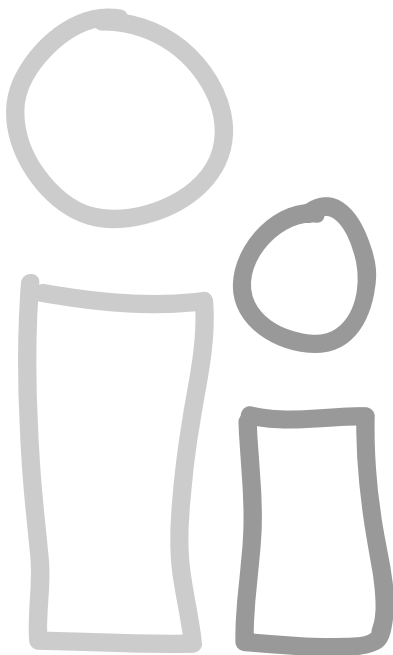




# Stewart the Sustainable Student

## Progression through a whole school green curriculum



Ansford Community School is a rural, 11–16 comprehensive with about 700 pupils and a very mixed catchment area. For the last couple of years we have been working to put together a cohesive and progressive curriculum to deliver Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). At the heart of our planning is Stewart – a hypothetical student whose ‘journey’ through our school represents the metamorphosis of a ‘typical’ Ansford pupil into a ‘sustainable citizen’.

### Our hopes and fears right at the start...

“This project sounds quite interesting – but I don’t think it really applies to my teaching subject.”  
*Teacher*

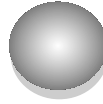
“The ozone layer and greenhouse effect are getting worse – especially with the cars and factories and stuff. The government should do more about it.” *Student*

“The environment does worry me, it’s in a mess... but I don’t think me recycling a drinks can is going to save the planet.”  
*Student*

“I try to include environmental issues in my teaching where possible, but I don’t really understand the sustainability bit.”  
*Teacher*

“I’ve never worked in a school that puts so much emphasis on environmental education – I’m looking forward to finding out more.” *Headteacher*

“Our ultimate goal is to eventually have a curriculum from year 7 to 11 that will provide every student with the opportunities to be able to gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for a more sustainable lifestyle. It’s not going to be easy and will take years to achieve, but that’s the ideal!” *Project co-ordinator*



**Here is part of our Education for Sustainability Policy – this is the 'ideal'!**

What we want to gain:

### **Knowledge and understanding**

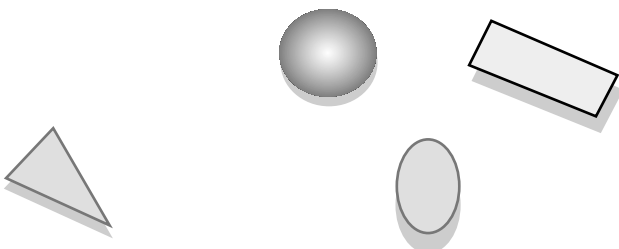
- how natural systems work, their potential and limits
- what is involved in different methods of providing for human needs and wants (energy, raw materials, human influence, environmental impact, economic systems)
- the concepts of sustainability, quality of life, social justice and interdependence
- how our own actions can affect the lives of others locally, nationally, globally; now and in the future
- alternative forms of technological, economic, political and social futures where we can live more sustainably
- how the processes of decision-making work and how to take part in them
- how lessons of the past can inform the future.

### **Skills**

- co-operative working
- critical thinking
- negotiation
- problem solving and lateral thinking
- reasoned debate
- informed decision-making
- creativity – and an ability to envisage alternatives
- research and data handling
- effective communication
- practical and organisational skills to be able to live more sustainably.

### **Values and attitudes**

- a commitment to the well-being of all living things and their natural environment
- a desire for social justice and greater global equity
- empathy and awareness of the viewpoints and beliefs of others
- an understanding that quality of life is not just dependent on a 'material' standard of living
- an understanding of the place of individual and collective rights and responsibilities
- a desire to participate
- a belief that individual choices and working with others can make a difference
- a belief in a more positive, more sustainable future
- a sensitivity to the needs of others
- a willingness to learn from lessons from the past, and from other cultures.



## Setting the scene for Stewart

### Raising awareness

Having decided to embark upon the project we decided that we needed to publicise the fact – a bit of 'awareness raising' was required:

### Herb garden

This was our first cross-curricular venture involving History, Food, English, Science, Technology and Art. A medieval herb garden was researched, designed, drawn, excavated, planted and used by Year 7 students (12 year olds). It's a useful resource and looks pretty good too!

### 'Environment Week'

A week of lunchtime and tutor time activities and competitions. Staff and students were introduced to ideas and 'amazing facts' through a bulletin and daily updates. During the week there was a Drama and Music production and an exhibition of 'Environment work so far...' for parents – with contributions from all subject areas.

### The school production

This was performed on several nights and had an environment theme. "Trash" was written by the students with our hero learning from an ancestor on how to look after the planet! A wide range of staff, students and parents were involved and came to watch.

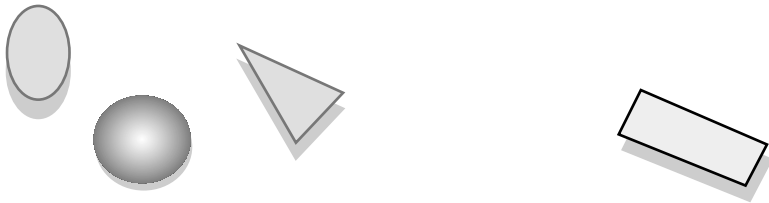
### 'Environment Day'

Despite the weather, our first 'Environment Day' was successful in raising awareness for the overall project. Students and staff took part in different activities including working with primary students on environment activities, cycling and green transport, creating a junk music band, etc. A useful introduction to further work in many areas.

### Pupils preparing and planting the herb garden



"The herb garden has made the Technology Quad a really nice place to sit during breaks. I never realised that herbs could be so pretty and attract so many insects." *Student*



## Stimulating the staff!

To be able to provide our 'cohesive curriculum', staff training was required.

### Training days

Day 1 – this included ideas for incorporating environmental education into different curriculum areas. We considered the importance of environmental issues and began to discuss the school site and our own impact on the environment.

Day 2 – this was held some months later and went into greater depth on sustainability issues, Agenda 21 and global links. It was more contentious and thought provoking. It challenged our lifestyles and thus received a rather mixed reaction! The 'end point' was a focus on our own subject areas and the planning of 'Purple Projects'.

### 'Purple Projects'

At the end of the second training day each subject area was asked to come up with a project or module that could be developed in some way in line with ESD – but why 'Purple Projects'? Because the forms were printed on purple paper, of course! This gave each area a focus and an outcome that could be evaluated, for example:

Art – environmental sculpture with an artist in residence

Food – analysis of packaging for prepared foods

Maths – ethical investment and banking.

### Developing policy

An 'Environment Working Party' was established, and this enjoyed a healthy membership throughout the project. Twelve teachers, representing most of the curriculum areas, were joined by a couple of governors and three students. All ideas, issues, audit and evaluation work were co-ordinated and discussed by the team. A policy was eventually formulated and approved, including the "What we want to gain" section, so that we all knew what we were aiming for.

## Starting on Stewart!

To monitor our progress in turning Stewart into a sustainable citizen we first needed to formulate some action research questions, and audit curriculum areas:

### Action research questions

#### How do we...

#### 1 ...involve the school community to implement effective education for sustainable development?

- find out the knowledge, skills and values of staff and students?
- improve knowledge and awareness of ESD within curriculum areas?
- develop staff motivation and confidence to be able to deliver ESD?
- encourage a cross-curricular approach with specific outcomes?
- maximise student involvement in the project?
- create and implement an Environmental Sustainability Policy?
- ensure support of the whole school community for this project?



Year 7's environment sculpture

## 2 ...manage the school site and resources more sustainably?

- find out staff and students' opinions and use of the school grounds?
- improve and make more use of the school grounds?
- audit and then manage the site, buildings and processes more sustainably?
- encourage more 'environment conscious' actions by staff and students?

## 3 ...involve the local community and outside organisations in education for sustainable development?

- work closely with the community education officer to promote sustainable ideas in the local community?
- work together with The Sustainable Somerset Group to increase awareness of Agenda 21 initiatives?
- share ideas with other local organisations and schools about ESD?
- improve links with the Dimmer Wildlife Park Project?

## 4 ...ensure 'Education for Sustainable Development' happens within the context of Global Development Education?

- link this WWF project with the wider vision of Global Development Education?
- support and work with our Zambia link school to exchange ideas and progress with Agenda 21?



Learning about sustainable management – Year 9's trip to Exmoor.

### Audits

Each department area was asked to complete an audit before and after the project. The categories were based upon the 'knowledge, skills, values and attitudes' statements from the policy. It was clear that the staff training had been successful in promoting new ESD teaching ideas, and also making staff aware of the things that they taught already that were actually relevant to ESD. We wanted to find out if the audits were accurate in terms of actual teaching and learning. The only way was to talk to students like 'Sustainable Stewart' – time for some Progress Tracking...

### Progress Tracking

To help us get a clearer picture of what was actually happening we decided to monitor a selection of students from Years 7 and 10 (12 and 15 year olds) on a termly basis. We asked the same group similar questions each time about what they had learnt, their lifestyles and attitudes. In addition, they filled in a 'skills grid' to inform us what skills were being offered in different subjects. All this has been recorded so that we can search for areas of success and gaps in our programme. The process isn't perfect and needs refining, but the basic idea is certainly working.



## **Streamlining**

The staff generally responded well to the training but it was inevitable that we weren't going to get 100% support. It was hard to deal with the negative feedback, but the Environment Working Party membership and Senior Management Team enthusiasm gave the project a solid foundation. Ideas were everywhere and in the end we had to call a halt to the innovating and encourage the actual development work itself. Some projects fizzled out; others never really got off the ground. We had to let go of the areas where enthusiasm was waning and build upon our strengths. We helped some staff alter and modify, and for others it was 'back to the drawing board' – such is the process of streamlining!

## **'Environment Day' II**

One activity that we successfully modified was the annual 'Environment Day'. This became a 'What if ... Day', where students undertook activities based around an ESD question. Students had more preparation than for the earlier 'Environment Day'; the day itself was more in-depth, and there was thus a greater effect on our thoughts and actions.

## **Handy hints for planning an Education for Sustainable Development Programme**

- ✓ **Discuss your aims. What do you want your school community to gain?**
- ✓ **Devise a policy**
- ✓ **Research ideas and other groups' experiences**
- ✓ **Raise awareness of the issues and project aims**
- ✓ **Staff and governors training**
- ✓ **Audit the curriculum**
- ✓ **Plan development projects – innovate!**
- ✓ **Enthuse the students**
- ✓ **Implement projects**
- ✓ **Evaluate**
- ✓ **Modify projects**
- ✓ **Progress track students**
- ✓ **Streamline mini projects**
- ✓ **Build on strengths and successes**
- ✓ **Plan for the future**
- ✓ **Be patient and positive!**

### Since Stewart

Extracts from what could have been Stewart's diary make up pages 9–11 of this publication. We have only been able to skim the surface of our progress and activities, and so Stewart's Diary may help to give an overview of what we are trying to achieve...

### Going global

Our hope is that each student that progresses through our school will experience some ideas of how to live their lives more sustainably – but we now want more than that and aim to introduce ideas that will provide the foundation for global citizenship. Multicultural Education has long been firmly in place in our curriculum, and our community and school exchange programme with a school in Zambia helps the students in both countries to understand their place and responsibilities in the global community. The 1999/2000 exchange has a particular environment and sustainability focus, with students from both continents working on projects based around Agenda 21 environment indicators. The exchange visits have an impact on the whole school and local community, helping to put our teaching content into perspective. To increase the involvement of more students we have a 'Global Citizenship Activity Day' planned for this year's exchange visit.

"Our community and school exchange programme with a school in Zambia helps the students in both countries to understand their place and responsibilities in the global community." *Teacher*



The 1999 exchange visit on waste and recycling

## And now...?

“I feel my subject can actually contribute to the project – particularly with some of the identified skills.” *Teacher*

“What I teach is just one piece of the whole jigsaw.”  
*Teacher*

“If I want a better world, I’m going to have to make a few changes myself – aren’t I?” *Student*

“It doesn’t require a lot of effort to put ESD into your teaching. It’s just a different way of presenting it, and altering your own actions.” *Teacher*

“I have to keep reminding myself and my family to be ‘greener’ – not easy, but I think we’re getting there!” *Student*

### **Stacey Smith, Sixth Form Stewart's sustainable smaller sister: the future!**

Stewart has now left the school, fully equipped for his sustainable lifestyle, but there is still much for us to do! Having completed our evaluation, we know that there are areas that require modification. Not to worry! Sustainable Stewart’s sister starts in September and so we’re going to try again. Our action plan for the future includes: a new global citizenship working party; another look at the way we look after our site; exploring possibilities within PSE, and an eventual extension of the programme to include progression from primary school and into further education. Here’s hoping!

**"Stewart's Diary"****Year 7 (age 12)**

I saw the Environment board today; it had lots of ideas on how to make your Christmas greener. So I'm going to think about what I buy a bit more carefully, and have a chat with Mum about last year's wrapping paper...

...This work we're doing in tutor times at the moment is pretty good. We've talked about lots of different environment problems around the world, and today we had a debate about a development in the rainforest in Brazil. I was a Yanomami Indian. We won! Shame it's not that simple for the Indians in real life...

...Today was 'What if... Day'. It was based around problems like 'What if... there were no more fossil fuels?' We could choose what we wanted to do, and I went to the Peat Moors Visitor Centre - it was great. They showed us how they built Iron Age round houses. We then had to build shelters from grass, built a mini roundhouse, and made a wattle fence which we daubed with mud! We used renewable resources and it really showed us how in the past they used materials in a sustainable way. A great day.

...I've seen this man in the art rooms working with the older students, and today he came to work with us. He is a sculptor and he helped us make all sorts of sculptures out of leaves and bark and things we collected. We also tried a few designs out of scrap. Some of the older students have made theirs out of scrap metal. They look great in the Quad and the Herb Garden.

...We spent quite a long time finding out about Global Warming in Geography today. I never realised that our car is making things worse - I'm going to have to chat to Dad.

...We're doing a food project in English. I wrote a great poem the other day and got a merit. We talked about food all around the world and how much everybody has - it doesn't seem very fair! Bananas travel a very long way to reach my lunch box.

...Our tutor group has two Year 10 'Green Prefects', Simon and Alice. They help us to look after our classroom by turning off lights and closing doors and windows. They do environment quizzes for us, and we talk about how we can make our lives a bit greener. I told Mum and Dad, and we go to the recycling skips every Saturday now. I also turn off the TV at the screen or the plug, rather than leaving it on standby - which is what happens if you use the off button on the remote control.

## Year 8 (age 13)

...Joe, Freddie and me all made up a really cool rap today. We had to choose a topic about the Environment so we could tell everyone about it. I played some drums, which had been made in Zambia. Ours was really good and we're going to play it in Assembly next week.

...We've been doing work about ecosystems in Science. If you kill off some animals and plants by mistake it can have a really bad effect on loads of others that live in the same place - it's much more complicated than you think. Some animals are killed by farming chemicals - they can get into rivers. I'm going to ask Mum and Dad if we can get a few bits of organic food to help.

...I like our 'Environment in Danger' module in French. We're learning lots of new words and also learning about what people in France do to help the environment.

...I think renewable sources of energy are much better than fossil fuels - we've been learning about that in Science. Mum says that she thinks we could choose to have our electricity from green sources on a special scheme: she's going to ring up the electricity company and find out.

...There's so much packaging on some foods you know. I learnt about that in 'Food' today. I talked to Mum about some of the cakes and meals we buy - I'm going shopping with her on Saturday. I told Dad he won't be getting a box of chocolates on Father's Day - too

much packaging!!

...Yuk! We went to the landfill site with Science today. I couldn't believe how much there was. I think we put too many bin bags out each week. Our waste goes to that site.

...A really good day today. We didn't do proper lessons. We had an ethical money day - all about world debt and wages in different parts of the world. I'm not going to buy these trainers next time! We played the world trade game and learnt about what banks do with your money - some things don't seem very fair. When I get a bank account I'm going to choose carefully. Got to get some money first though!!



**Working with local primary children to explain the movement of pesticides through the food chain**

## Upper School – Years 10 and 11 (ages 15 and 16)

...I got my Green Prefect badge today and I find out what tutor group I'm working with tomorrow. I don't really feel confident about helping the Year 7s, but Mrs Taylor is going to give us some training sessions. I have to do duty every few weeks too – turning off lights and shutting doors and windows, etc. I've got some ideas about saving energy that I'm going to say on School Council.

...I had to go to this meeting called 'Progress Tracking' today. I'm going to be asked to say what things about the environment we've been doing in different lessons each term. I said we were doing a module on development studies in Geography and a big unit called 'Environment' for our Science exam. The more I find out about the world and what we do to it makes me wonder if we are very 'developed' at all.

...History is all about the Wild West at the moment. The Indians had loads of respect for their environment; we've got a lot to learn from them... sustainability isn't a new thing.

...Last week we went to the Quarries with Mr Craggs. We went to an old, disused quarry and one which is working today and talked to the manager. Today we had a whole day doing a pretend Public Enquiry about an imaginary quarry. We represented various interest groups and questioned real expert witnesses from the community. We put our cases and made presentations. Mine was pretty good. It felt empowering. Like real stuff for real life!

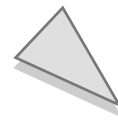
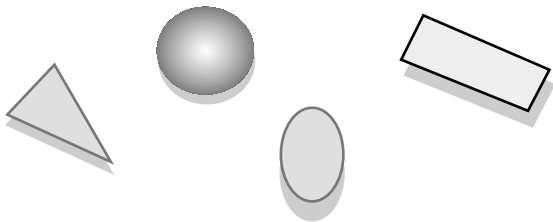
...I picked up an application form for the Zambian exchange programme today. Lots of people apply, but only a few get selected, so

my form has to be good. I've got to think clearly about why I want to be a part of it all, because I want to find out what my exchange partner thinks about certain issues, about their lifestyle, what they do, what their daily routine is, what conditions are like in an African country – their food, celebrations, music, clothes, everything! – and I want to share what we do with them. Swapping cultures, I guess...

We spent a long time chatting in PSE today about what we wanted from our lives. It's not just about what we want though, is it? I've got lots of choices to make soon, and I know what I decide will affect lots of things and people. Scary! I leave school tomorrow – big wide world, here I come...



The 1999 exchange group on quarrying and mining



### **Reference**

*Educating for the Future*, David Hicks, WWF-UK, 1994.  
Please note: a revised and updated version of this book will be published in Autumn 2000 under the title *Citizenship for the Future*.

### **Acknowledgments**

Written by Sam Russon and Mick Hemming, Ansford Community School, Somerset.

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