



A community of commitment

CRISPIN SCHOOL, SOMERSET

This mixed comprehensive with over 1,100 pupils has a wealth of experience and initiatives behind them ranging across the breadth of Learning for Sustainability, including working to improve its grounds and buildings in an environmentally friendly way for over 10 years. A number of staff from Crispin school have attended WWF training, including CMAS, the ESD introductory online course, and our previous conferences. Staff at Crispin saw the WWF School Support Scheme and Pathways as an opportunity to 'give greater coherence between ESD and other initiatives' and to face the challenge of involving the whole school.

Creating cohesion

To help take their sustainability work forward in an integrated way, a group of interested individuals has been formed as one of the schools four 'forward thinking groups'. An example of the kind of work this group is striving for is the development of an exciting new school block with four classrooms. The block has been designed to conform, as far as possible, to sustainable building techniques; moreover, pupils have been involved in its design, evaluation, and continuous use. Placing the pupils at the heart of the school is the key to what Crispin is trying to do.

Examples of encouraging pupils to take control of real decision making within their school include peer tutoring, support and mediation, setting up a School Council, and looking at issues such as bullying, children's rights, and fair trade. But it doesn't stop there. This year, when the school were looking to appoint a new Head, the School Council were invited to play an integral part of the decision making process.

'When I was appointed to the position, I was interviewed by a dozen students. I was surprised at the rigour in the interview; the students very much had their finger on the pulse of what the school was about...it was clear that what they had to say about the appointment of their Headteacher was going to be taken notice of.'

Continued commitment

Often in large secondary schools, the real challenge for sustainability work is that of keeping the commitment going and alive. At Crispin, sustainability is being embedded within the school's ethos, plans and policies, with its own budget line and visible elements – such as the new school build – acting as a constant reminder of what it is all about.

...'you just need a few significant changes and ESD becomes vulnerable... A budget line shows a school is committed'

'[Sustainability] has resonated with the values of people within the school'. Another element of sustaining this commitment is the value the school sees in being a part of a wider community of practitioners, created around something like the WWF conference. This stimulates and encourages them to take things forward.