



Bringing cohesion to diversity

BALLYMENA PRIMARY SCHOOL, COUNTY ANTRIM NORTHERN IRELAND

At Ballymena Primary School, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has always been conducted on a whole school basis, although different aspects have been led by different individual teams. With a dynamic Head at the helm, they have achieved a string of awards including Eco Schools, Health Promoting Schools and the Our World Challenge, as well as undertaking a diverse range of projects taking in international links, citizenship, the Global programme, fair trade week, and ICT based work.

By joining the WWF School Support Scheme, Ballymena hoped to gain an overview of their work, and to encourage greater participation by all staff, parents, and pupils. The *Pathways* process helped them to look at all their work, celebrate their achievements, and bring the disparate events together.

NURTURING THE SAPLINGS TO MAKE THE WOOD STRONGER

As part of a Baker day, the school completed a whole school audit, with individuals doing it from their perspective leading to a whole staff discussion. The audit showed successes but also missed opportunities: for example, their schools grounds work had gone well, but they had not thought how to integrate this into the curriculum – perhaps by developing maths trails for each class as part of their involvement in the Numeracy strategy, whilst school build is something largely out of their control.

The staff decided that, to enable them to make these projects and ideas really work, they needed to work on pupil development and participation. The first step on this road was to release the Vice Principle's time from teaching duties to set up a School Council.

'What is a school council? – A group of pupils, two from each class, who meet regularly to talk about how to improve their school'

All the pupils at Ballymena have been trained on what a School Council is about, how to run their meetings, plan agendas, listen, and take on the concerns of the school. The intention is that the School Council will give pupils a say in what is going on in their school: each class will have someone who can speak up for them, and teachers have a forum in which to listen to pupils' ideas, so everyone is working together.

The structures and skills are now in place within Ballymena, enabling staff and pupils to contribute to the future of their school under a common framework that Learning for Sustainability brings.

ONE PLANET
SCHOOLS