



Raising awareness and changing attitudes through a whole school ESD curriculum project

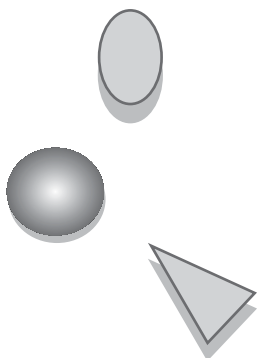
"Nobody wants to listen to us, we're just inner city ghetto kids, nothing will happen anyway."
Year 9 student at the beginning of the project

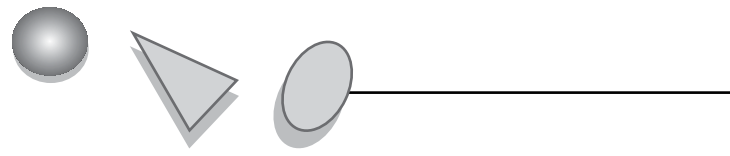
ESD and empowerment

This case study looks at how a secondary school raised the profile of Education for Sustainable Development and, in the process, not only raised students' awareness of sustainability issues but also taught them how to make their voices heard. The result was increased self-esteem and influence locally and globally, bringing public recognition to both school and students.

Background

Holy Trinity Catholic School is an inner city secondary school in the Small Heath area of Birmingham. Our students are aged 11-16 years and the main focus of our curriculum project was to raise their awareness of local, national and global issues, and thereby encourage responsible decision-making, enable empowerment and raise self-esteem through the medium of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). WWF's 'Making it Happen' scheme – which offered funding, training and consultancy to help schools on their ESD journeys – proved a valuable stimulus to this work.





Launching the scheme

In many secondary schools, the idea of a new initiative or extra workload is too much to bear. At Holy Trinity we went through the following processes to launch our scheme:

- organising an Inset for the ESD coordination team, supported by WWF
- formalising an action plan
- presenting the action plan to the Senior Management Team
- meeting with the PSME Coordinator, librarian and department heads to discuss areas where ESD was already in place, and where new ideas and schemes could be embedded.

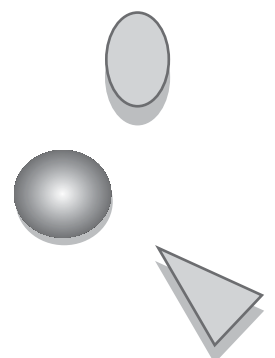
Our first whole school initiative was an Eco-Week. We asked all departments to provide a display of work on the theme of ESD to be displayed in the school library. As a staff we decided to make radical changes to the library on the Friday evening. The idea was that, when the students came to school on Monday morning, they would see just what could be achieved when people worked together as a community.

Every child in the school was involved, either with the display or the decorations and artwork needed for the 'Changing Rooms' style library. We had displays from English, IT, Modern Foreign Languages, Science, RE, Geography, Art, Textiles and an accompanying Music Department soundtrack. Our inclusion unit also took part, so the whole school was involved. We devised a quiz based on the information in the display materials and held an Eco Poem and Essay Competition.

The Eco-Week allowed us to see where departments were in terms of their understanding of ESD issues, and from this we initiated a curriculum audit so that ESD could be formally identified in schemes of work taught across the school.



Some of our display work for Eco-Week



Student involvement

After the excitement of Eco-Week, a project to design and build a peace garden for the students to use was launched as a way of involving the students and showing them that their voices could and would be heard if they learned to access the most effective channels of communication.



The site for our planned peace garden

In order to get the project up and running:

- we designed a school grounds scheme of work (a DFES scheme is now available in the Citizenship orders to all schools)
- students photographed and measured out the site
- students lobbied local Members of Parliament, the Chief Education Officer (in our case Tim Brighouse) and the Secretary for Education by writing formal, persuasive letters
- when funding was secured for the plans the students met with the landscape designers and showed them their designs. They insisted upon recycled materials and low water usage plants for the area
- the plans were drawn up.

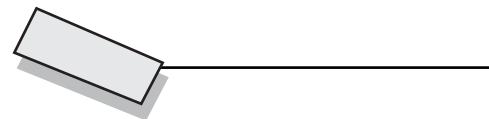
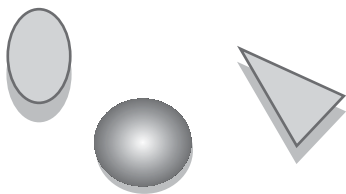
Although we are still waiting to access funding for building the garden by applying for various grants there has been an important change in attitude, with students gaining self-esteem and a belief in the eventual success of the project.

"It may not be finished by the time I leave school but it'll be there for the kids that come after us, that's good isn't it?"

Year 10 student

"Miss! He wrote back! I didn't know that important people even read their letters!"

Year 7 student



Activities and projects

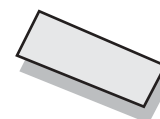
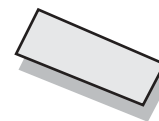
As the academic teams worked on curriculum development, the following activities were organised to raise the profile of ESD and keep the momentum going:

- Peer reading – older students mentored and helped the Year 7 students through a reading club once a week. They then went into our primary feeder schools to read and mentor the new Year 6 intake in the summer term on a weekly basis.



Helping others with their reading skills

- A public speaking competition, with ESD as the theme for the speeches – we won first and second place.
- A *TES* Newsday competition – our newspaper ran major ESD articles and features and won a Commended Award which two students collected from the Palace of Westminster.
- In partnership with Newspapers in Education, our students took over the letters page of the *Birmingham Post* on the subject of the litter in Small Heath. A highly recommended activity. Ring your local Editor – the children and parents could not get enough copies!
- A recycled fashion show – our Year 11 Textiles students designed and revamped old and worn clothes into trendy, wearable fashion items.
- A residential to Boscastle Youth Hostel in North Cornwall to assess the impact of tourism and compare it to eco-tourism such as the Camel Trail and the Eden Project.
- We joined the Young People's Parliament at Millennium Point in Birmingham; our students attend debates and activities on a regular basis.
- A paper recycling scheme has been established through Birmingham City Council.
- Al-can recycling bins are now on the premises.
- Staff and students bring in their old ink cartridges for recycling.
- A gardening/food produce club has begun on the urban farm attached to the school.



Our finalised curriculum audit showed us that ESD was being taught in nearly all curriculum areas where a specific ESD slant on the subject matter could reasonably be made. In other departments such as Geography and Science the links are far more obvious, as would be expected.

"It was brilliant!" Year 7

Our biggest project came just before the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). We decided to give Activities Week a sustainability focus. The whole school came off-timetable and we arranged gardening on the farm, fair trade and Cafod speakers, and a visit to the Centre for Alternative Technology. In conjunction with the Development Education Centre in Manchester we organised a Key Stage 3 Earth Summit that took place over two days. It was an amazing success as every child and every member of staff – including teachers, classroom assistants and learning mentors – took part. Staff delivered a rolling programme of preparatory lessons on fair trade, climate change and use of resources on the first day and then the students went into their country, industry, press and NGO groups to debate the issues and prepare their Summit speeches.

"How do some countries get away with it?" Year 9

"What can we do to stop this unfairness? I'm telling my Mum to buy Fair Trade bananas now." Year 7

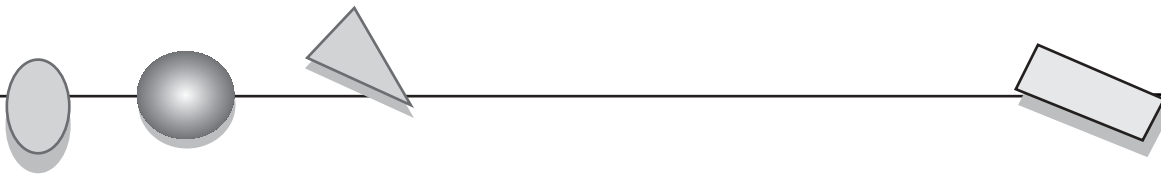
To do this in your school (an activity we would highly recommend) try to ensure that a member of the Senior Management Team takes on the lead coordinator's role as they have more influence over the timetable and other logistical issues.

Visiting Ubuntu Village in South Africa

Finally we sent two members of staff and two students to Johannesburg to the WSSD. One trip was funded by the Young People's Parliament and another by the National Trust, through a Birmingham Schools' competition.

The school has also now appointed a Citizenship/ESD coordinator.





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

Values and attitudes

- concern for and appreciation of all living things, their needs and interrelationships
- concern for social justice globally, now and for the future
- respect for and valuing of human and biological diversity
- 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

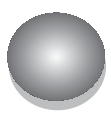
- cooperative working
- critical thinking
- problem solving
- reasoned debate
- informed decision-making
- creativity, an ability to envision alternatives
- research, data handling and communication.

Knowledge and understanding

- the environment and the human condition are inextricably interrelated
- how biological systems operate, support life and are affected by human activity
- there are basic human needs that are universal
- the earth's resources are finite and access to them is unequal
- how their own lives and actions connect with the environment and with the lives and actions of others – locally, nationally and globally; past, present and future
- 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

- Inviting all departments to contribute to a display with an ESD theme encouraged participation and demonstrated where departments were in their understanding of ESD.
- Off-timetable events supported by external specialists, combined with curriculum integration, enabled deeper exploration of 'big' sustainability issues.
- Helping pupils to access the most effective channels of communication, including newspapers and political lobbying, was vital to the success of the projects, and to pupils' belief that they can make a difference.
- Working for long-term change within the school helped pupils to recognise the impact of their actions on people in the future.

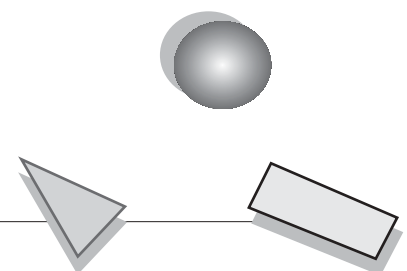


The WWF Schools' Case Studies Series

This case study forms part of a series designed to capture the work of schools as they journey towards Education for Sustainable Development. Each school has chosen an aspect of their work which they believe would work for other schools and they have set out their aims and the processes through which they worked towards them. While all the case studies are embedded in a whole school approach, many contain ideas for individual events or subject areas which many schools would be able to incorporate into their current work. 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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