



Knocknacarra Educate Together
National School

Environment Sustainability Policy

This policy has been formulated by Knocknacarra ETNS to provide guidance to support a whole-school approach to environmental sustainability.

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Introduction:

This school policy on Environmental Sustainability was drafted with input from the Green School Committee, staff members and the Board of Management to summarise and provide direction for our work as a school to lessen on impact environmentally and to promote an awareness and understanding of the effects of our actions on the environment based on the choices we make for our schools, homes and wider community.

Background and Relationship to School Ethos:

Knocknacarra Educate Together NS values highly the development of young citizens who understand their role and personal impact related to the environment, enabling them to make choices and advocate for protection of our environment. A key component of this ethos is present in teaching and learning associated with the Ethical Approach to the Environment Strand of the Learn Together Curriculum.

Aims and Objectives:

- To remind members of our learning community to take responsibility for our own actions and we need to have a sense of duty and care for the world in which we live.
- To record current actions in place that are aligned with environmental stewardship and the sustainable development goals.
- To identify future actions to further improve our efforts to promote sustainable practices in our learning community.

Policies and Procedures:

Green-Schools Committee

Our school, in line with its democratic ethos, has several committees made of pupils and facilitated by staff members and parent volunteers including a Green School Committee. Every year a Green School Committee will be elected/chosen, consisting of two members from each class from 1st to 6th Class. The committee has monthly meetings to discuss Green School issues and to implement initiatives. They oversee the environmental sustainability activities in the school and ensure the practices in this section are implemented on a whole-school basis in cooperation with the Board of Management and all members of the school community.

Litter/Waste Activities

- All classrooms and the staff room to have recycling bins.
- The staff room and kitchen has a compost bin for food waste and pencil shavings.
- Staff are aware of environmental impact of photocopying and to only photocopy what is needed and to use double-sided copying where possible. Staff are encouraged to use soft copies when possible.
- Children reuse paper where possible.
- Children engage in recycled / “junk art” style projects periodically.
- Single-use plastic materials will be avoided as much as possible, opting for the use of coloured pencils and reusable whiteboard markers that require less plastic waste.

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- The school uses reusable plates, cups and cutlery when practical and opts for ideally biodegradable or fully compostable single-use items if necessary.
- Children and staff are encouraged to have plastic-free lunches as far as possible and to bring a reusable water bottle to school.
- Paper briquettes are made from shredded paper.
- Everyone uses materials and equipment appropriately and carefully to maximise longevity.
- As far as is practicable, the school will endeavour to repair broken items, including electronic items, and to properly dispose of any waste.
- Communication with parents is through email and text rather than printed paper.
- Composting will resume onsite away from the main building.

Energy Saving Activities

- Lights and heat are turned off when not required.
- Computers and interactive whiteboards are on standby when not in use.
- Staff only photocopy what they need and to use black ink where possible.
- Outside doors and windows shut when appropriate to save heat except when required for enhanced ventilation.
- The school is gradually replacing all ordinary light fittings with LED lights.
- Additional insulation is in place, any damaged doors and windows are repaired quickly and the heating systems are maintained regularly to ensure efficiency.
- The school completes an annual energy consumption report to SEAI.
- Participate in the new solar panels for schools project.

Water Saving Activities

- Taps throughout the school were replaced in 2020 at hand-washing basins and have an automatic stop mechanism.
- Other taps are not left on when not in use.
- The outdoor tap has a lever that disables accidental use of water.
- Each classroom monitors for leaks, and they are repaired quickly.
- Water harvesting will be explored as an option in the courtyards and garden areas.

Transport

- Pupils and staff are encouraged to use active modes of transport such as walking, cycling or riding a scooter to school where possible.
- Parents are encouraged to park at Cappagh Park and walk to school.
- Car-pooling, where practicable, is also encouraged.
- A new cycle shelter is available for children who cycle or ride a scooter to school.

School Garden and Biodiversity

- A variety of garden spaces are established, which can be enjoyed by the children and staff alike, including a range of apple trees and a variety of other plants.
- A number of parents are volunteering to improve and develop these spaces.
- The inner courtyards are going to be redeveloped over the next two years to promote outdoor learning, to create a calming sensory space and to support biodiversity.
- The possibility of creating a wild meadow adjacent to the cark park will be investigated.

Global Citizenship

- Regular beach cleans in our locality to protect our natural landscapes & marine life.
- Use of reusable bottles for staff & students.
- Participation in the National Spring Clean in the vicinity of the school.
- Additional ways of supporting global environmental campaigns will be explored.

Curricular Activities

Many aspects of environmental awareness will be taught in the form of explicit lessons which will complement the Green School activities taking place throughout the school in relation to litter, energy and water, travel & biodiversity. In addition to direct links with the An Ethical Approach to the Environment Strand of the Learn Together Curriculum, the themes are integrated across many different subjects easily. The following are some examples of where the Green-Schools programme can be linked to curricular work:

SPHE: promotion of personal development and wellbeing, citizenship and social/personal responsibility, communication / co-operation with others, media awareness

Art: creation of posters, murals, signs, logos, mascots, water as a medium for art.

Information Technology: creating graphs and charts, using spreadsheets, designing signs and posters etc., carrying out research, use of interactive websites, sending emails/letters in relation to environmental issues, doing surveys, raising awareness through the school newsletter and website.

English: debates, poetry, essays, Green Codes, signs, newsletter, letters

Geography: The water cycle, the water treatment process, rivers, lakes, oceans of Ireland and the world, climate change and global warming, using maps, coordinates, symbols and keys

History: change in water quality and consumption over time, change in packaging/litter/consumer trends over time, relate to changes in lifestyles and society

Science: pollution, properties of water, water quality sampling, water experiments

Maths: charts and graphs measuring volume, capacity, interpreting surveys.

Success Criteria:

The effectiveness of this policy can be judged from the following indicators:

- A litter-free, clean school environment;
- Reduced bills for electricity, heating fuel, water and waste disposal; and
- A growing awareness of environmental sustainability and clear actions taken within the school and beyond that demonstrate activism among pupils, staff members and parents.

Implementation and Review:

The policy has immediate effect and will be reviewed no later than 2027.

Ratification and Communication:

The policy was ratified by the BoM on the date below. It will be posted on the school website.

Paul Adams, chairperson

Date of ratification: 15/12/2023