider community. Parents, neighbours, local business, and the Local Authority can all be drawn in. They can give advice, practical help, money, or gifts. This will also make excellent publicity for the school.

In summary, informing and involving the school and wider community should:

- Ensure that both the school and wider community are fully informed of the progress of your Green-Schools programme.
- Cover as many media sources as possible, e.g. television, internet, radio, school newsletter, notice board, etc.
- Encourage greater numbers of the school and members of the community to get further involved in your Green-Schools programme.

TOP TIP Contact your local newspaper and ask them to publicise details of the success of your Green-Schools programme as detailed by the students. There are some examples of articles that have appeared in various national and regional newspapers shown in ‘News’ on our website (www.greenschoolsireland.org).
2.7 Step 7: Green Code

Aim: To state the objectives that demonstrate the school’s commitment to environmentally friendly actions.

The Green Code should be negotiated by as many of the students and staff as possible and related to the action plan and curriculum work. It is not to be a list of vague comments along the lines of ‘we will care for the environment and encourage wildlife’. Each statement should describe an action that all students and staff can carry out. The code should be displayed somewhere prominent (e.g. your Green-Schools notice board) and be updated as new issues are addressed. Therefore, the Green Code should be specific to your school. For example, the Green Code outlined below is from a primary school that was undertaking litter management and the recycling of aluminium cans as the core of their programme.

As further themes of the Green-Schools programme are undertaken, additional statements can be incorporated into the school’s Green Code. This will help to successfully integrate these new themes.

It is important that students feel they have had involvement in developing this code, as this will give them greater reason and encouragement to follow it. Many schools have used a competition to develop their Green Code. This is also a good way of informing and involving the whole school. The Green Code can also be released to the local press and the general public.

**TOP TIP** As outlined above, the Green Code can be an excellent ‘hook’ for informing and involving the whole school. Some schools have turned their Green Code into a ‘rap’ or slogan that all students and staff can use. A further development of this is the use of a catchy ‘mnemonic’ or ‘acronym’, where by the first letters of each line of the green code spell out an aspect of the code (see below for examples).

**T.R.A.S.H**

Try Recycling Ashbourne Shows How

**P.A.P.E.R**

Paper will not be wasted;
All pages in copy will be filled;
Photocopies will be backed;
Every box, paper and cardboard will be reused, recycled and therefore reduced;
Reduction of paper is our aim.

---

**Sample Green Code Statements**

- We will put all our litter in a bin
- If there is no bin, we will take our rubbish home
- We will put all aluminium cans used in school into the recycling bank
3.1 Assessment Criteria

You decide when you are ready to apply for your Green Flag award. As long as your “Seven Steps” have been up and running for at least 9 months or more, there is no set time scale between registration and applying for the award. Once the Green-Schools programme has been established and in operation in your school for several months you will begin to know which elements of the programme are working successfully and which need further attention.

Before applying for the award, it is important to ensure that the “Seven Steps” have been successfully implemented and all steps have been up and running for at least 9 months. The following lists the minimum required for each step:

1. A Green-Schools committee has been established and meets on a regular basis.
2. An environmental review has been undertaken, which clearly indicates the environmental impact of the school for the theme being undertaken.
3. An action plan with realistic and manageable goals has been developed from the review, with some of these goals partially or fully achieved.
4. The progress towards achieving these goals has been monitored and displayed.
5. The programme has been integrated with the school curriculum when and where possible.
6. The whole school has been updated on the progress of the programme and has been involved to some degree. A “day of action” should be part of this process.
7. An applicable “Green Code” has been written, adopted, and displayed.

The seven steps are the basis of the Green-Schools programme. When you apply for the award the assessors will be looking for evidence that each of these steps has been adopted. However, it is important to note that the assessment procedure will take account of each school’s individual circumstances. For example, the level of student involvement expected will vary according to the age, ability, and experience of the students. If you are in any doubt about meeting the criteria please contact the Green-Schools Office of An Taisce for advice. Remember, there are case studies provided on our website to show how other schools have implemented their programmes. The criteria listed above are the minimum requirements for a Green Flag award.

When you are confident that all of the above points are in place (i.e. that each of the seven steps of the Green-Schools programme have been implemented successfully), you are ready to apply for the Green Flag. The list of 16 questions on the following page will help you to organise your application in a clear and concise manner.
### 3.2 Application Questions for the Green Flag Award

As already outlined, when you feel that you have adequately addressed all the elements of Green-Schools, you can apply for the Green Flag. In order to simplify and standardise the application process, the questions below have been devised to help you clearly outline your Green-Schools programme. **You should answer all of the questions and make sure they are clearly numbered.** Your answers will give us most of the information needed to decide whether you have achieved Green Flag status.

Note: Your answers should show how the students were involved in each element.

| Committee                                                                 | 1. Who sits on your Green-Schools committee and how were the members selected? (Please list each committee member and detail who they are, i.e. 3rd year student, teacher, parent, caretaker, etc.).  
2. How does your committee operate? (e.g. How often do you meet? Who keeps the records of meetings?). Please include an example of the meeting minutes. |
|---|---|
| Environmental Review | 3. How did you undertake your environmental review?  
4. Who was involved in the review?  
5. What were the results obtained? (i.e. include samples of charts/graphs from surveys) |
| Action Plan | 6. How did you decide on the targets for your action plan? (Please attach a copy of your action plan in table format, identifying goals, actions to be undertaken to achieve these goals, person or group responsible, and the time frame for completion). |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | 7. How are you monitoring and evaluating your progress?  
8. How far have you progressed towards your goals? (Please include figures showing the reduction in your environmental impacts for the theme under investigation i.e. litter & waste generation/energy consumption/water usage/etc.)  
9. Has the monitoring and evaluation process helped in amending and improving your action plan? If so how? |
| Linking with the Curriculum | 10. Please give the numbers and ages of students involved in curriculum work, and information on the topics or subject areas addressed. |
| Informing and Involving | 11. How was the whole school community informed of, and involved in, all aspects of the Green-Schools programme?  
12. Describe your day of action.  
13. Please describe any contacts made with the wider community (for example, using outside help, involving parents, publicity gained, industry links). |
| Green Code | 14. Please reproduce your school’s Green Code. Describe how it was agreed and how it has been integrated into school life. |
| General | 15. How has the experience of Green-Schools benefited your school? (If you wish you can also include any difficulties you encountered with the Green-Schools Programme).  
16. Please add any additional information you feel is relevant to your application (This is optional – but should be limited to five A4 pages). |
### 3.3 Submitting a Successful Application – Top Tips!

The following is a list of suggestions and tips to help with your successful application for the Green Flag award:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Top Tip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Committee</strong></td>
<td>While there are no set rules for its structure, remember that students should make up the majority of the committee, not teachers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Review</strong></td>
<td>Again students should be involved in (or responsible for) the review as much as possible. Make sure you give plenty of detail on the procedure and results of your review in answering the application questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Action Plan</strong></td>
<td>As was stated in Section 2.3, it is important to remember that the action plan is not a review of the work that has been carried out. Rather it should be a list of actions and targets set out from the results of the environmental review, to be carried out by specific individuals/groups within specified time frames, in order to achieve quantifiable goals. Publicise your action plan on your Green-Schools notice board, and make sure you have included a copy of your action plan (which should be in table format) in your application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Use charts and graphs where possible to evaluate your progress, display these results on the Green-Schools notice board and be sure to give some examples of these graphs/charts in your application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td>The most important factor in your application is to insure all the questions in Section 3.2 are answered clearly, and completely and to the best of your ability. Perhaps you can delegate the responsibility of answering the questions to students on your committee. (Some of the best applications for the Green-Schools award have been put together entirely by students). The best way to submit your application is by e-mail. So please try to submit your application electronically where possible. If you wish to add any additional information you feel is relevant to your application, please do. Remember that you shall also be visited by an assessor, and you may be able to show much of this work to the assessor at this time. Keep in mind any hard copies submitted will not be returned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Application Procedure

Option 1: Provide the information requested on the application form in an e-mail with your application attached and send it to greenschools@antaisce.org

Option 2: Photocopy and carefully fill out the Green-Schools Award application form on the following page, and attach it to your application (i.e. the questions you have answered from Section 3.2 and any other additional material you wish to submit). Please send two copies (or CD-ROMs) of the whole application to:

Green-Schools Office, Environmental Education Unit, An Taisce, Unit 5A, Swift’s Alley, Francis Street, Dublin 8,

Once the Green-Schools Office has received your application, the procedure for assessing your school is as follows:

1) An Taisce reviews application and makes recommendations if needed.
2) School implements recommendations and sends report to the Green-Schools Office.
3) Assessor visits the school.
4) Green-Schools evaluation committee makes decision whether to award the Green Flag.

Schools can submit an application for an award at any time of the year. However, there are two sets of award ceremonies during the school year; the first takes place in February/March, and the second takes place in May. If you wish to be awarded at the earlier date, you need to have your application in before the first deadline. The application deadlines are usually at the end of November and the end of February each year. However, please check the website (www.greenschoolsireland.org) or contact the office on 01 400 2222 to get the exact dates each year. It is best to apply for the earlier deadline where possible to avoid a large amount of applications arriving late in the school year, and to ensure that all applications can be dealt with before the end of the school year. Any applications received after the second deadline may be carried over until the following school year. Remember, please try and submit your application electronically where possible.

It should also be noted that you can make your application in CD-ROM format.

3.5 Renewing the Award

Once you have been awarded your Green Flag you will need to renew the award every two years thereafter. To maintain your flag, you will need to show that you have maintained the successful implementation of the Litter & Waste theme and built on this by integrating the Energy theme into your Green-Schools programme, e.g. schools that have been awarded the Green Flag for their achievements on Litter and Waste should be able to show that they have also integrated aspects of the Energy theme into their programme in their renewal application. Similarly the themes of Water and Travel will be integrated into your programme when it comes to renewing your award for the second and third time respectively.

When renewing your flag use the same application form, stating clearly that you are applying for renewal. The Green-Schools Office will contact you when you are due to renew your flag and provide you with a list of questions which you will need to answer in your renewal application.

You will be required to show your application to the assessor on the day of assessment.
Green-Schools Award Application Form

To be completed after you have established the seven essential elements of the Green-Schools Programme and achieved some of your action plan targets. Please re-read sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 before submitting your final application.

Please e-mail the relevant information or photocopy this form. □ Tick this box if you are renewing your award

Name of school

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Address

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

County

_____________________________________________________________________

Email __________________________ Telephone __________________________

Please complete this form and submit it with your answers to the questions in Section 3.2 of this Handbook. Please number each answer and in addition you may enclose up to five other items no larger than A4, e.g. press cuttings, photographs, or children’s work. Please remember to enclose your action plan in table format and to put the school’s name on every sheet.

N.B. If you are submitting hard copies please submit two copies of your application (one will be sent to your assessors before their visit)

We, the undersigned, declare the attached as a true record of our Green-Schools experience and apply for the Green-Schools Award on behalf of our school.

Principal:

Name

__________________________

Signature

__________________________

Green-Schools Co-ordinator:

Name

__________________________

Signature

__________________________

Date of submission

__________________________
Useful Contacts

ENFO
Environmental Information Service
17 St. Andrew Street, Dublin 2
Telephone: (01) 888 2001
LoCall: 1890 200 191
Fax: (01) 888 3946
Email: info@enfo.ie
Website: www.enfo.ie

Department of Education and Science
Marlboro Street, Dublin 1
Telephone: (01) 8896400
Website: www.education.ie

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Custom House, Dublin 1
Telephone: (01) 8882000
LoCall: 1890 20 20 21
Website: www.environ.ie

Local Authority
Environmental/Local Agenda 21 Officers
Many authorities have officers who are working on waste reduction plans, environmental improvement schemes or developing Local Agenda 21 projects. These officers usually work with schools.

The Blackrock Education Centre
Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin
Telephone: (01) 236 5000
Fax: (01) 2365050
Email: info@blackrockec.ie
Website: www.blackrockec.ie

IPCC
Irish Peatland Conservation Council
Lullymore, Rathangan
Co. Kildare
Telephone: (045) 860133
Email: bogs@ipcc.ie
Website: www.ipcc.ie

National Parks and Wildlife Service
Knocksink Wood Education Centre
Knocksink Wood, Nature Reserve,
Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow
Telephone: (01) 2866609

National Parks and Wildlife Service
Wicklow Mountains National Park
Education Centre
Fax: +353-404-45710
Email: wickloweducationcentre@environ.ie
www.wicklownationalpark.ie

Irish Wildlife Trust
Sigmund Business Centre
93A Lagan Road, Dublin Industrial Estate
Glasnevin, Dublin 11
Telephone: (01) 860 2839
Fax: (01) 830 8914
Email: iwt@eircom.net or enquiries@iwt.ie
Website: www.iwt.ie

ECO-UNESCO
26 Clare Street, Dublin 2
Telephone: (01) 662 5491
Fax: (01) 6625493
info@ecounesco.ie
Website: www.ecounesco.ie

Friends of the Earth Ireland
9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2
Telephone: (01) 639 4652
Email: info@foe.ie
Website: www.foe.ie

Conservation Volunteers Ireland
Steward’s House
Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin 14
Telephone: (01) 495 2878
Fax: (01) 495 2879
Email: cvi@cvi.ie
Website: www.cvi.ie

For Further Information about Green-Schools
Please contact:

Green-Schools Office
Environmental Education Unit
An Taisce
Unit 5A
Green-Schools
Towards a sustainable lifestyle
HANDBOOK