

Name	St. Columb's College
Type of School	Grammar School
Number of pupils	1460
Joined Eco-Schools in...	September 2007
Eco-Schools Status	Bronze Award

GETTING STARTED – Secondary School

AIM

Why did you register with Eco-Schools? State your reasons for becoming involved and what you are ultimately looking to achieve.

We registered with Eco-Schools because it provided us with a very user-friendly framework for putting the environment on our whole school agenda. In addition, the Eco-Schools programme provides us with a reward system which is tangible and achievable.

We hope to raise awareness of Environmental issues and in so doing, make every member of the school community more conscious of their own behaviour. We also hope to cut the school's running costs, in the long term, and improve the aesthetic appearance of the school, by reducing litter.

METHOD

How did you go about setting up as an Eco-School? Include the process of setting up the Action Team, completing an environmental review, writing the Action Plan etc. Who made the decisions? How are you documenting your progress? How have you tailored the programme to the age of your pupils?

As the teacher with responsibility for Environmental Issues, I was already aware of the interest in this area, among both pupils and staff. I initially spoke to the Principal and the School's HR and Finance Manager to gain their support. In order to establish the Action Team, I spoke to all my classes and simply asked if there was anyone interested in joining the team. I also spoke to teaching staff. At our first meeting, I introduced the Eco-Schools programme and asked all members of the Action Team to familiarise themselves with the Eco-Schools' website before the next meeting.

At our next meeting we conducted a Simple Environmental audit and as a group identified three areas for development: paper waste, litter, computers on standby. The audit process included a lot of group discussion, as well as individual contributions from everyone on the Action Team. We then reached agreement on the three priority areas.

The whole process thus far has been paper free. We have used e-mail as the means of communication within the Action Team. All agendas, minutes and other

documents have been saved electronically. We have also posted progress reports on staff and pupil notice boards, as opposed to making unnecessary photocopies. We have delivered progress reports in person at staff meetings and pupil assemblies. In addition, our webpage will be up and running shortly and this will be updated regularly.

Our pupils range in age from 11 -18. They all have a high degree of computer literacy and we have exploited this, for example one of the members of the Action Team, a Year 12 Computing student, designed the website.

The pupils have also acquired new skills as members of the Action Team. They have positions on the Team (Chair, Secretary, P.R.O. etc). They conduct the meeting and take minutes.

RESULTS

Include any measurements of success e.g. actions achieved, knowledge gained, how has Eco-Schools been received? How many of the school community are involved? Have you had any attention from outside the School (e.g. local media)?

Awareness levels have certainly increased. As a result of presentations at In-Service training days, assemblies and staff meetings, all staff and pupils are aware of the Eco-Schools initiative.

In addition, we have succeeded in making the issue a topical one! People are talking about environmental issues and many pupils as well as members of staff are already changing their habits. There is a genuine interest in reducing the school's environmental impact.

Given that we only started in September, results so far have been very positive. We are using less paper, people are using e-mail more, computers and lights are switched off at the end of the school day. Positive reinforcement of these changes is ongoing,

In the coming days, we will have an official presentation of our Bronze Award Certificate and we will invite the media to this event.

RESOURCES

Include any costs involved with setting up, how much staff time has been involved / allocated (these can be estimates). Have you had access to any outside help or funding? Have you involved any other partners (e.g. local council, wildlife trusts etc.)?

We have incurred no costs thus far.

Meetings have been frequent, but short, in order to make progress quickly. These have been held during the school day or sometimes after school. Designing the

webpage has been the most time consuming activity so far. Tasks have been effectively delegated to avoid one person doing the bulk of the work.

We have been in touch with Derry City Council about recycling. A meeting with their Environmental Officer is pending. We have also had a 2 day visit from Action Renewables. Their Education Officer visited 6 Citizenship classes to talk about alternative energy sources. This visit was a great success. There was massive interest in this area and the Education Officer was overwhelmed by the number of questions asked!

TIMESCALE

**How long did it take to set up your committee? Did you encounter any delays?
How long did it take to write and get everyone involved in your Action Plan?**

Our Action Team was established by the 14th of September. We have encountered no delays thus far.

We compiled our Action plan during a 30 minute meeting, having already conducted a Simple Environmental Audit. Informing the whole school about our Action Plan was relatively straightforward. Teachers were informed at an In Service Training Day, by means of a brief presentation. All pupils were informed at Assemblies during September and October. The school's Administrative staff has been involved from the outset because a senior member of the school's admin staff is a member of the Action Team. In addition, the school's HR and Finance Manager has put the Action Plan on the agenda at management level.

Contact Details

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