

Eco-Schools Case Study - Litter

Name of School: St. Columba's P.S. Clady Strabane

Project : 'Bash the Trash'

Why did you choose this particular project?

St. Columba's Primary School is located in Clady, a small, rural village, four miles from Strabane in Co. Tyrone. There is only one designated area in a housing estate for the children to play. As part of our Eco-school programme our school has participated in a 'Bash the Trash' campaign in the village two years ago to help improve the environment but despite our efforts the litter has reappeared. The pupils in our eco-school committee are the voice of all the pupils in the school and they have agreed that it is now time to take action once again and tidy up one of the 'grotty spots' in the middle of the village which is an eyesore and an embarrassment to the community of Clady. The pupils would love to use it as a play area and their dream last year was to put up a Christmas tree in this location. The area chosen has the potential to become a beauty spot if some shrubs and flowers were planted. No one has taken the lead to solve the problem of litter and develop this site. The children are proud of their village and are now eager to declare war on litter.

Did you integrate it in to the curriculum? How?

Litter was an area addressed in our action plan for eco-schools. We integrated it into the curriculum in the following ways:

- ICT – Y7 Pupils created posters which were displayed in Clady to inform the villagers of the time, date etc that they would be picking up litter in the village. The pupils also published an article on the 'Bash the Trash' campaign in the half termly eco magazine for parents.
- Literacy – Pupils composed poems about the event.
- Art – an art display was created using litter which could be recycled

Did you encounter any problems and if so, how did you overcome them?

One problem which we had was that we didn't have enough litter picks in school for all of the Year 7 pupils nor did we have appropriate clothing for the event.

We therefore contacted the Education Environmental Officer with Strabane District Council to accompany us on the 'Bash the Trash' campaign in the village. He supplied the pupils with overalls, plastic gloves, litter picks and bin bags.

How did you encourage pupil participation? How did they have ownership of the project?

'Bash the Trash' campaign was aimed at our Year 7 pupils. The pupils were very enthusiastic about the project as they could see a purpose for it. They realised that the project would improve the environment which they lived in and that the village would be a place that they could be proud of, thanks to their efforts.

Did you receive any support from parents, staff or outside agencies? Did you have to source any funding?

We received oral and written thanks from parents and the villagers in Clady. The Education Environmental Officer supported us in the campaign. All the staff were very supportive of our project and the Year 7 pupils gave an account of it orally to everyone in the school at assembly. We didn't have to source any funding.

Is there any advice you could offer to other schools embarking on a similar project?

It is necessary to explore the area to be cleaned up and to take photographs of it before and after the event. Support from the district council was invaluable to us. Pupils need to be briefed prior to the event on health and safety issues on litter which they should not touch.

Has doing this project driven other Eco-Schools ideas? What are your future plans regarding Eco-schools?

We were awarded our second Green Flag last June. This project motivated us to develop our school grounds as place for outdoor learning. A vegetable, a fruit and a herb garden were planted by the pupils in our grounds. We also have a mini-beast, woodland and wild life areas. Each year we have a ballot to elect a very dedicated eco-school committee. Our school has also adopted an orang-utan. 'Walk to School' Week is a major project each year on our school calendar and we have been successful in winning the project for two consecutive years. In 2008 the Year 7 pupils with the help of the principal wrote a play called 'Save our Planet' which was performed in the Alley Theatre in Strabane.

Our plan is to continue to develop pupils who will be responsible citizens of the future who care for their environment. We would like to further develop our school grounds as an outdoor classroom where pupils will develop a love and a deeper understanding of nature and our environment.