

AMBASSADOR SCHOOL CASE STUDY



St Joseph's Primary School

15 Glenavy Road, Crumlin, BT29 4LA

Number of pupils	Age range	Joined Eco-Schools	Number of Green Flags	Date of last Green Flag
401	5-11	2010	7	June 2024

St Joseph's Primary School has been involved with Eco Schools for the past 16 years, with many actions and activities that have continued to develop and enhance our school grounds and community, all led by a very enthusiastic and committed Eco team.

Our school is set in a semi-rural environment, and we have been very fortunate to develop the school grounds to create specific Forest School areas, outdoor classrooms and designated areas for planting and growing.

Our main focus over the past two years has been on improving waste and recycling around our school, both internally and externally. There are bins around our school however the Eco team felt that these could be better situated with proper signage, as well as including children from the Foundation classes to help promote and improve this area. We work alongside our caretaker when sorting and emptying the recycling bins and

have also appointed Bin Monitors in each class to ensure that the correct rubbish is put into the correct bin.

This was prompted by our involvement in the Wheelie Big Challenge both last year and this year, which has been a great focus to help us with this action. We also had some of our previous Eco members joining us to continue with the work that they had started last year. It is great to see that past members are still eager to support and get involved!

Our outdoor space has been greatly developed and is being used by all classes, including our nursery children, for a range of activities. We were very fortunate to secure funding through different grants and the children were included in the planning and creation of these spaces. One of our teachers has attained the Forest School award for St Joseph's and his commitment and enthusiasm for outdoor learning and forest school activities has benefitted the whole school community. Our Forest School Rangers after school club is also a great success and is very popular, especially among our younger pupils.

We have a strong partnership with our Shared Education school and one of our activities is the annual litter pick which takes place in the local area, including the Main Street, which is supported by our local council (Antrim and Newtownabbey).

We have regular visitors from a range of areas, including NI Water, Arc 21, Bryson House, Trocaire, Dairy Council, Lough Neagh fishermen, to share their expertise with the school and engage with the children to help support their learning and understanding of these areas.

We have applied for our 8th Green Flag award and in 2021 our Eco teacher was awarded 'Eco teacher of the Year' which was a great surprise and honour! Other awards have included the work with our school Faith Group to achieve our Bronze level in the Compassionate School Award (Children in Crossfire); NIFSA; Fairtrade Schools with the work carried out with the Pupil Council.

There are so many things that we are proud of in regards promoting all things Eco and look forward to building on and developing these in the years to come.

Topic Actions:

Recycling properly in the bins provided around the school and making sure the correct waste is going into the correct bin. The Wheelie Big Challenge was a great initiative to get everyone involved, as well as giving the Eco team the idea of creating Bin Monitors in each class (from Year 1 to Year 7) to assist them with recycling.



Annual Shared Education litter pick supported by the council, where we litter pick the Main Street and areas around Crumlin.

Outdoor learning – lots of planning and designing to make our outdoor areas places for learning, having fun and engaging with the environment through planting and growing. Just last year we took part in growing our own potatoes (Grow your Own) and it was so successful the Eco team wanted to do it again this year! Including all the great work that has been happening due to our Forest School Programme. This also connects with biodiversity and how we have our bug hotels and wormery.



Sharing Good Practice Actions:

School Website and termly newsletters with photos and write ups by the pupils about all the great work that is happening.

Engaging with the Parish to showcase our actions in the bulletin and linking with creation and giving thanks, which enabled a visit from some fishermen from Lough Neagh.

<https://www.stjosephscrumlin.co.uk/news/detail/from-fish-to-faith-celebrating-the-life-of-lough-n/>

Forest School status has enabled us to share the activities and ideas for learning with other teachers and schools.

Involving parents and members of the local community to come in at different times of the year to share their expertise with the pupils – creating outdoor spaces, Men Shed, NI Water, Sustrans, Dairy Council.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

We have carried out Before and After surveys to compare our results to monitor impact and progress of the topics and areas that we are focussing on.

Visits to classrooms and talking at assembly to share updates of evaluations and engage in discussion about how the pupils feel we are progressing.

The Eco notice board in school is regularly updated with all new information, including results and evaluations of work.





Mentoring School:

We have invited different schools and teachers to see how our actions have worked in our school and encourage them with their work. One example is of a previous teacher who came back to visit with some colleagues in helping to get ideas for setting up an outdoor learning area and developing their school grounds.

Sharing of good practice and working alongside our Shared Education partners.

Inviting teachers to observe Forest School in action and sharing lessons and ideas with others, both within St Joseph's and with colleagues in other schools.

<https://www.stjosephscrumlin.co.uk/news/detail/learning-without-walls-forest-school-nifsa-award/>

We also had the opportunity to mentor our partner schools when involved in our last Erasmus project in developing their outdoor areas, as well as sharing their ideas for our school too.



Forest School in action



Visit from Bryson House to talk about how to recycle correctly.



Dr Bike (aka Johnny) talking to the Key Stage two classes about safety checks on your bike as a way of encouraging more active school travel among our older pupils.



Cash for Clobber. We collected so many bags that we didn't mind having to sort them in the rain!



Making the most of our recycling and active travel as Johnny delivered some bikes from the Recycling scheme for us to use in school.



Visitors to help us learn even more!! We were delighted when Pat from NI Water delivered a water butt for our school science courtyard.

Contact

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

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