



PO Box 43, ENNISKILLEN. BT74 0AT; Tel: 0845 86 206 86;
E-mail: nigel.frazer@tidynorthernireland.org; Web: www.tidynorthernireland.org

NEWS RELEASE

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Eco-Schools Kids Helping Parents Beat the Recession

Listen to your kids - they can save you money and help you beat the recession.

That is the message coming from a growing band of Eco-Schools educated school children throughout Northern Ireland. The internationally acclaimed environmental programme, run by TIDY Northern Ireland, is rapidly expanding through the province's schools, and the lessons being learned by the younger generation are not only benefiting the environment but having an impact on how their families deal with the current financial crisis.

Hannah Alison, a Primary six pupil at Holy Family Primary School in Belfast, is one Eco-Committee member who is re-educating the older generation. "For several years we have been trying to spread the 'Green' message to our parents, and with the current credit crunch we have been amazed at how eager our parents are to hear energy, paper and water saving tips," she revealed. "Some have even expressed interest in our vegetable patch, with one parent remarking that 'the creation of a vegetable patch would be a great way for her and her family to save money.' We are delighted that we are not only helping to save the environment but we are also helping our school and parents to save money."

The Eco-Schools programme encourages children and teenagers to adopt an environmentally friendly attitude on a wide range of topics, and in turn educate their parents and friends in how to implement measures that will have financial benefits. Findings show that Eco-Schools pupils are saving money through the conservation of energy and water, as well as reducing fuel and transport costs by changing the way they travel to school when compared to non Eco-Schools pupils. Schools that have achieved a Green Flag have been able to reduce the amount of waste they produce by an average of 45%, and their pupils are also more likely to participate in local environmental projects, recycle materials within the home and are less likely to drop litter*.

A third of the province's schools are currently registered on the programme, with Holy Family Primary School becoming the 100th recipient of the prestigious Eco-School Green Flag Award. Coagh Primary School also recently became the 400th school to register for the scheme, which provides a simple framework to enable schools to analyse its operations and become more sustainable, reducing the environmental impact of the whole school on the community.

"It's great to witness the enthusiasm of school children when it comes to addressing environmental issues," said Dr Ian Humphreys, CEO of TIDY Northern Ireland who runs the programme within the province. "They are not only making their schools more environmentally aware, but they are bringing the message home and reminding their parents of the benefits of living responsibly. Instead of parents complaining about having to delve into their pockets to fund their children's spending, it makes a surprising change to hear parents say their children have helped them save money - something that is particularly relevant in the current financial climate."

Run internationally by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), Eco-Schools involves over five million pupils across 46 countries. In recognition of the efforts of Northern Ireland's pupils and teachers, FEE President, Jan Eriksen, and Director, Finn Bolding Thomsen, have travelled to the province to acknowledge the achievements made by local primary and post primary schools.

"The Eco-Schools Programme has since the start proved to be a very successful programme - valuable to schools as an important environmental management system," said Jan Eriksen, FEE President. "As the President of the Foundation for Environmental Education, I would like to send my best greetings to the Eco-Schools Programme in Northern Ireland. Our member organisation from Northern Ireland, Tidy Northern Ireland, has been running the Eco-Schools Programme very successfully with the Programme now celebrating the award of the 100th Green Flag."

The Eco-Schools programme is a pupil led initiative that involves the entire school. It deals with topics including Biodiversity, Litter, Waste, Energy, Water, Transport, Healthy Living and School Grounds

* The performance of the Irish Green-Schools (Eco-schools) programme. Michael John O'Mahony and Frances Fitzgerald, An Taisce, Environmental Education Unit, 2001.

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Interview:

TIDY Northern Ireland CEO Dr Ian Humphreys is available for interview. He can be contacted on 0845 86 206 86 ext. 2, Mob 079 0561 3546 or email ian.humphreys@tidynorthernireland.org

International representatives of FEE and other guests may be available for interview on the morning of the event (Thursday 13th November) until 10.30am, and also between 1pm and 2pm. To avail of these interviewees please contact Dr Ian Humphreys on the above numbers.

For any further information contact Nigel Frazer, TIDY Northern Ireland Communications Officer, on 0845 86 206 86 ext. 3, mobile 079 800 97996 or email nigel.frazer@tidynorthernireland.org

Notes to Editors:

- ❑ The Eco-Schools presentations are taking place from 10.30am on Thursday 13th November 2008 at the Braid Centre, Ballymena

- ❑ Photographs of schools receiving their Green Flags are available from TIDY Northern Ireland following the presentations on Thursday. Please contact Nigel Frazer, TIDY Northern Ireland Communications Officer, on 0845 86 206 86 ext. 3, mobile 079 800 97996, or email nigel.frazer@tidynorthernireland.org

- ❑ The following 32 schools have been awarded a Green Flag for 2007/2008:
Greenhaw Primary School, L'derry
Lowwood Primary School, Belfast
Star of the Sea Primary School, Belfast
St Columba's Primary School, Strabane
St Columb's College, Derry
St Mary's College, Portglenone
Silverstream Primary School, Carrickfergus
Holy Family Primary School, Belfast
Belmont Primary School, Belfast
Mill Strand Integrated Nursery School, Portrush

Kesh Primary School, Fermanagh
Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim
Millquarter Primary School, Toomebridge
Ballysally Primary School, Coleraine
Oakwood Integrated Primary School, Belfast
Ashfield Girls' High School, Belfast
Dunseverick Primary School, Bushmills
Mullavilly Primary School, Craigavon
Harberton School, Belfast
Camphill Primary School, Ballymena
Riverdale Primary School, Lisburn
Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast
McKinney Primary School Dundrod, Crumlin
Orangefield Primary School, Belfast
Euston Street Primary School, Belfast
Buick Memorial Primary School, Ballymena
Groggan Primary School, Antrim
Banbridge High School, Banbridge
Fourtowns Primary School, Ballymena
Carniny Primary, Ballymena
Ballykeel Primary School, Ballymena
The Country Playgroup, Ballymena

- ❑ There are currently over 430 schools registered in Northern Ireland. The following awards have been issued: 220 Bronze awards, 129 Silver awards, 106 first Green Flags, 57 second Green Flags, 36 third Green Flags & 24 fourth Green Flags.

- ❑ Eco-Schools is run internationally by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). It is operated in Northern Ireland by TIDY Northern Ireland. Eco-Schools is supported by a wide variety of partners.

- ❑ Eco-schools is funded in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and local councils

- ❑ The Foundation for Environmental Education is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation aiming to promote sustainable development through environmental

education. FEE is an international umbrella organisation with one national member organisation per country representing FEE on the national level and in charge of implementing FEE programmes nationally. FEE has member organisations in 55 countries worldwide.

- Eco-Schools is an international programme promoting environmental awareness in schools. It involves the whole school – pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and governors – as well as members of the local community, parents, the local council, the media and local businesses.

- TIDY Northern Ireland is the province’s leading authority on litter issues, and provides a unique service to communities, businesses, councils and schools throughout Northern Ireland. The anti-litter charity runs the Keep Northern Ireland Tidy Campaigns, and manages the Northern Ireland Borough Cleanliness Survey, TIDY Business, Eco-Schools, and the Blue Flag and Clean Coast programmes for beaches in Northern Ireland.