



## From innovation to mainstream

THE HOLGATE SCHOOL, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

### The challenge

This very large co-educational comprehensive school is based in Hucknall, which is with the in South Nottinghamshire Coalfield area. Following the closure of local collieries, it has declined to one of the most deprived districts in the UK. With this background has come many challenges but also many opportunities, with a caring and supportive community. Holgate are only at the very beginning of their journey and are just trying to pull together all the work across a large school.

Their first step was to adopt an environmental policy, pushed forward by an enthusiastic geography teacher who had been at the school for over 20 years. Due to the need for a change in direction, this teacher was made environmental coordinator on a three year secondment to try and make this work within the formal structure of the school.

*'The secondment allowed me to talk to people on a different footing.'*

### Adaptation

The environment coordinator brought together a steering group comprising a representative from SMT, the Deputy Head, a citizenship coordinator, a governor, an enthusiastic teacher and a representative from one of the feeder schools, to look at how they could coordinate with the community.

The group set about creating a programme of INSET training for teaching and support staff, inaugurated by a launch event. Although these events were not mandatory for all the staff, the turn out demonstrated that more people than expected were interested in looking at what sustainability could do for their school.

They started to look at what they were doing already, and the strengths and areas of improvement for the school. This led them on to discussing the aspirations for the coming years, and these were collated under the headings of 'comfort zone', 'exclusion zone' and 'uncharted territory'.

### Within the formal structure

Due to this work being carried out by a wide group of staff, Learning for Sustainability was adopted in the School Improvement Plan 2004-2007 including action points on the following areas:

- Curriculum – looking at how ESD can be integrated into all subjects, through working with the faculties. An audit has been carried out to identify what they can build on (it has taken a year to map out 30 per cent), using the seven key concepts of sustainable development identified by the Panel on Sustainable Development Education



- Safe and supportive environment – looking at pastoral care in the school, for example through assemblies
- Providing professional development opportunities
- Global awareness – looking at how this can be brought into the school
- Integrating health and safety
- Pupil participation and empowerment – involving students so they can develop a voice through the development of a School Council, which has been given funds to look at issues across the school. Any savings they make through their work will be placed back into their budget
- Resource management
- Travel plan.

As it is now embedded within the formal structure of the school, Holgate's LfS work has to get recognition. And as the news spreads of this work, the steering group has been providing short sessions for those interested, using the Pathways activities in captured time during lunch and in the allocated after-school sessions. These structured discussions have now reached up 30-40 per cent of the staff over the year. The coordinator also reports back to the Management Team, and tries to keep the school informed and keep the profile raised through noticeboards for both staff and pupils.

The coordinator describes himself as 'a bit of a bush fire that refuses to be put out'. Holgate are by no means done, but by involving as many people as possible; by realising that people can relate to LfS at different levels; and by providing 'sweeteners' to bring people 'onside', they have shown how such work can achieve formal recognition. Their story shows how 'a little and often', progression from small initiatives approach can lead to success, if you pace the process and stay flexible whilst working within the constraints of a large organisation.