



*for a living planet*

LEARNING  
FOR **SUSTAINABILITY**

# Pathways to change

Lessons learned from the WWF Schools Support Programme

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Fortrose Academy, Invernesshire

Glebe School, Kent

The Holgate School, Nottinghamshire

Meare Village Primary School, Somerset

Staunton-on-Wye Endowed Primary School, Hereford

Upton Cross Primary School, Cornwall

Woodheys Primary School, Manchester

Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari, Rhondda Cynon Taf

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# Preface

This report shows how *Pathways: A Development Framework for School Sustainability* and its support system elements provided practitioners with the confidence they needed to take Learning for Sustainability forward and place it at the heart of their schools. The *Pathways* process – flexible, adaptable, self-facilitated and based around a learning approach – enabled practitioners to involve the whole school community and embed Learning for Sustainability within school plans, leading to changes in practice.

In their action plan for Sustainable Development, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) refer to the exploration of a “whole school approach to ESD” and “a network of sustainable development practitioners at the regional and national level”. WWF would like to contribute this ‘Pathways to Change’ report to such an exploration, as well as to local and regional organisations involved in supporting schools in this work. We welcome the DfES’ ‘Sustainable Schools’ website where the *Pathways* framework for a whole school approach will be highlighted as a model of good practice for schools to use.



*“Education for Sustainable Development is a learning process that will prepare pupils to make a more sustainable future... The Government is delighted to support this initiative and I can’t think of anything more worthwhile going on in our schools... I am delighted to be working with WWF on this important task.”*

Lord Adonis, speaking at WWF’s pre-Annual Teachers Conference reception in June 2005.

## Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability refers to all the different processes that advance knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, and empower individuals, schools and communities to pursue social justice, economic security, environmental stewardship and civic democracy as complementary goals – now and in the future.

The distinct fields of development education, global education, environmental education, citizenship, peace education and others have been challenged by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). WWF continues to recognise and promote work in all these fields; this includes work that contributes to ESD, as well as work that can be more appropriately described as ‘Learning for Sustainability’.

## Elements of school culture and ethos

### Whole school approach

Each school has different approaches to the ways in which they communicate and make decisions. A whole school approach brings together the entire school community – or an equitable representation of all the stakeholders. This enhances the potential for the school community to govern themselves and strengthen the variety of relationships that exist.

- The whole school is involved in decision-making.
- Participatory decision-making addresses all aspects of school life.

### Whole school policy

Each school has written plans and policies that articulate its mission and values and describe the way it operates. By including Learning for Sustainability within these plans and policies, the school signals its intention to address the elements of Learning for Sustainability in all aspects of school life and decision-making.

- Learning for Sustainability is embedded in the school’s mission and ethos.

From *Pathways: A Development Framework for School Sustainability*, WWF-UK, 2004

# Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, visions and strategies for sustainability are vital. If we are each to make positive contributions to the local and global community – now and in the future, we all need to develop appropriate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

WWF believes that whole school communities need to come together, to share their own visions of sustainability and to place Learning for Sustainability at the heart of school life and the Formal Education system. WWF-UK is therefore working with schools and their communities to assist them in making Learning for Sustainability an underpinning approach.

WWF-UK’s schools programme sets out to explore how schools can develop and improve using a Learning for Sustainability approach, as well as how Formal Education systems could change to support them. *Pathways* and its support system elements play a key role in this programme. They form the basis for placing sustainability at the heart of schools, and discovering how the whole school community can work and learn together – in the way it manages itself, its culture and ethos, and its teaching and learning.

*“I believe that the Department of Education and Skills has a duty to ensure that people engaged in learning are given the opportunities and inspiration to think about and really appreciate their role as world citizens.”*

Charles Clarke, *Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education and Skills*, 2003

*“...it is essentially up to schools how they take these things forward, depending on their own priorities, local circumstances and the needs of their pupils... we will combine this new relationship with schools with encouragement to incorporate environmental or wider sustainability issues into teaching and management practices.”*

UK government response to the *Environmental Audit Committee Report on Education for Sustainable Development*, June 2005

# Pathways and its support system elements

This report describes the learning from a pilot carried out from January 2003 to June 2005<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the pilot was to explore what is needed to place sustainability at the heart of a school. Based on WWF-UK's experience of working with schools since 1988, a system of support for schools was designed to provide schools with the skills and opportunities to advance Learning for Sustainability throughout the whole school community. Eleven very different schools from across the UK – primary and secondary, urban and rural – participated in this pilot.

The support system elements included:

- 1 an organising framework;
- 2 building the team;
- 3 professional development opportunities;
- 4 technical support; and
- 5 a learning community.

*“Rigorous self-evaluation lies at the heart of a well managed and effective school improvement”*

*Every Child Matters,*  
DfES, 2005

## 1 An organising framework – *Pathways: A Development Framework for School Sustainability*

The *Pathways* publication offers a process, activities and tools which can be used by a school community to explore their understanding of sustainability, assess their current practice and inform planning. The activities are participatory. The aim is to help widen school involvement and create a sense of shared ownership, move beyond a single initiative and embed Learning for Sustainability in the culture of the school. The structure of *Pathways* is based on the idea that self-evaluation leads to effective action planning. It is not prescriptive: each school will adapt it to determine their own path.

Schools are encouraged to explore their understanding of Learning for Sustainability and self-assess their practice against a framework of Learning for Sustainability themes and elements (see box opposite). This framework has evolved from schools WWF-UK has observed and worked with over the past 10 years. (See *One School at a Time: A Decade of Learning for Sustainability*, WWF-UK, 2004, for more information on the work of these schools.)

## 2 Building the team

Implementation of *Pathways* needs to be initiated by a practitioner of ESD, usually self-selected, although practice varies from school to school. The key role of this person is to bring together a team or steering group committed to an inclusive, participatory approach to Learning for Sustainability in order to facilitate wider involvement.

The team can consist of up to five people who share responsibility for planning, organising, facilitating and following up the activities. Ideally this team would include people from senior management, the teaching staff, the non-teaching staff, and even parents or school governors. The role of the team is to be the catalyst to ensure that the whole school participates in decision-making.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that this work and programme is ongoing. This report captures the learning to date – June 2005



Learning for Sustainability themes and elements in schools:

- **School culture and ethos – whole school approach and policy;**
- **Monitoring and evaluation – action learning;**
- **Teaching and learning – curriculum, teaching, professional development, and diversity;**
- **Pupils – empowerment and participation, and a safe and supportive environment;**
- **Links with the community – governors, parents, local and wider community;**
- **School estate – resource, grounds and building management.**

A training day for all the school teams was essential. The format of the day allowed participants to explore *Pathways*, Learning for Sustainability and a whole school approach, as well as offering opportunities to share and create ideas for implementing *Pathways* back in their schools.

### 3 Professional development opportunities

The support system offered professional development opportunities to those leading *Pathways*. In addition to the *Pathways* activities, a minimum of one teacher from each team participated in WWF-UK's 'An introduction to ESD' online course. This, or a similar opportunity, is fundamental to developing an understanding of ESD in the school.

The WWF-UK online course uses a participatory learning approach to professional development in ESD. It aims to build an online community and enable educators to take action in their workplace. The course content looks at different approaches, frameworks and skills for ESD, enables participants to reflect on their practice and that of other course members, trying out and discussing new approaches.



### 4 Technical support

Each school was offered support from WWF-UK to initiate and encourage activity. This interaction was not intended to be ongoing but simply to stimulate the process. Examples of the support that teams found useful were: help with INSET sessions, raising the profile of the project with senior management, asking questions, promoting action and general encouragement. The process required WWF to question practice, ask for progress reports, collect stories and ensure that what was happening related to the needs of the school. In addition to this support an amount of money was granted to the schools for supply cover to give them the space and time to initiate change.

### 5 A learning community

A key aim of *Pathways* is to create learning communities as a vehicle to broaden engagement and deepen thinking. A learning community enables a school to celebrate achievement and have this recognised beyond that community. This is a means of ongoing support beyond the initial project, whatever form that took.

In this project the learning community element was provided through the following:

#### One Year On – evaluation event

The 11 schools came together to look at what they had done over the year, share practice and support each other in moving forward. This event also included all those who had been involved in the programme in order to evaluate and draw conclusions together.



### WWF Annual Teachers conference

In 2005, WWF ran its third teachers conference. The aim was to support schools by creating an environment that enabled participants to share ideas and concepts, and to move thinking on together. The pilot schools led workshops to share their practice and stimulate debate.

### Support materials

In order to disseminate practice and learning from schools, WWF created a variety of materials for others to use. These include a DVD of Learning for Sustainability practice – *Pathways: real schools, real experiences*, and *Signposts*, a publication capturing examples of practice. Case studies and an online area are being developed which will link to the DfES TeacherNet ‘Sustainable Schools’ website.

***“Schools are professional learning communities which can contribute to a wider professional learning across appropriate networks.”***

*DfES Continuing Professional Development Strategy*





Outcomes

# Whole school community

*“Be creative and innovative in how they teach and run the school”*

*Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools, DfES, 2003*

From this pilot WWF has learnt what can best enable and facilitate change towards sustainability in schools. If schools are to include Learning for Sustainability in their professional practice and change the culture, they need to be self-organising and organic, placing emphasis on informal relationships<sup>2</sup>. From this programme we have identified some of the key learning that can enable these changes to occur. Schools enter at different points on their journey, depending on their situation, level of understanding and participation as a school.

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## Motivation to bring about change

When starting out, a practitioner needs to feel motivated to take Learning for Sustainability beyond their own practice – see ‘Confidence building’.

### Meare Village Primary School

*“I’ve been teaching for 25 years, and it’s just given me that bit of a buzz. And if I’ve got a bit of a buzz then it goes on to the children... I’ve had different contacts, different input, which has fed me incredibly.”*

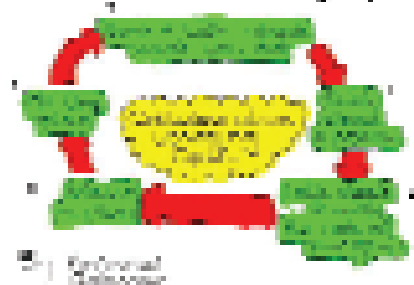
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## Develop team understanding

Engaging more people in Learning for Sustainability needs a personal or team understanding of the theory and concepts.

### Glebe School and Staunton-on- Wye Endowment Primary School

#### Collaborative Learning Cycle



Glebe School used this diagram of a collaborative learning cycle to help them understand and apply the theory behind Learning for Sustainability in school.

*“Pathways gave us a framework to see how different aspects of school practice can be brought together,”* commented Staunton-on-Wye.

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## Develop a communications approach

Before widening out the approach it is important for each practitioner or group to think about what they are going to communicate and how they will get the messages across. This can be one of the most daunting times. There is a need to make sure that the language is not alienating (eg avoid jargon) or threatening, and that messages are clear.

<sup>2</sup> *How do organisations change?*  
Paul Roberts, 2001



### **Fortrose Academy**

Fortrose Academy spent most of the year understanding Learning for Sustainability for themselves and developing displays and messages to communicate before embarking on their dissemination approach. Here we can see the building blocks created from an adapted version of Activity 4: 'My school's journey' from *Pathways*.

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### Raise awareness

Once the communications tools are created, a process of awareness-raising can begin: this is the beginning of the engagement process.

### **Holgate and Woodheys Primary Schools**

Holgate School used their website and noticeboard to bring people on board, whilst at Woodheys they sent out leaflets and information to the whole school, parents and governors. This was "*very useful*," according to the Environmental Coordinator, as it "*reminded everyone of what they've done*".

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### Involve others

Starting to involve others can be a difficult process but can bring many rewards, not least due to the variety of perspectives and ideas a diverse range of people can bring. In order to facilitate this approach and move beyond a level of awareness, one of the most useful elements of this programme was the forming of a team or task group.

### **Holgate School**

Holgate School created a team including a representative from SMT, the Deputy Head, a citizenship coordinator, a governor, an enthusiastic teacher and a representative from one of the feeder primary schools. This group invited all staff to a launch event.

### **Alphington Primary School**

At Alphington Primary School they set up an 'enquiry team' responsible for facilitation, communication and implementation of *Pathways*. This team provided motivation and support for each other.

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### Increase dialogue

Crucial to increasing dialogue is to start from where people are and to ensure that there is time and space for people to come together. WWF recognised this need and allocated money to each school for supply cover so they could attend training and develop the process. Some schools created this time within their own school allocation of INSET time, school meeting and development time. With DfES driving "a major commitment to staff development" in their five year strategy (2004), it should be easier for more schools to adopt this approach.

### **Holgate School**

At Holgate School they seconded a teacher to coordinate the project, whilst the majority of schools allocated their own resources.

*"The secondment allowed me to talk to people on a different footing... I am a bit of a bush fire that refuses to be put out."*

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## Whole staff decision-making

Once the school community is engaged, be it a small group or everyone, they can start to make decisions together. The number of people involved depends on where the school is along its journey, with the more advanced stages involving the whole school community.

This particular process broadens school involvement rather than nurturing a deep shift in values towards Learning for Sustainability. However, once the staff are on board, ongoing training, discussion and debate can start truly to transform the ethos of the school.



### Alphington Primary School

At Alphington Primary School all staff were involved in deciding where the school should go. Above we can see them taking part in this process.



### Meare Village Primary School

At Meare Village Primary they involved parents, pupils and the community in the process. Here is a photo of them talking to the community about their Learning for Sustainability work at their school fete.

*“It’s great they are doing things that really matter”*

A local resident

### Crispin School

At Crispin School involving pupils is an underpinning ethos within the school:

*“When I was appointed to the position [of Headteacher], 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.”*

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## Professional learning community

The benefits of this dialogue, communication and participatory decision-making are that the school community start to share their practice amongst themselves. This assists the spread of positive practice within schools<sup>3</sup>. These benefits can be expanded when schools build learning communities amongst themselves, locally and nationally, within a context such as Learning for Sustainability.

### Fortrose Academy

Fortrose Academy’s team are using Activity 1: ‘Developing Understanding of Learning for Sustainability’ from *Pathways* to work with all the departments looking at what it means to their subject and to demonstrate an example of teaching and learning practice. They will come together as a school community and share this practice. This in turn will inform their teaching and learning strategy.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Fullan –  
[www.nsd.org/library/  
publications/jsd/fullan241.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/fullan241.cfm)

# Plans and policies

*“Monitoring and evaluation should contribute, directly or indirectly, to periodic updating of the school improvement plan.”*

*Every Child Matters, DfES, 2005*

A school policy and plan makes a visible commitment to Learning for Sustainability, its themes and elements, as well as acting as a mechanism for articulating its mission and vision within the formal structure of the school.

## Understand and define Learning for Sustainability

An understanding of Learning for Sustainability needs to be created amongst the staff involved so as to create clarity, comprehension and their own definition. Who is involved will depend on where a school is on their journey (see ‘Whole school community’). Some schools already have an articulation: however, bringing as many people on board with its creation can lead to greater ownership.



### Fortrose Academy and Alphington Primary School

Above we can see Fortrose Academy’s team definition of Learning for Sustainability, after completing Activity 2: ‘Defining Learning for Sustainability’ from *Pathways*. The activity *“forced people to think about what words meant, leading to a clearer understanding of what sustainability means”* commented participants from Alphington Primary School.

## Adopt a strategic approach

A strategic approach needs to be developed or adopted so that it complements and informs the school’s planning process. The activities and themes in *Pathways* can help with this process.

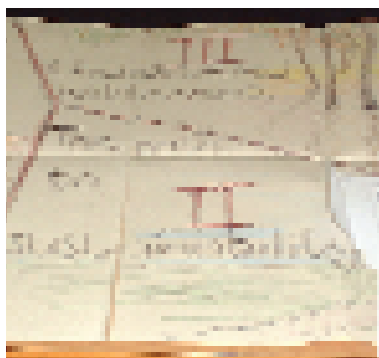
### Llanhari

Llanhari took all the themes from the self-assessment matrix to start developing their school policy on ESD (see box on page 3).

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## Identify the school's needs

Schools should identify their needs and place Learning for Sustainability within their own context. This will assist them in determining their next steps.



### Holgate School

Holgate School adapted Activity 6: 'Action proposal', to separate their school proposals and needs into three areas.

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## Create a plan

A plan for future progression and practice can then be created. This can be used by the originating group, it can be placed within the school development or improvement plan, or it can be the process that becomes the school development plan. Involving as many people as possible can start to embed the Learning for Sustainability plan at the centre of the school.

### Holgate and Meare Primary Village Schools

At Holgate, Learning for Sustainability is one of the eight themes on the school improvement plan whereas at Meare Village they have used the *Pathways* themes and elements as the basis of their school development plan.

### Staunton-on-Wye Endowment Primary School

*"Our school improvement plan for the next two years includes a commitment to incorporating ESD across the whole curriculum... this was a process that could enable us to do that."*

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## Embedding the plan within the school

The creation of a plan can immediately increase the status and raise the profile of Learning for Sustainability. (A supporting process that originates from a respected brand, like WWF, also assists with profile.) A plan with clear achievable goals, created by the whole school community and with buy-in from those who will be implementing it is more likely to gain the approval of senior management and thus to take Learning for Sustainability forward. Once within the formal structure of the school, its implementation is also much more likely to be sustained.

### Crispin School

Crispin allocated a budget line to its work and built a sustainable school building, making their Learning for Sustainability work more visible.

*"You just need a few significant changes and ESD becomes vulnerable... a budget line shows a schools commitment,"*

### Ballymena Primary School

Ballymena Primary School allocated time and resources, in the form of supply cover, to enable the implementation of their Learning for Sustainability plan.

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# Self-evaluation

*“...strong emphasis on school improvement through the use of the school’s own self-evaluation, including regular input from pupils, parents and other stakeholders, [is] the starting point for inspection and for the school’s internal planning and development.”*

*Every Child Matters, DfES, 2005*

A coherent approach to self-evaluation, conducted in a participatory, way can underpin a whole school approach and policy to Learning for Sustainability. It can help bring about changes in culture, allowing schools to develop their own agenda. This approach complements the new inspection for schools in England which places a greater emphasis on school self-evaluation. *Pathways* can therefore enable schools to self-assess their practice using Learning for Sustainability as a framework.



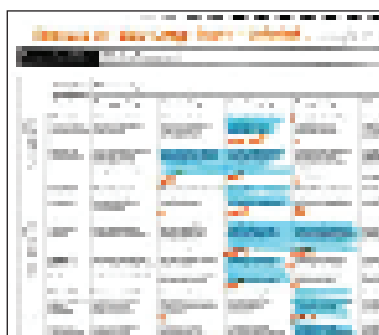
## **Alphington Primary School**

Many schools celebrated what they were already doing using Activity 4: ‘My school’s Learning for Sustainability journey’. At Alphington Primary School, this was done alongside their personal journeys (Activity 3). The process *“...validates each person’s experiences, knowledge... and what each of us are doing,”* commented a member of the Alphington enquiry team.

## **Fortrose Academy and Llanhari**

Here you can see Fortrose Academy using the ‘Taking Stock Sheet’ from *Pathways*. “The school self-assessment was the most valuable for us,” commented staff from Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari. Some people thought we were low down the scale; others further up. Together we have moved towards the front.”

Through self-evaluation schools gained an overview of their practice and consequently decided to change and develop practice and thereby make it more coherent. These two examples demonstrate a deeper culture shift in the school.



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## **Involving pupils**

Involving pupils can place learners at the centre of their school, as well as giving them citizenship and leaderships skills for sustainability. This is an important step towards involving the whole school community in decision-making.

## **Ballymena Primary and Meare Village Primary Schools**

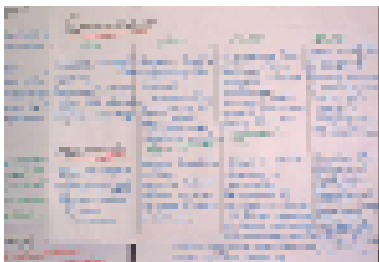
At Ballymena Primary School pupil participation was identified as a priority for change during their school self-assessment. At Meare Village Primary a WWF online debate on the subject of sustainable schools was one vehicle for involving pupils in the process of decision-making about Learning for Sustainability.

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## Teaching and Learning

Developing and changing teaching and learning practice – a school’s core business – is crucial to changing the deep rooted elements of the ethos and culture of the school.



### **Upton Cross School**

The pilot schools changed their teaching and learning approaches in a variety of ways. Upton Cross looked at a ‘scope and sequence’ (progression) of skills for sustainability: Pathways activities 1 and 2 “...*really made staff think hard... it gave us a useful physical support for teaching and learning... using the skills approach makes curriculum mapping much more workable and manageable.*”

### **Glebe and Holgate Schools and Fortrose Academy**

Glebe’s collaborative learning approach was used in the classroom, Holgate has started to map out the curriculum before developing practice, whilst Fortrose are looking at strategies for wider change.

### **Staunton-on-Wye Endowment and Alphington Primary Schools**

Staunton-on-Wye are looking at broadening their approaches to including multi-cultural education and Alphington Primary School are re-writing their whole curriculum through using and adapting the activities and theories in *Pathways*.

*“School self-evaluation now sits alongside, and has been embraced by, external inspection as a major mechanism for monitoring and raising standards of achievement in schools.”<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> *Evaluating School Self-Evaluation* by Peter Rudd and Deborah Davies, National Association for Educational Research. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, Cardiff University, 7-10 September 2000



# Confidence building

*A truly facilitative approach means continually challenging individuals and groups to accept, rather than avoid, responsibility for their own actions and decisions. It means providing structures and processes by which people can determine their own needs and develop their own solutions. It means an effective, mutually supportive team in which communication is direct, open and honest.*

*The School is Us – A Practical Guide to Successful Whole School Change, Linnea Renton, WWF-UK and DEP, 1993*

The process of achieving a whole school approach needs facilitation either within or from outside the school. Practitioners of Learning for Sustainability do not always see themselves as leaders of the approach within their school or organisation. It is important, therefore, to help leaders develop facilitation skills, increase their confidence and enable them to feel valued.

The elements that enabled the leaders to take on this role included: the provision of professional development through a WWF online course; training; attendance at the WWF conference; support documents as well as individual support and encouragement. All these were designed in such a way as to encourage and enable learning and the sharing of ideas, skills and experiences. WWF staff took on the role not of experts but of enablers and observers of practice.

In addition to external support, network building was seen as essential to the process. Leaders of practice within schools need continuing support through training and access to a wider learning community at a variety of scales and levels.

## School support scheme evaluation day



Here's a selection of participants' comments on the school support scheme evaluation day:

*"I felt really supported which made the whole thing less daunting and isolating."*

*"It gave me confidence and provided back-up for people leading this in schools."*

*"The single biggest benefit was the sharing, reflecting and space offered."*

*"It didn't criticise current values and actions and we got to know each other better."*

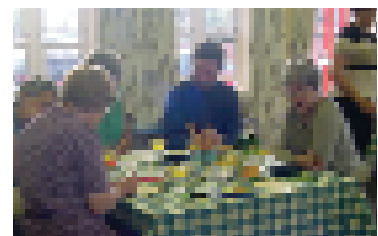
*"It was based on reality which validates it for other teachers."*

*"Empowering."*

*"It made us realise how much was going on whilst tying everything together."*

## Meare Village and Alphington Primary Schools

Meare Village Primary School invited the environmental coordinator from Woodheys School to speak to staff and parents. At Alphington Primary School, 'learning together' is branching out across the whole school and is being extended to working with the Local Authority.



## Pathways: a model

In November 2003, England's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) launched its 'Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education and Skills' committing to "explore a whole school approach to ESD and identify models of good practice" to improve the content and engagement with schools.

In August 2004, DfES approached WWF and proposed that they adopt the *Pathways* framework as a model for developing a whole school approach to Learning for Sustainability on their TeacherNet 'Sustainable Schools' website.

## Supporting school improvement

In 2003, Ofsted published 'Taking the first step forward... towards an education for sustainable development'. The study noted that primary and secondary schools around the country had developed good practice using an ESD focus, but could only offer anecdotal evidence that this approach had contributed to better performance.

HMI have embarked on a three year survey to investigate the potential of sustainable development as an approach to whole school improvement. The results will provide additional evidence of how school improvement benefits from a whole school participatory approach to Learning for Sustainability. HMI will be looking at 12 schools that have embarked upon *Pathways*. This Ofsted survey will be shadowed by independent research into teachers' and pupils' ESD-related knowledge, skills and values, and on pupils' attainments in the short- and medium-term.

In responding to the Environmental Audit Committee's report on ESD, the government stated that "consideration will be given to extending the Ofsted survey work in 2007/08 to a more widespread review to explore how one would go about inspecting sustainable development in education."

*"We have no evidence that a whole school participatory approach to Learning for Sustainability changes learners' and teachers' ESD knowledge, skills and values or contributes to learners' attainments. The presumed difficulty of measuring these cognitive and behavioural changes makes it unlikely that ESD will become part of school inspections, despite the fact that it is a statutory part of the National Curriculum."*

DfES and QCA, 1999

# Recommendations

Working with schools, WWF has learnt what it takes to place sustainability at the heart of school life and how such an approach can be implemented by local, regional or national ‘supporters’ of schools.

## Schools

Implementation of Learning for Sustainability across a school requires a commitment: it needs enthusiasts and leaders to carry a programme like *Pathways* forward. From our experience we have found that these leaders need:

- confidence and motivation to engage the school in Learning for Sustainability; skills in facilitation (or willingness to learn such skills) to lead this process forward in their school;
- skills in communicating the process and ideas of Learning for Sustainability;
- a communications approach, ways and strategies to engage other members of the school community;
- a process, and activities that engage the school community in understanding, auditing and celebrating practice so as to create a plan or policy across the school;
- time and space for developing professional learning, collaboration and partnership working;
- a way to ensure it is an embedded and is a continuous process within the school.

## School supporters

If other organisations that support schools – eg local authorities, education centres – were to implement *Pathways* and its support system elements or design a similar programme of support for schools, there are three important conditions that would enable success.

### A learning approach

The learning approach WWF-UK took to this work was reflected in *Pathways* and its support system elements. Particular emphasis should be placed on:

- participation and participatory approaches;
- the space and time given to sharing, reflecting and providing mutual support;
- partnerships with schools based on equality and democratic principles;
- a cycle of questions and learning to assist people to take action and move forward.

### Facilitation by the school

Setting up mechanisms that enable the school to facilitate *Pathways* themselves – such as creating a team within the school to take it forward – was crucial to its success.

### Flexibility and adaptability

All schools will approach Learning for Sustainability differently according to their situation and needs. Therefore a flexible approach is needed to acknowledge these differences. Each school should be encouraged to choose their own pathway, adapting their approach as they progress.

## Regional approaches

As seen, *Pathways* does help to foster whole school change towards Learning for Sustainability. WWF recognises that it does not have the capacity to deliver *Pathways* and its support system on a national level. WWF, in fact, is challenged to offer such a direct service to more than a dozen schools at a time.

WWF has run a variety of workshops and training sessions with others using the experience demonstrated in this report; this has included working with two Local Authorities in depth.



### **Worcestershire Environmental Services**

Worcestershire Environmental Services alongside their Environmental Education Centre, Bishops Wood have been working in the area of ESD for many years. However, they did not have a framework to pull all this work together. In 2004 they decided to pilot *Pathways* and its support elements at a regional level. They held an introductory day for heads in the area and got eight schools to attend the initial training day. *Pathways* provided them with an exciting way to instil inspiration in local schools and an opportunity to work with whole school staff teams. Next year they are offering *Pathways* to more schools within a wider strategy of engagement with schools.

### **The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead offers *Pathways* as a core part of developing relationships with schools – countywide. They have set up a Learning for Sustainability Action Group that encompasses providers, in and beyond the council, and have trained them on *Pathways*. This year they are piloting the approach with over 10 schools and hope to adapt the approach to work with community and business partners. *Pathways* and its support elements have offered them a strategic approach that will enable schools to access the support services provided by the Action Group.



WWF hopes that this report and a forthcoming supplementary technical manual will offer a local and regional model for school supporters, such as Local Authorities, education centres and other NGOs. This model could be used regionally to assist local brokerage with schools as well as offering a strategic direction and approach to bring together support and provision in Learning for Sustainability. This collaboration and partnership is what is required by the DfES' five year strategy. WWF recognises that there is no uniform support mechanism, locally, regionally or nationally for schools and their supporters. At the same time WWF appreciates that differences and variations in support can result in local and regional initiative and leadership.

### A learning community

WWF has explored what learning networks, at a stage of information exchange, look like through face-to-face evaluation events and our annual teacher conferences. In order to progress, schools need to be enabled, locally and nationally, to work together in networks, building Learning for Sustainability best practice. This might be through feeder primary schools working with their secondary schools, local groups supporting a group of schools, or schools who have already started the process supporting more schools.

A learning community is needed to support the learning needs of sustainability practitioners in their efforts to cultivate and mainstream these approaches. WWF welcomes DfES' exploration into a network of sustainable development practitioners at the regional and national level, and hopes that a wider learning network and community can be developed.

***“More schools working together in networks, supporting each other”***

*Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, DfES, 2004.*

# Looking towards the future

*Pathways* and its support system offers opportunities for schools and their staff to make personal choices about their future, thus giving pupils the skills to fulfil their role as world citizens. It supports DfES' drive for more freedom and independence in education, whilst offering them a way to show their commitment to staff development and assisting schools in creating partnerships that maximise school improvement.

*“The central characteristic of such a new system will be personalisation... the system must be both freer and diverse – with more flexibility”*

*Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, DfES, 2004.*

For more information visit  
[www.wwflearning.co.uk/pathways](http://www.wwflearning.co.uk/pathways)  
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# [www.wwflearning.co.uk](http://www.wwflearning.co.uk)

The mission of WWF is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption



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