Go Green in the Classroom
Activity Workbook
with Laois County Council

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Primary Schools Pack

Laois County Council, Áras on Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois. www.laois.ie
Go Green in the Classroom
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Green Schools Programme

Green-Schools is a long-term award programme promoting environmental education and awareness amongst schools, other educational facilities and in turn the wider community. In all, there are 7 steps you need to follow to become a Green School which are outlined as follows:

Step 1: Green Schools Committee
Step 2: Environmental Review
Step 3: Action Plan
Step 4: Monitoring & Evaluation
Step 5: Curriculum Work
Step 6: Informing & Involving
Step 7: Establish A Green Code

Once your school registers with An Taisce, you will receive a Green Schools handbook which will give practical advice on how to implement each of the 7 Steps.

Flag 1: Litter and Waste

To achieve the first flag, schools work on minimising waste and tackle litter pollution in their school grounds.

Suggested Classroom Activities

• Get a designated Green Schools Notice Board (in a prominent place) to put all your Green Schools news and activities on it.
• Start a litter rota in your school and try to get every class/classroom involved if possible.
• Keep track of waste management activities e.g. amount of times materials are going to landfill or for recycling. Present your findings in bar or pie chart format and display it on the Green Schools Notice Board.
• Identify what wastes can be reduced, reused or recycled.
• Start composting – it is an excellent way to reduce waste going to landfill and the compost produced can be used in the school garden. If your school is unable to do this, why not encourage the pupils to compost at home.

Laois County Council promotes home composting by providing compost bins, guides and composting accessories at a subsidised price. We provide schools with a compost bin free of charge.

Remember to keep samples and records of the green schools work that you are undertaking in school as these will be included in your Green Schools application.
Once schools have got their first Green Flag for litter and waste management, they move on to study energy conservation.

**Suggested Classroom Activities**
- Discover the difference between renewable and non-renewable energy.
- Discover how much energy your school consumes by reviewing your electricity, gas and oil bills.
- Adopt low cost/no cost options to use in your school – eg adopt a turn off / turn down campaign.
- Discover what activities students can undertake to reduce their energy consumption.
- Carry out a ‘red light stand-by survey’ – you’ll be amazed by the results.

Working on the Green Flag for water, schools discover many interesting facts about water eg where it comes from, how much we consume and Schools can identify how to conserve it within their own building(s).

**Flag 3: Water Conservation**

**Suggested Classroom Activities**
- Learn about the water cycle.
- Many schools audit their school premises and see if they have leaky taps or toilets etc. Once they discover the extent of the problem, then solutions can be identified.
- Display the survey results and write a press release to the local papers detailing your progress to date.
- As part of your Action Day, host a ‘water’ exhibition in your school – contact ENFO (phone 1890 200 191 or www.enfo.ie) to book your free exhibition. There are over 28 to choose from.
- Carry out a water survey at home. Remember, it is the simple things that make a difference eg
  - only fill the kettle for the required amount of water,
  - don’t let the tap run when washing your teeth.

When studying the travel theme, schools identify transport issues which they face and discover the potential damage that excessive and sometimes unnecessary transport can cause. We can all make small changes to reduce our impact on the environment.

**Flag 4: Travel**

**Suggested Classroom Activities:**
- Conduct a survey on how students/teachers/parents get to school or work.
- Discover which is more environmentally friendly - travelling by bus, car or walking.
- Promote car pooling to and from school (if applicable).
- Participate in Car Free Day every year on 22 September or in Energy Awareness Week (in September).
- Organise a park and ride or a park and stride as this will help keep the school grounds clear of cars/buses.

**Useful Web Links:**
- [www.sustrans.com](http://www.sustrans.com)
- [www.saferoutestoschool.org.uk](http://www.saferoutestoschool.org.uk)
- [www.dto.ie/walkbus.pdf](http://www.dto.ie/walkbus.pdf)
- [www.walkingbus.com](http://www.walkingbus.com)
- [www.cyclingsafetyschool.com](http://www.cyclingsafetyschool.com)
- [www.nsc.ie](http://www.nsc.ie) – National Safety Council
Flag 5: Climate Change

Climate Change is one of the major environmental problems we face today – in fact, many experts consider it is the most serious environmental threat we face at a global level. It is being caused by the build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. These are released from the fossil fuels that we use to make electricity, drive our cars and heat our homes.

Suggested Classroom Activities

- Can you reduce your individual greenhouse gas emissions? Conduct a survey to find out if you are making smart choices about your energy use at home, your choice of transportation and your recreational activities.
- Calculate your ecological footprint – see how environmentally friendly you are – can you improve on anything or encourage others to adopt your sustainable practices?
- Grow your own vegetables using the compost that your school has produced – your crop can be distributed among the students or the wider community.

Useful Web Links:

www.combatclimatechange.ie/
www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/education
www.eco-schools.org.uk/case-studies/
www.change.ie

Applying for a Green Flag Award:

Check List for Schools applying for their First Award:

✓ Have you carried out each of the 7 steps?
✓ How long have you carried them out? (minimum 6 months).
✓ Can you answer the assessment questions which are in the An Taisce Green Schools handbook?

If you have answered yes to the above, then

- Advise the Environment Awareness Officer of Laois County Council;
- Send your application (by cd, email or hard copy) to An Taisce before their application deadlines.
- The Green Schools office will review your application and make recommendations (if necessary);
- The School should implement any recommendations and send an update to An Taisce (if necessary);
- You're nearly there… The next step is to participate in the Green Schools Assessment visit (the assessor wants to make sure your Green Schools programme is working at grassroots level);
- An Taisce’s Green-Schools evaluation committee makes the decision to award the Green-Flag.

Schools can submit an application for an award at any time of the year based on the following deadlines: 01 December or 01 March. If schools are successful with their Green-Schools application, Green-Flag award ceremonies are held in March and May.

To maintain your flag, you will need to continue with the good habits that you have already formed with your previous flag while incorporating the new theme into school life too.

Check List for Schools renewing their Award:

Once you have been awarded your Green Flag you will need to renew the award every two years thereafter.

Inform An Taisce that you wish to renew your award and arrange an assessment visit with the Environment Awareness Officer in Laois County Council. Please note you can give your school’s renewal application to the assessor at the time of your assessment visit.
Wildlife Gardening

Term 1: September to December

Back after the summer break and starting into a new school year. New classrooms, new teachers, new books and new goals to achieve. How about getting out into the school grounds and checking out what lives in the shrubs, hedgerows and trees?

Jobs to do:

• Collect fallen leaves and place in an area where they can compost down for future use as mulch in flower beds.
• Fallen branches and twigs can be gathered and placed in an area where small mammals and insects can hide over the winter.
• Plant spring flowering bulbs like Daffodils, Snowdrops and Tulips.
• Clean bird feeders and use fresh nuts and seeds to feed the birds over the winter. Make sure they have a supply of water as well.
• If you don’t have a water barrel get one and collect the rain water off the roof, it is great for using to water flowers and vegetables in the garden.

Term 2: January to March

Christmas is over, Santa has been delivering presents and it is now time to settle back into the school work. Winter is still hanging around.

Jobs to do:

• Continue to collect fallen leaves and stash away for converting into compost or mulch.
• If there is a water feature in your school garden that may be frozen over because of frost, break the ice so that the birds can drink and wash.
• Clean the bird feeders and fill up again with fresh nuts and seeds.
• Check to see if your spring bulbs are beginning to peep out from the ground.
• Have a look to see if there are any small mammals hiding away in the log pile but do so carefully, as you don’t want to disturb them!
• Register with Laois County Council to participate in National Tree Week – your school can get free trees!

Term 3: April to June

Spring has passed and summer should be in the air by now. Bulbs have flowered and some may still be in full glory. Buds are on the trees and some might even have flowers. Birds have built their nests or returned to old ones and the baby birds are on their way.

Jobs to do:

• Take down the bird feeders because young birds can choke on seeds and nuts. They are better being fed by their parents with worms and insects at this early stage.
• Wash all the bird feeding equipment and put away safely until September. Good hygiene applies to birds too! Get the vegetable plot ready. Rake over the soil to make sure it is a fine easy to work soil.
• Pick out the separate areas for the different type of vegetables you want to sow. Follow the instructions on the seed packages.
• If you are developing a wildflower area the soil does not need to be rich. Wildflowers can be sown in a gravel area or stony ground.
• Check that any trees that were sown in the spring have enough water. Once the leaves come out the tree needs lots of water so keep a check that the leaves are not wilting.

During Summer holidays: July to August

Looking for an excuse to get out of the house and satisfy summer boredom? check out what is happening in the school garden.

Jobs to do:

• Enjoy the flowers in your wildflower area. See if there are any butterflies about.
• Expend some energy weeding in the vegetable plot and watering the growing vegetables with rain water from the water barrel.
• If it is a hot sunny summer, water the newly planted trees and shrubs to make sure they don’t suffer from drought.

Where to find more information:

• Laois County Council www.laois.ie
• Irish Peatland Conservation Council www.ipcc.ie
• BirdWatch Ireland www.birdwatchireland.ie
• ENFO www.enfo.ie

Especially for Book Worms:

• Turn Spoil into Soil – How to compost by Laois County Council (Available free of charge)
• Paul Sterry ‘Complete Irish Wildlife’ (introduction by Derek Mooney) Collins Press
• Pocket Encyclopaedia Organic Gardening
The Heritage in the Schools Project

The Heritage in Schools Scheme offers a panel of Heritage Specialists who will, at the request of a teacher, visit a primary school to work directly with the children. Specialists are listed in the Heritage Directory, which is updated annually and sent to all primary schools in the country. The visit is part-funded by the school and the remaining fee plus expenses are funded by the Heritage Council.

The scheme supports the stated aims and objectives of the SESE curriculum and provides an additional educational tool for teachers. The primary aim of the scheme is to raise awareness of the natural and built heritage among children, teachers, and parents. The scheme hopes to establish a real and vibrant understanding of heritage in our primary schools, to encourage children and teachers to leave the classroom and enjoy a first hand experience of their local heritage, and to open children’s eyes to the world around them.

Guidelines for Schools

1. Obtain approval for the visit from the school principal or board of management.
2. Select a heritage specialist from the Heritage in Schools Scheme directory.
3. Contact the heritage specialist and arrange date, time and duration of the visit.
4. Plan the content of the visit with the heritage specialist, and decide what preparation must be undertaken by specialist, teacher and pupils prior to the visit.
5. Complete and return the booking form to the Professional Development Unit, INTO Head Office, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1. The booking form must be accompanied by the relevant payment and returned to INTO who administer the payment to the specialist. The payment must be made in advance of the visit.
6. Remember that the maximum number of children participating does not exceed 30 and the heritage specialist is not expected to supervise children alone, or to visit for longer than the agreed time.

For further information log onto www.into.ie or www.heritagecouncil.ie/education or email Laois County Council’s Heritage Officer Catherine Casey – ccasey@laoiscoco.ie

Useful Web Links:

www.sei.ie this website provides lots of information for teachers and students on sustainable energy, including how much energy we use and how it is created.

www.epa.ie the education section of the EPA website provides excellent materials to download on a variety of topics including waste, natural resources, impacts and pollution, nature and environmental care.

www.enfo.ie this website provides information on the every aspect of the environment including biodiversity, waste management, air quality, litter management and energy.

www.greenschoolsireland.org this website provides useful information and resources on all elements of the Green Schools programme.

www.combatclimatechange.ie SEI’s new website specifically dedicated to climate change – on line resources available to primary and secondary schools.

www.powerofone.ie energy efficiency in Ireland.

Additional web links are available on www.laois.ie

Need additional support?
we’re here to help!
Contact Environment Awareness Officer, Ann-Marie Kelly by phoning 057 867 4331 or email: amkelly@laoiscoco.ie