



Introducing ESD as a whole school perspective

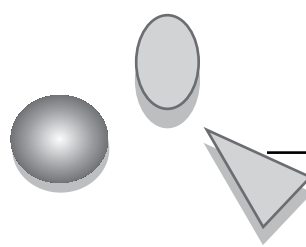
A range of approaches

This case study looks at how a large secondary school built on staff and pupil concerns for the school environment to develop a whole school approach to Education for Sustainable Development. It describes how a sense of ownership was developed among staff and students – without placing unreasonable demands on staff – by initiating a range of long- and short-term projects and involving students at every stage. The major impact of a change in catering arrangements is highlighted.

Background

Prestwich Community High School is an 11-16 developing school in a suburban area which is almost wholly residential. Before the school became involved in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and WWF's 'Making it Happen' scheme – which offered funding, training and consultancy to support schools in their ESD journeys – there were several on-going projects that were successful, but we lacked an all-embracing approach. It is sometimes useful to have a whole-school project to which everyone can contribute. Since we seemed to be constantly complaining about litter around the site, issues relating to the environment seemed to be a high priority for whole school development. Students were already demonstrating their concern for the environment through the existing curriculum, and we were therefore influenced by that concern to formulate a project that we felt would give students an opportunity to 'make a difference'.

Schools are very busy places so it was important at the outset to ensure that any whole school drive for sustainability would not encroach on the schedules of teachers already working



hard. Any such project is unlikely to receive support and will soon flounder. In our experience, a whole school approach also has to have the support of the Senior Management Team so that the whole school can see that it is endorsed at the highest level. Communication is also important. We found full school assemblies a most effective medium for reaching staff and pupils, delivering messages instantly as well as reminding them that this is a whole school initiative that concerns them all.

Having launched the idea of a whole school environmental bias, we then set about formulating a number of specific projects. As with most schemes in school, we knew that there would be a small group of active staff, a further group of staff willing to help from time to time, but that the rest of the staff, though willing to support, may not have any available time to do so. To ensure the success of the scheme the rest of the staff had to be convinced that it was a positive development for the school, and one which they could support without having to devote too much time to it. This group 'make up' was mirrored in the student body: a small group of active students, those who assisted from time to time, and the remainder who had to be kept informed! We felt it was vital that any projects had to involve students at every stage, so that they felt some ownership. Each project also had to demonstrate to the wider audience of students that there was some real tangible benefit for them. Since children are genuinely worried about environmental issues, we only had to harness that concern.

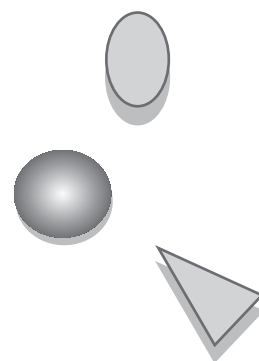
Project work

It's all very well trying to promote educational sustainability, but what about project sustainability? How can you keep a project going?

One tip is, don't do it all yourself! In essence you need a small management group to drive the thing along – coordinating, evaluating, steering. Another is, don't just have one project, but several. You may have one long-term project running which does not require much input to sustain, and several shorter-term projects which may require more time, but here you can involve interested staff. Whilst the longer-term project emphasises the whole school approach, the shorter-term projects should offer opportunities for ESD in practice to be emphasised in different curricular areas – 'spreading the word', as it were. Schools are very dynamic institutions, and effective projects are those that 'drip-feed', so introduce ideas by a variety of means.

Before describing the various projects we initiated, it might be useful to set out some of the different approaches to project work that helped us in formulating the process. This is essentially a classification of projects. We felt it was important that, overall, our projects addressed each of the following issues in different ways:

- support for a whole school perspective, targeting all ages and abilities
- the need for a tangible result that is clear and distinct
- the need to be firmly embedded in, and give support to, the curriculum
- the involvement of staff and pupils
- the need to support the aims of the school and address issues in the School Development Plan
- the benefits of addressing a small but clear issue, with a short-term life span
- the desirability of reaching out to the wider community beyond the school.



The whole school approach

Closest to home is our own school environment. Staff and pupils alike had previously raised a number of issues relating to the environment. These included a lack of seating areas for pupils and a generally untidy environment due to litter and waste. The student School Council was involved in discussing these issues from the outset. These student representatives in turn discussed the issues with the wider student body. If money could be generated, this could fund pupil-seating areas. If reducing litter could generate money, then both issues could be tackled together: the answer was to recycle.

The scheme was launched at full assembly and action was taken.

To encourage recycling, a long-term project was started:

- extra rubbish bins were provided
- special bins were provided at certain sites for clean paper, cans, etc
- a local company agreed to collect recyclable waste, generating money
- a whole school Art competition encouraged pupils to look at these issues and produce posters for display
- a newsletter to parents asked for support, encouraging them to reduce waste in their own homes.

To reduce waste, a short-term project was set up. This involved the following:

- student participation in a 'waste survey', measuring waste generated by the school and where it came from
- a national project offering sponsorship for us to reduce waste
- changing practices within school to reduce the generation of waste.

In order for teaching and learning to benefit:

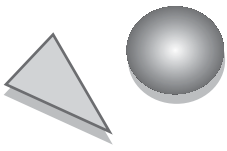
- work was undertaken in PSE to look at the environment of the school
- best practice was identified by students
- work schemes were rewritten to include our new emphasis.

Catering procedures and practices were also changed, for example:

- using fewer food items involving disposable containers (eg no sachets!)
- a reduction in 'take away' containers and wrappings
- offering a better variety of food to reduce packaged food being brought on site.



'WWF Waste Points' for recycling



The new school canteen

Whilst the recycling scheme focused views, and generated the monetary bonus the students needed to give them their desired seating, the change in catering arrangements had the biggest impact. Perhaps it was opportune that the school was embarking on a renegotiation of the catering contract so that the School Council, along with Management, could ensure that the contract clearly specified changes in relation to reducing waste. By offering a better variety of foods (some with a healthy eating bias), sold at break as well as at lunchtime, pupils were less inclined to buy packaged food and sweets to bring to the school to eat, leading to a reduction in wrappers deposited about the site. Sachets of tomato ketchup, etc were replaced by bottles, and food was presented in safe, clean, but minimal wrapping, again to reduce waste. Students were extremely responsible about these changes, and embraced them fully: the proportion of students now eating a healthy snack in the middle of the day, rather than gravy and chips, has increased considerably.

The curriculum approach

PSE

A PSE project in lower school encouraged pupils to look at the litter problem and come up with solutions.

Year 7 pupils studied the local area and community. They worked with the local shopping precinct to redesign the central courtyard with an environmental theme. They also conducted surveys on litter in the local community, representing their views on possible local environmental improvements to the Youth Forum Group, comprising students and members of the local community.

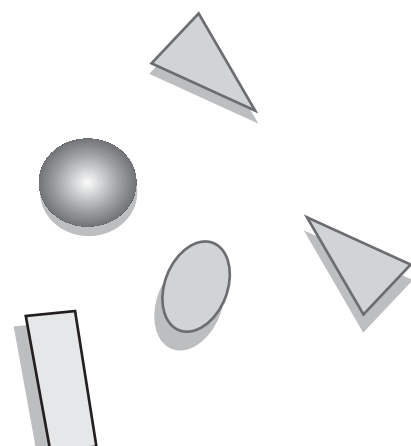
A project for Year 8 called the 'Earth Summit' involved a day off normal timetable, looking at issues relating to the Earth Summit on the environment and debating them in a mock council. Students lobbied supermarkets about stocking fair trade products, which helped them to realise they had power as consumers.

ICT

Time was made available within ICT for students to explore Internet sites relating to the environmental concerns of other countries.



The Summit simulation



Geography

In Geography, Year 7 pupils produced a newspaper report on the causes and effects of global warming, researching solutions that they could implement at home. In this way energy efficiency became part of their daily routine.

Year 9 pupils investigated aspects of eco-tourism in Kenya, particularly the future of safari and beach holidays, making comparisons between the two. Students identified the characteristics of an 'offensive tourist' and made a list of rules to improve their behaviour on holiday with respect to the local environment – a list which could also be used to assist them in evaluating their behaviour in their own community.

The small project approach

A number of short-term projects were started. These were used to spread the emphasis on ESD into other curricular areas of the school and involved a wider audience of teachers and pupils. They included:

- A statistical investigation in Maths as to how students travelled to school. This resulted in a debate about bicycle storage facilities at the school. The school made an area available for safer storage, encouraging more pupils to come by bike, rather than relying on cars for transport.
- As part of a school Industry Day, all pupils engaged in a fashion show with a difference. They were given (clean) waste materials, and teams were challenged to dress one member of their team in the materials. This project emphasised that many materials disposed of by one person, can be used by another, perhaps in a different way. The resultant 'fashion show' stimulated much debate! Conceived and managed by staff and pupils, this short-term project will now feature annually in our Industry Days. Students were encouraged to bring in old outfits that they were throwing out and customise them. In this way students were keen to wear the outfits after the event rather than just discarding them.

"As a Geographer, ESD has always been a consideration, however it was easy to acknowledge it as a philosophy rather than a practical approach to living and teaching. Through work with WWF and Prestwich High School I value ESD as an integral and valuable part of my professional and personal life." *Head of Geography*

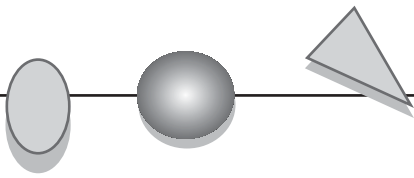


The refurbished cycle sheds featuring recycled wood and background mural



The fashion show using recycled materials





Eco-club

The energies of a group of particularly interested pupils have been harnessed in an Eco-club, which complements the activities of the School Council in supporting the aims of the overall project. We considered this paramount, to harness the imagination of pupils to assist in the creation of further project work. The group has been involved in several landscaping projects on the site and has introduced some protected plant species. They have contributed to several local environment fairs and, through these, other schools are seeing the benefits of the whole school approach to ESD. The club has attracted external funding to ensure its sustainability.

Conclusion

The many staff and pupils who have given their time to support these ESD projects have encouraged others to realise the importance of the initiatives to the whole school. Through careful planning and attention to the process by which projects were introduced to the school, it was possible to integrate the ESD approach into existing practices, which will assist in ensuring that ESD will be sustainable within the school. Evidence of the success of this approach is that ESD continues to develop, despite the fact that two of the three staff originally leading the work have moved on.

The key benefit for the school and the pupils has been the whole school focus of the ESD approach. It was soon embedded within the ethos of the school and has created new opportunities for students to contribute to school development.

The future...

We see the work as only just beginning. Some longer-term projects will never go away, whilst the shorter-term projects will come and go.

What we have detailed is a means by which we have introduced a whole school emphasis on ESD, which has then paved the way for more project work. Once that focus is there, it is easier to set up and run other projects that support the over-arching theme.

Our continued work on ESD will, in time, encourage other curricular areas to integrate the whole school approach into their schemes of work. Developments for the future include third world consumer affairs in Food Technology, sustainable materials in Resistant Materials, encouraging

"ESD has become an education for myself. It has opened doors for the school, attracting interest from the wider community. The whole school has benefited in some way from our involvement."

Deputy Headteacher



environmental considerations in Graphic Products, and in RE an appreciation of the philosophy behind ESD in respect of world religions.

Through the local Development Education Project (DEP) in Manchester we are beginning to develop links with schools in Brazil and hope to extend this to schools in other countries, with the support of the British Council. The focus will be joint work on ESD issues, sharing concerns and considering solutions for perhaps different problems.

Together we will create opportunities for children to learn, and to explore ideas in relation to environmental concerns.

"Sustainability is the key to our future. Our involvement has provided opportunities for children to share in this vision." *Head of PSE and Citizenship*

What's this got to do with Education for Sustainable Development?

Values and attitudes

- empathy and awareness of the points of view of others
- a sense of responsibility for personal and group actions
- a belief in a positive future to which they, working with others, can contribute
- a willingness to act as a responsible citizen.

Skills

- cooperative working
- critical thinking
- problem solving
- reasoned debate
- informed decision-making
- research, data handling and communication.

Knowledge and understanding

- the environment and the human condition are inextricably interrelated
- how biological systems operate, support life and are affected by human activity
- how their own lives and actions connect with the environment and with the lives and actions of others
- how the economy, society and the environment are interdependent
- how school, home and community can be managed more sustainably
- how the processes of decision-making work and how to take part in them.

Key success factors

- Ensure that a school drive for sustainability does not encroach too far on teachers' already busy schedules.
- The support of senior management is vital to a whole school approach.
- Use school assemblies to communicate whole school initiatives.
- Involve students at every stage to give a sense of ownership.
- Demonstrate to the wider body of students that there will be real, tangible benefits for them (eg use money raised from recycling to address student concerns).
- Introduce new ideas through a variety of projects – both long- and short-term.
- Establish an Eco-club to harness the imagination of pupils to create further projects.
- Develop links with schools in other countries to share concerns about and solutions to sustainability problems.

"Our partnership with WWF has proved extremely beneficial and we are grateful for their support. All pupils involved in the initiative have a greater understanding of sustainability and responsibility, particularly within the wider global context." *Headteacher*

Resources

Websites that were found to be particularly useful in exploring ESD themes:

www.wwflearning.co.uk

www.nc.uk.net/esd

The WWF Schools' Case Studies Series

This case study forms part of a series designed to capture the work of schools as they journey towards Education for Sustainable Development. The case studies come from schools working at all levels – from Early Years to Secondary, but we hope that the principles and ideas are transferable. Free copies of all the case studies are available from WWF Education at the address below, or you can download them from the Resource Bank: Case Studies section of our dedicated ESD site, www.wwflearning.co.uk

WWF-UK, Education and Awareness, Panda House, Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1XR

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