

AMBASSADOR SCHOOL CASE STUDY



Mill Strand Integrated Primary School & Nursery

Number of pupils	Age range	Joined Eco-Schools	Number of Green Flags	Date of last Green Flag
411	3-11	2007	9	30/05/2024

Information about our school

Mill Strand Integrated School & Nursery in Portrush, Northern Ireland, has seen remarkable growth and development. This includes the completion of a state-of-the-art school building in spring 2024 and expanded school and nursery intakes to meet increasing parental demand.

Environmental awareness is central to our ethos. We have a thriving Eco Committee, comprised of pupils from Y3 to Y7. Interested students can apply, with the selection process managed by the current committee. Regular after-school ECO clubs and outdoor learning sessions are available weekly for most pupils.

Sustainability is deeply embedded in our culture, and we take pride in maintaining our initiatives. With over 30 years of experience in outdoor learning, we actively engage in marine conservation and the enhancement of outdoor spaces. Responding to pupil voices, we launched 'The Last Straw' initiative, eliminating the use of straws and reducing plastic consumption by encouraging recycled water bottles. Our community-focused approach includes clothing swap shops, a staff buy-swap-sell group promoting sustainable habits, and Green Fingers days where parents and grandparents contribute to school environmental projects.

We value collaboration with local experts, benefiting from visits by marine specialists such as Robin Ruddick, Gary Burrows, and Georg Arnsneidt, who have enriched our students' learning experiences.

Over the years, our school has earned numerous accolades. We are working towards our 10th Green Flag and hold accreditation through the Primary Science Quality Mark (PSQM). Mill Strand Integrated School & Nursery has also achieved multiple awards for its innovative scarecrow creations, including the well-known "Scaremaid" and "Maid of Straw" in recycled scarecrow competitions. We have won the Translink Travel Challenge for two consecutive years, with our environmental initiatives widely recognised.

In another proud achievement, the school triumphed in the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 categories of the 'Marine Litter Art Competition 2018', organised by Ulster Wildlife as part of the NI Science Festival across two years.

Our commitment to education, sustainability, and creativity remains at the heart of everything we do, inspiring students and the wider community to engage meaningfully with the environment.

We are very proud of our school community; here are some of the things that Mill Strand is proud of.....

Topic Actions:

Outdoor Learning is now an integral part of our Curriculum, and we actively support other schools by lending resources and delivering workshops.

Additionally, as part of our most recent application, we took part in the Radius Housing 'Grow to Eat' initiative, collaborating with Carnalridge, Portrush, led by ECO Schools NI (Gareth Lamrock & team)

We have fostered the local beach as part of the 'Adopt a Spot' programme & carry out regular litter picks.





Sharing Good Practice Actions:

We provide training annually for PGCE students from UU Coleraine, in 'Science and the Outdoor Classroom', provided by our WAU Coordinator Deirdre Doherty.

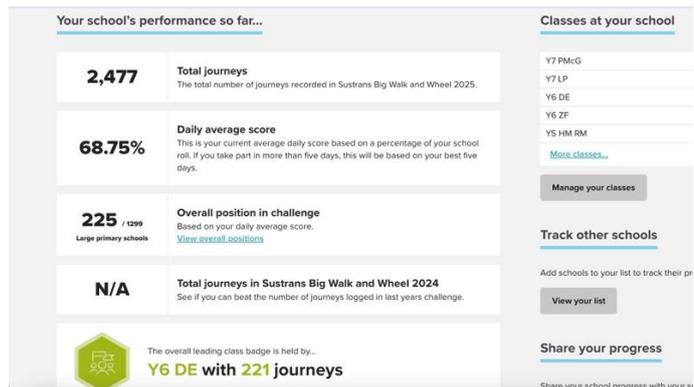
Ms Doherty has also been a presenter over the past three years in the SCOTENS online workshops supporting student teachers in a cross-border initiative.

We are active on social media to help support other schools with ideas and opportunities.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

We ask our pupils to monitor and evaluate the activities/projects that are part of our action plans.

During our Big Walk and Wheel to school 2025, every child from Nursery to Y7 recorded their travel on the Big Walk & Wheel app daily for two weeks.



Mentoring School:

Since 2024, Mill Strand has been part of a Shared Education Programme with Sandleford Special School and Irish Society Primary School.

Each school acts as a host school for the others, carrying out a number of workshops to mentor each other and providing opportunities to learn about each school and their own unique environment. We also have ongoing links with St Malachys, Coleraine-Sharing resources and supporting each other.



Members of our ECO Committee from Mill Strand lead one of the interactive displays at the Coastal Zone, Portrush. There was great excitement when they were invited to take part and they were invited to the grand opening of the new look marine centre.

The Secretary of State, Hilary Benn, paid a visit to our school on April 10th, 2025 – the 27th anniversary of the signing of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. He was delighted to be asked to assist Nursery in releasing their butterflies as a sign of ‘New beginnings’.



We use the outdoor environment to promote all Curricular areas and have been filmed as part of a series of BBC Programmes ‘Outdoor Detectives’ Learning by the Seashore.

We grow to eat at Mill strand and are excited to develop these opportunities on our new site. We understand how important it is for young children to know where their food has come from and what it needs to grow.



We work closely with Johnny from Sustrans while working towards our Silver award. We now have more bike stands and plan to install another one shortly.

We are so lucky to have marine experts in our environment who support us in learning about its richness as well as sustainability. Robin Ruddock & Gary Burrows regularly support our school

Contact

For more information on this Eco-Schools Ambassador School, see details below.

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Years involved in the Eco-Schools Programme: 20

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