

Green-Schools Handbook



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The *Green-Schools* Handbook provides information on the practical implementation of the *Green-Schools* programme. The Handbook is divided into 3 main sections:

Section 1 looks at the main aims, objectives and themes of the *Green-Schools* programme, examines its success both nationally and internationally and how it may be of benefit to your school, and explains how to register your school for the programme;

Section 2 looks at the seven steps involved in implementing the programme and provides examples for each step from schools both in Ireland and abroad;

Section 3 gives information on how and when the award should be applied for and renewed. Some important additional elements of the *Green-Schools* programme are also examined and details of useful contacts providing further resources and information are given.

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Section 1 WHAT IS 'GREEN-SCHOOLS'?

Most young people care deeply about environmental issues, and wish to make a positive change in the environment around them. The *Green-Schools* programme provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in the entire school in a way that links to many curriculum subjects. The programme is based on the EU EMAS (Eco-Management and Auditing System) approach, and encompasses four principle aspects:

Green-Schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues from the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of the school. The *Green-Schools* programme is run by FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education), and is known internationally as 'Eco-Schools'. *Green-Schools* is now represented in almost all European Union Member States, and various countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, South America, Oceania, and Asia. There are also some pilot projects taking place in other parts of the world.



For more information about the international programme: www.eco-schools.org

Green-Schools is holistic. It aims to make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and ethos of a school. This should include the students, teachers, non-teaching staff, and parents, as well as the Local Authority, the media, and local business. *Green-Schools* endeavours to extend learning beyond the classroom and develop responsible attitudes and commitment, both at home and in the wider community.



Green-Schools is both a programme and an award scheme. Any school using the guidelines given in this Handbook can adapt the programme to their needs. While the Green Flag award will be given to schools that complete all the essential elements of the *Green-Schools* programme, it should be remembered that the programme is flexible, and that different schools will find different routes to achieving *Green-Schools* status. Have a look at some of the case studies on our website (www.greenschoolsireland.org) to see how these schools have implemented their programmes. The Green Flag award is now established as a well respected and recognised eco-label.



Green-Schools is a long-term programme. The *Green-Schools* award as outlined above takes the form of a Green Flag. This can be flown outside school or displayed in the foyer. However, it is important to remember that the programme is one of continual reduction of the school's environmental impacts. Therefore, the award requires renewal every two years. This links in with the themed nature of the *Green-Schools* programme as outlined in Section 1.3.



1.1 International and National Aspects of 'Green-Schools'

International 'Eco-Schools'

'Eco-Schools' is an initiative of FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education), and is referred to by a number of different names in member countries e.g. 'Eco-Scholen' in Belgium, 'Eco-Schools' in the UK and 'Umweltshule' in Germany (see www.eco-schools.org for more information). *Green-Schools* is the name used in Denmark and Ireland. 'Eco-Schools' began in 1994 as a pilot project in the UK, Denmark, Germany, France, and Portugal. In 2001, 'Eco-Schools' moved from a European initiative to one of international dimensions with the inclusion of South Africa in the programme. There are currently forty-one countries from Europe, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America and Oceania participating in the Eco-Schools programme. 'Eco-Schools' is very much based on the principles of sustainable development (i.e. 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future') and Local Agenda 21 ('acting locally, thinking globally'). It is important for all schools to realise that their contribution and efforts, irrespective of scale, are part of a bigger programme with some 15,000 schools working towards similar ideals.

'Green-Schools' Ireland

Green-Schools is operated by the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that are the FEE members in each of the participating countries. An Taisce, as the FEE member for Ireland, co-ordinates the programme in this country. The programme was introduced to Ireland in 1997 and has enjoyed sustained growth each year. By the end of the school year 2005-2006 there were 2,330 schools in Ireland registered for the programme, representing over 58% of Irish schools. Of these, 886 schools have successfully achieved Green Flag status, making the Irish *Green-Schools* programme among the most successful internationally.

In Ireland *Green-Schools* is operated in partnership with Local Authorities. This partnership has proved very successful, with Local Authorities working closely with schools on the ground and the *Green-Schools* Office of An Taisce running the administration, coordination, and development of the programme. Since 2001 *Green-Schools* has been a fully national programme, with all 34 County and City Councils involved. The *Green-Schools* programme is therefore part of a three-way collaboration involving schools, An Taisce and Local Authorities.



'Green-Schools' Sponsorship and Support

Greenstar, Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland and The Wrigley Company Ltd provide financial support for the *Green-Schools* programme in Ireland. The financial support An Taisce received from Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland since its introduction to Ireland in 1997 has been crucial to the growth and development of the programme, resulting in *Green-Schools* developing at a faster rate than in any other participating country. The Wrigley Company has been supporting *Green-Schools* since 2000, when it sponsored the *Green-Schools* Video, and has continued its support since then. Greenstar, Ireland's leading integrated waste management company, became lead sponsor in 2004 and now, with three such committed supporters, we have been able to produce new materials and update current materials.



1.2 Does 'Green-Schools' Make a Difference? Results from Research

Since the introduction of the *Green-Schools* programme in Ireland in 1997, there was significant anecdotal evidence of a substantial reduction of levels of litter and waste in participating schools. In 2001, a *Green-Schools* research project was undertaken to accurately record and measure the performance of the programme. Two aspects of the *Green-Schools* programme were investigated;

- The diversion of waste from landfill achieved by schools participating in the programme.
- The effect of the programme on the levels of student environmental awareness, behaviour towards the environment, and opinion leadership towards the environment.

Schools that had been awarded the Green Flag were diverting *on average* 45% of their waste away from landfill in comparison to schools that were not participating in the programme. In fact, several of the awarded schools were very close to achieving zero waste, with some producing as little as 2 grams of waste per person per day.

Over 1,300 4th and 5th class students from awarded *Green-Schools* and schools that were not participating in the programme were surveyed across the country. The results of this work are as follows:

- Awareness and knowledge levels of the environment were very similar among both types of student (i.e. *Green-Schools* and non-*Green-Schools*).
- Behaviour towards the environment was significantly different. Students from awarded *Green-Schools* drop less litter, take part in more local environmental projects, conserve more water and more electricity, and are more conscious of the environment when making a purchase than their non-*Green-Schools* counterparts.
- *Green-Schools* students are better “opinion leaders” for the environment, i.e. they discuss the environment with more people and in more settings, particularly the classroom, and provide more encouragement to their peers than their non-*Green-Schools* counterparts.
- *Green-Schools* students indicated that their teachers were their main source of information and motivation regarding environmental issues.
- Recycling levels of glass, paper, cardboard, and aluminium, as well as the levels of home composting were significantly higher within the homes of *Green-Schools* students.
- A total of 91% of students within non-*Green-Schools* felt they could do something about the state of the environment. However, this concern was even higher among *Green-Schools* students at a level of 96%.
- The main environmental concern indicated by both types of student was litter.

Further research carried out in 2006 indicated that the awarded schools had improved their performance and on average were diverting just over 60% of their waste from landfill. Out of a sample of 160 schools, over 8% (13 schools) were diverting in excess of 90% of their waste from landfill. Calculations indicate that around 5 tonnes of waste is directly diverted from landfills per school day in Ireland due to the work of *Green-Schools*. Check www.greenschoolsireland.org for results of further research!

Overall, both sets of research show that the Green-Schools programme is having a very significant effect on environmental behaviour and attitudes in Ireland.



1.3 'Green-Schools' Themes

Green-Schools covers a number of different themes, beginning with litter and waste minimisation and followed by themes such as energy, water, travel, and healthy living. As your *Green-Schools* programme evolves further themes will be introduced.

In order to implement the Green-Schools programme most effectively, the Green-Schools Office encourages schools to resist taking on all themes at the same time. Schools begin by examining the litter and waste theme and will receive materials providing information on how best to implement the Green-Schools programme for litter and waste. Upon renewal of the award subsequent themes may then be tackled. The sequence of the initial themes is outlined below:



Litter and Waste

Examines the impact of litter and waste on the environment and explores practical means for reducing and minimising the amount of litter and waste produced by the school.



Energy

Suggests ways in which all members of the school can work together to increase awareness of energy issues and to improve energy efficiency within the school.



Water

Provides an introduction to the importance of water both locally and globally and raises awareness of how simple actions can substantially cut down water use.



Travel

Suggests ways for students, staff, and local government to work together to raise awareness of travel issues and come up with practical solutions that will make a real difference to students' everyday lives.



Healthy Living

Examines some of the many health factors, mental as well as physical, that influence the ability of students to fulfil their potential and encourages schools to put in place a sustainable plan for becoming a healthy school.



1.4 Benefits and Requirements of the 'Green-Schools' Programme

Green-Schools offers your school opportunities:

- To help develop children's decision-making skills.
- To build students' confidence and sense of citizenship through participation.
- To supply curriculum materials and ideas for projects and events.
- To gain access to a network of support agencies.
- To link with other schools in Ireland and internationally.
- To gain a prestigious award.
- To provide local and national publicity.
- To make financial savings.
- To reduce waste and litter.
- To improve the school environment.
- To reduce energy and water consumption levels.
- To tackle and improve travel issues within the school.
- To involve the local community.

It requires:

- The support of the Principal and Board of Management.
- The willingness to involve children in decision-making and action at every stage.
- Active involvement of staff and support from parents and the local community.
- The willingness to take action to instigate long-term change.

1.5 Four Stages of the Award Scheme

The award has four main stages

1. Registration.
2. Implementation of *Green-Schools* Programme.
3. Applying for your Award.
4. Award Renewal.



Note that there are minimum requirements that must be fulfilled and that the school must have implemented all of the seven steps before applying for an award. The following pages cover each of these seven steps in detail. Further information on the awards system and how to apply is covered in Section 3.



1.6 Registration

Before you register your school you need to be sure you have sufficient support from the Principal and other staff. We suggest that one or more core members of staff read this Handbook and present an outline of the *Green-Schools* programme to colleagues and the school's Board of Management. The presentation should cover:

- The benefits to the school.
- The seven essential elements as described on the following pages.
- The scheme's flexibility.
- The intention to start with small, achievable targets.
- The long-term nature of the programme.
- And the programme's potential to act as a focus for developing a whole-school policy for environmental education.

Note: *There is a short power point presentation outlining the Green-Schools programme available on www.greenschoolsireland.org.*

If the idea is received with sufficient enthusiasm for it to continue you will need to register your school formally by filling in and returning the enclosed *Green-Schools* registration form.

Returning the registration form will confirm your participation in the programme and **your intention to apply for an award in the future**. You can register at any time of year. You will receive notification of your school's registration into the *Green-Schools* programme. You will also be eligible for the school linking service (see below) and your *Green-Schools* theme booklet pack.

1.7 National and International Linking

One of the most exciting aspects of *Green-Schools* that is currently being developed is its potential to generate national and international links between schools.

School linking is an ideal way to broaden children's appreciation of other countries and different lifestyles. You might like to correspond with a school in another area of Ireland or in one of the other participating countries. If you are interested in this aspect of the programme please contact the *Green-Schools* Office, Environmental

Education Unit, An Taisce, Unit 5A, Swift's Alley, Francis Street, Dublin 8, Tel: 01- 4002222, Email – greenschools@antaisce.org for further information. A demonstration of the linking programme and further information is also available on the international website at **www.eco-schools.net**.



In addition to support for schools at a national level, schools can benefit from the international dimension in the following ways:

- Newsletters with information on Eco-Schools throughout the world and innovative projects and activities by schools themselves, interesting initiatives, new contacts, etc.
- Website with updates, news, school activities, contacts, etc.
- Involvement in joint initiatives being developed by FEE and Eco-Schools together with other organisations or programmes.



The aim of the Green-Schools programme is to move from environmental awareness in the curriculum to environmental action in the school and wider community.

As with any environmental management system, a structure is required to help it run smoothly. Pilot testing showed that a programme including the seven essential elements listed here provided a structure successful in achieving this aim.

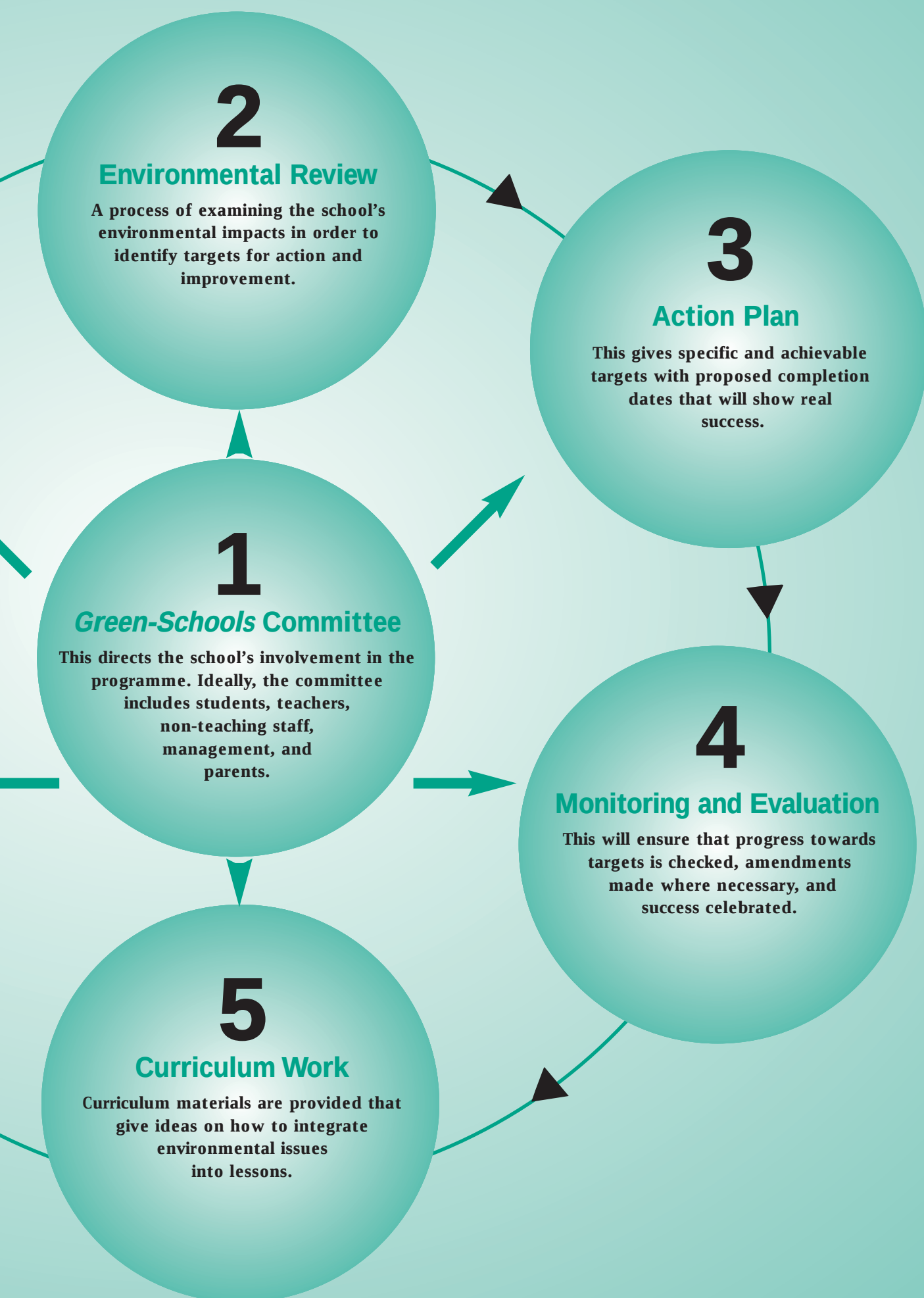
It should be remembered that this process is intended to be flexible enough to accommodate any school and that each should be implemented to the best of the schools ability at that point in time. The nature of the seven steps also allows for the programme to be continually updated as the environmental status and requirements of the school change.

Section 2 IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME:

Seven Steps of the *Green-Schools* Programme



'THE SEVEN STEPS'





2.1 Step 1: 'Green-Schools' Committee

Aim: *The Green-Schools committee aims to direct and address all phases of the Green-Schools programme. It is the driving force of the programme and should ensure that the other elements are carried out.*

Composition and Selection

Ideally, the committee should be as representative of the whole school as possible. It should *primarily* be made up of students (making up the majority of the committee members whenever possible) and could also incorporate a combination of teachers, the Principal or a member of the Board of Management, non-teaching staff (particularly the school caretaker), parents, and any other interested and applicable members of the local community. You may also wish to co-opt a local environmentalist or a Local Authority representative. Regarding size and operation, it should be remembered that there is no set formula or rules for a successful committee.

Often the committee is made up of volunteers from the student body as well as teachers and other interested members of the community. In some cases schools will go through a full election process with manifestos, election speeches, canvassing, election posters, and ballots in order to fill the various positions on the committee! Many secondary schools select the committee members from the CSPE or transition year classes that are undertaking the *Green-Schools* programme or a similar module as part of their course work. It is important, however, to ensure that the student members of the committee are as representative as possible of the different classes and age groups in the school. This will also ensure greater continuity in your programme over the years.

The committee may take different forms depending on the age and ability of the students. A formal committee has worked well even with young students but less formal committees are fine if they achieve the same purpose. However informal it is, the committee should be

representative of all and should keep records of meetings held and decisions made.

The purpose of the committee is:

- To ensure the six other steps are successfully adopted and implemented.
- To give students responsibility and to make them recognise that their ideas are valued.
- To ensure the views of all members of the school community are heard and acted upon where possible.
- To ensure the continuity of the programme.
- To link with school management and the local community.

Fenor N.S. in Waterford has a committee made up of pupils, teachers, a representative of the Board of Management, the Parents Association, and the Tidy Towns Association. Meetings take place once a week, and for the first 20 minutes of each meeting the principal, teachers, and other adult representatives are not allowed to join the committee, therefore allowing the pupils to run it as much as possible!

St. Cronan's N.S. in North Tipperary has a committee made up of pupils, teachers, a parents' representative, and a community representative. Due to the huge interest from all 58 pupils, the entire school became the committee, and as such meet each Friday morning for their committee meetings, which are supervised by their principal.

TOP TIP *to get things started on the right track might be to invite your Local Authority Environmental Awareness Officer where possible to one of your meetings to give advice and help you to get your Green-Schools programme underway successfully.*

In summary, your committee should:

- Be as representative of the whole school as possible.
- Have regular meetings to successfully keep up-to-date with the development of your *Green-Schools* programme.
- Record the minutes of each meeting.
- Disseminate the points and decisions of each meeting to the school when relevant.





2.2 Step 2: Environmental Review

Aim: *The aim of the review is to identify the initial situation within the school regarding the environmental theme under investigation (e.g. litter and waste, energy, etc.).*

If we envisage the *Green-Schools* programme as using a map to undertake a successful road trip, the review enables us to locate our starting point on the map. Once you know where you are starting from, you can then set realistic targets and measure your success. The review process also helps to raise awareness of the programme throughout the school, whereby results of the review can be publicised by means of a notice board, school newsletter, or through assembly or public announcements. It is important that the students are involved in the review process.



The Environmental Review section at the back of each theme-specific booklet provides a checklist designed to help you to carry out a review. It can be adapted for your school's particular needs. It can help identify areas for further study and specific improvement targets for the action plan, as well as identifying areas that require little or no improvement. Remember, the review is a tool to ascertain issues, not an end in itself. Also within the theme booklets there are guidelines on how to undertake audits and surveys of the various themes (e.g. litter surveys, waste, energy, etc.).

By thoroughly checking all potential environmental impacts of the school for the theme under investigation, the environmental review will:

- Give a clear view of the range of the school's impacts.
- Make sure that no significant areas are overlooked.
- Identify areas where little or no improvement is needed.
- Help students and the rest of the school community understand the impacts.
- Help to prioritise the actions to be taken.

St. Feichín's N.S. in Galway carried out waste surveys in their classrooms and recorded what type of waste was going into the bins each day. They found that 70% of their waste was paper from the post and wrappers. The students also did a school walkabout with a camera and found several areas of the school that required attention as regards litter and tidiness.

St. Cronan's N.S. in Co. Tipperary carried out a number of surveys for the Energy theme. They undertook a hot water survey, a sun survey to assist them in cutting back on artificial light usage, and an oil survey. They also recorded electricity meter readings, usage of lights, and how long computers were used each day. The students carried out all of these surveys and continue to do so regularly to identify those areas that require further attention in order to save energy.

Our Lady of Victories Boys N.S. in Dublin carried out a baseline survey to determine: how children travel to school; how children travel from school; how they would like to travel; levels of bike ownership in the school; reasons for not walking/cycling. In addition to this, they carried out a Traffic Survey, where they observed the number of cars passing their school, and how many people were in each car. They compared this with the number of people carried on a bus.

TOP TIP *It is important to quantify your review using a unit of environmental performance that is applicable to your school, e.g. number/volume of bins going to landfill weekly, units of electricity consumed per month, average cost of water consumption per student per month, etc. You can use this indicator throughout the Green-Schools programme as a benchmark against which future monitoring can be compared.*

In summary, your environmental review should:

- Give a clear indication of the school's environmental impact for the specific theme (e.g. the amount of waste produced, the amount of energy consumed, etc.) before the *Green-Schools* programme is implemented.
- Be undertaken by the students when and where possible.

Use, where possible, the environmental review materials provided at the end of each theme book. Remember, any results from your environmental review should be displayed on your *Green-Schools* notice board, and if possible publicised elsewhere (e.g. school newsletter, local paper, etc.).



2.3 Step 3: Action Plan

Aim: The action plan aims to identify goals and provide a structured timetable for the reduction of the environmental impacts identified in the review.

The action plan is the core of the *Green-Schools* programme. It is a timetabled series of specific goals for improvement over a fixed time scale. Quantifiable targets should be set where possible e.g. 50% reduction in waste in 6 months, 100% recycling of cans sold in 8 months, 10% reduction on electricity consumption from previous year, etc. Using our map and road-trip analogy, the action plan is our route planner, giving the finer details on how we aim to reach our destination. It should always be developed from the results of the review. The sample action plan excerpt given describes the actions taken by a school to achieve their goal (i.e. recycle all cans sold in the school by July of that year) in a clearly defined step by step process.

The action plan should, if possible, be linked to curriculum work and have realistic and achievable goals. These goals should be specific and quantifiable where possible, with proposed completion dates that will show real success. Success increases confidence and builds enthusiasm for setting subsequent targets for your *Green-Schools* programme. **Do not be tempted to be too ambitious at first as failure is very demotivating.**

It is crucial to work out how you will monitor and measure your progress and this should be integrated into your action plan. Try to involve all the committee members in the development of the action plan, and as much of the school as possible in its implementation.

TOP TIP *The action plan is not a review of the work that has already been carried out, but a list of future targets and goals of your programme and a detailed description of the actions to be implemented (and by whom) within specific time frames in order to achieve those goals and targets.*



Sample action plan excerpt

Goal: Recycle all cans sold in school by July

Steps: By Jan 50% recycled; by April 75% recycled.

Action	Person/ Group Responsible	Timing
Find someone to take cans.	Anne Byrnes	September
Devise way of monitoring can numbers.	4th Class Maths	October
Survey students to find best place for recycling bins.	6th Class English	October
Site Bins.	Brian Jones	November
Publicise scheme to all students and staff.	6th Class Technology	November
Calculate percentage recycled, display results on notice board.	5th Class Maths	January
Decide on remedial action if targets not reached.	Committee	January

Check www.greenschoolsireland.org for more examples of action plans for litter & waste, energy, water and travel themes.

In summary, your action plan should:

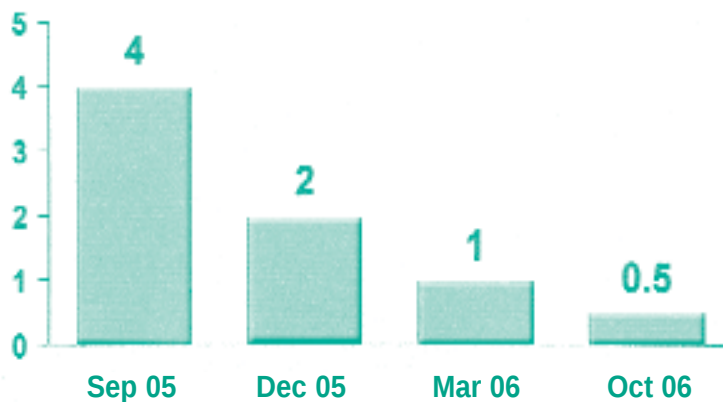
- Be developed from the results of your review.
- Contain realistic and quantifiable goals and targets with time frames, where possible. These goals should be displayed at the top of the action plan.
- Be in table format (as above), identifying action, person or group responsible, and the time frame for completion.
- Be displayed on your *Green-Schools* notice board.
- Include regular monitoring, and be updated if and when necessary.



2.4 Step 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

Aim: Monitoring and evaluation aims to check your progress and indicates areas for change if necessary.

Number of bags of waste going to landfill



Your monitoring and evaluation gives your *Green-Schools* programme its credibility. As mentioned previously, it should be developed in parallel with your action plan. Again, using our road-trip analogy, monitoring allows you to evaluate how far you have travelled towards your final destination and also how quickly this has been achieved. As far as possible, the students should do the monitoring. This will help give them a greater sense of ownership of the programme. (Also, teachers have more than enough to do themselves!).

Monitoring is vital for identifying areas in your action plan that can be improved upon and amended. This aids performance and feeds back to further actions and new goals. It also enhances whole-school awareness by highlighting the successes of your *Green-Schools* programme. This can provide a 'feel good' factor about the achievements and progress to date and continue motivation and participation at a whole-school level.

Publicise your results

Make sure the whole school is aware of your progress by displaying any results and figures prominently in the school (e.g. on your *Green-Schools* notice board, school newsletter, assembly, school website, etc.). *Remember, successes should be celebrated loudly!*

Ashbourne Community School in County Meath developed a 'can-window' when they discovered that the can collection system they had in place was both labour intensive and poorly supported. The can window comprised of a pre-existing sectioned area between a wall and a window along a corridor. This allowed the students to easily deposit the cans for recycling while also keeping the total number of cans clearly visible to the whole school. This resulted in an increase in the number of cans recycled in the school from 18% to 50%.

TOP TIP A simple way of envisaging your monitoring programme is to think of it as a number of 'mini' reviews. The unit of performance chosen for your environmental review may now also be used in your monitoring process (e.g. number/volume of bins going to landfill weekly, units of electricity consumed per month, average cost of water consumption per student per month, etc.). This allows easy comparisons with the initial results of your review and thus proper evaluation of the rate of success of your action plan.

In summary, your monitoring and evaluation programme should:

- Be developed in parallel with your action plan.
- Be carried out by the students when and where possible.
- Use the same unit of performance as for your environmental review to allow comparison with initial figures.
- Feed back into your action plan to identify areas for adjustments and improvements to be made when and where necessary.
- Increase the likelihood (or reduce time required) for achieving goals formulated in your action plan.
- Be publicised (e.g. display graphs, charts, etc. on your *Green-Schools* notice board, newsletter, etc.).



2.5 Step 5: Curriculum Work

Aim: To integrate the Green-Schools programme with the curriculum work of the school when and where possible.

The principle behind *Green-Schools* is that environmental topics being studied in the classroom should influence the way the whole school operates. What you decide to study should, if possible, enhance the environmental actions (i.e. your action plan) being undertaken by your school. This will provide greater relevance for the students. Opportunities exist within *Green-Schools* to make curriculum links into a range of subjects at many levels. The table below outlines just some of these opportunities. Most schools are already incorporating a variety of environmental issues into the curriculum.

For secondary schools CSPE (Civic, Social & Political Education) classes may be interested to know that *Green-Schools* is recognised by the Department of Education and Science as a suitable Action Project for Junior Certificate classes. *Green-Schools* can be worth 60% of the marks awarded for this core subject.



For primary schools the SESE (Social, Environmental & Scientific Education) section of the new curriculum contains a number of core strands that are identical to the objectives and ethos of the *Green-Schools* programme (e.g. the environmental awareness & care strand, the energy & forces strand). Therefore, *Green-Schools* is an ideal way of implementing this section of the curriculum throughout the whole school.

The above examples are for direct links to the curriculum. However, there are an infinite number of indirect links to all the other areas of the curriculum. Details of other organisations that publish excellent curriculum materials on a variety of themes are listed in 'Useful Contacts', located at the back of this booklet.

TOP TIP Each themed booklet shows in greater detail how and where the *Green-Schools* programme can link with the curriculum.

In summary, the *Green-Schools* programme should:

- Be integrated with the curriculum through as many subjects and levels as possible.
- Be used to inform the whole school of environmental issues and instigate action in the school community.

SUBJECT	LINKING TO THE CURRICULUM
SPHE (Primary) CSPE (Secondary)	• Promote personal development and well being. • Develop citizenship and a sense of personal and social responsibility. • Promote communication, co-operation, and working with others. • Encourage media awareness.
SESE (Primary) SCIENCES, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY (Secondary)	• Study of materials and their properties. • Develop a scientific approach to problem-solving. • Promote communication of ideas, report writing, and presentation. • Develop a critical understanding of environmental issues at local and global level. • Study of human and natural environments (sustainable management of resources, etc.) • Examine the impact of the environment on people's health in different historical periods.
LANGUAGES	• Source of topics for essays, poetry, etc. • Promote communication skills, public speaking, debates, etc. • Potential for many activities involving speaking and writing.
MATHS	• Provide real life situations for mathematical analysis. • Use of charts and graphs, introduction to database management and IT.
ART	• Creation of posters/murals/fashion to aid environmental awareness.
MUSIC	• Reusing old materials to create musical instruments.



2.6 Step 6: Informing and Involving the School and Wider Community

Aim: To spread the Green-Schools message throughout the whole school and the wider community through ongoing publicity and a 'Day of Action'.

It is important to ensure that actions and events organised for the *Green-Schools* programme are well publicised. This helps ensure maximum participation from the different groups involved. Methods of informing the school and wider community could include:

- A special *Green-Schools* notice board in a prominent position for students and visitors.
- The use of a school or parish newsletter to publicise the programme, or if possible create a specific *Green-Schools* newsletter.
- The use of assemblies to announce success in achieving targets or for students to present their research and results.
- Exhibitions of project work, both in school and in the wider community.
- Making use of local press and radio.

Students at St. Feichín's National School, Co. Galway wrote a letter to Granada Television Ltd. who produce the TV series "Coronation Street" informing them of the poor environmental practices being undertaken by one of the show's characters. They received a reply outlining that the scriptwriters were going to take this into consideration in future episodes. They also wrote to a food-producing company outlining that the plastic packaging they were providing was not recyclable and enquiring if any alternatives were available.



St. Oliver Plunkett School in Co. Dublin used a *Green-Schools* notice board and a 'daily notes' system to update teachers and students on the *Green-Schools* programme. The 'Green Section' of the monthly 'School News' publication was used in conjunction with the school website to inform parents and the local community of progress with the programme.

The 'Day of Action' is an opportunity for students, staff and the wider community to get together to work towards achieving some of the targets set out in your action plan. In some cases it may be carried out in conjunction with local or national projects (e.g. Tidy Towns, National Spring Clean, Energy Awareness Week, Tree Week, etc.). Benefits of the 'Day of Action' include:

- Raising awareness of *Green-Schools* within and beyond the school.
- Involving the wider community. Parents, neighbours, local business, and the Local Authority can all be drawn in. They can give advice, practical help, money, or gifts. This will also make excellent publicity for the school.

In summary, informing and involving the school and wider community should:

- Ensure that both the school and wider community are fully informed of the progress of your *Green-Schools* programme.
- Cover as many media sources as possible, e.g. television, internet, radio, school newsletter, notice board, etc.
- Encourage greater numbers of the school and members of the community to get further involved in your *Green-Schools* programme.

TOP TIP Contact your local newspaper and ask them to publicise details of the success of your *Green-Schools* programme as detailed by the students. There are some examples of articles that have appeared in various national and regional newspapers shown in 'News' on our website (www.greenschoolsireland.org).



2.7 Step 7: Green Code

Aim: To state the objectives that demonstrate the school's commitment to environmentally friendly actions.

The Green Code should be negotiated by as many of the students and staff as possible and related to the action plan and curriculum work. It is not to be a list of vague comments along the lines of 'we will care for the environment and encourage wildlife'. Each statement should describe an action that all students and staff can carry out. The code should be displayed somewhere prominent (e.g. your *Green-Schools* notice board) and be updated as new issues are addressed. Therefore, the Green Code should be specific to your school. For example, the Green Code outlined below is from a primary school that was undertaking litter management and the recycling of aluminium cans as the core of their programme.

As further themes of the *Green-Schools* programme are undertaken, additional statements can be incorporated into the school's Green Code. This will help to successfully integrate these new themes.

It is important that students feel they have had involvement in developing this code, as this will give them greater reason and encouragement to follow it. Many schools have used a competition to develop their Green Code. This is also a good way of informing and involving the whole school. The Green Code can also be released to the local press and the general public.

TOP TIP As outlined above, the Green Code can be an excellent 'hook' for informing and involving the whole school. Some schools have turned their Green Code into a 'rap' or slogan that all students and staff can use. A further development of this is the use of a catchy 'mnemonic' or 'acronym', where by the first letters of each line of the green code spell out an aspect of the code (see below for examples).

T.R.A.S.H

Try **R**ecycling **A**shbourne **S**hows **H**ow

P.A.P.E.R

Paper will not be wasted;

All pages in copy will be filled;

Photocopies will be backed;

Every box, paper and cardboard will be reused, recycled and therefore reduced;

Reduction of paper is our aim.

Sample Green Code Statements





Section 3 APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

3.1 Assessment Criteria

You decide when you are ready to apply for your Green Flag award. As long as your “Seven Steps” have been up and running for 6 months or more, there is no set time scale between registration and applying for the award. Once the Green-Schools programme has been established and in operation in your school for several months you will begin to know which elements of the programme are working successfully and which need further attention.

*Before applying for the award, it is important to ensure that the “Seven Steps” have been successfully implemented and all steps have been up and running **for at least 6 months**. The following lists the minimum required for each step:*

- 1. A Green-Schools committee has been established and meets on a regular basis.**
- 2. An environmental review has been undertaken, which clearly indicates the environmental impact of the school for the theme being undertaken.**
- 3. An action plan with realistic and manageable goals has been developed from the review, with some of these goals partially or fully achieved.**
- 4. The progress towards achieving these goals has been monitored and displayed.**
- 5. The programme has been integrated with the school curriculum when and where possible.**
- 6. The whole school has been updated on the progress of the programme and has been involved to some degree. A “day of action” should be part of this process.**
- 7. An applicable “Green Code” has been written, adopted, and displayed.**

The seven steps are the basis of the Green-Schools programme. When you apply for the award the assessors will be looking for evidence that each of these steps has been adopted. However, it is important to note that the assessment procedure will take account of each school’s individual circumstances. For example, the level of student involvement expected will vary according to the age, ability, and experience of the students. If you are in any doubt about meeting the criteria please contact the Green-Schools Office of An Taisce for advice. Remember, there are case studies provided on our website to show how other schools have implemented their programmes. The criteria listed above are the minimum requirements for a Green Flag award.

When you are confident that all of the above points are in place (i.e. that each of the seven steps of the Green-Schools programme have been implemented successfully), you are ready to apply for the Green Flag. The list of 16 questions on the following page will help you to organise your application in a clear and concise manner.



3.2 Application Questions for the Green Flag Award

As already outlined, when you feel that you have adequately addressed all the elements of *Green-Schools*, you can apply for the Green Flag. In order to simplify and standardise the application process, the questions below have been devised to help you clearly outline your *Green-Schools* programme. **You should answer all of the questions and make sure they are clearly numbered.** Your answers will give us most of the information needed to decide whether you have achieved Green Flag status.

Note: Your answers should show how the students were involved in each element.

Committee	- Who sits on your <i>Green-Schools</i> committee and how were the members selected? (Please list each committee member and detail who they are, i.e. 3rd year student, teacher, parent, caretaker, etc.). - How does your committee operate? (e.g. How often do you meet? Who keeps the records of meetings?). Please include an example of the meeting minutes.
Environmental Review	- How did you undertake your environmental review? - Who was involved in the review? - What were the results obtained? (i.e. include samples of charts/graphs from surveys)
Action Plan	How did you decide on the targets for your action plan? (Please attach a copy of your action plan in table format, identifying goals, actions to be undertaken to achieve these goals, person or group responsible, and the time frame for completion).
Monitoring and Evaluation	- How are you monitoring and evaluating your progress? - How far have you progressed towards your goals? (Please include figures showing the reduction in your environmental impacts for the theme under investigation i.e. litter & waste generation/energy consumption/water usage/etc.) - Has the monitoring and evaluation process helped in amending and improving your action plan? If so how?
Linking with the Curriculum	Please give the numbers and ages of students involved in curriculum work, and information on the topics or subject areas addressed.
Informing and Involving	- How was the whole school community informed of, and involved in, all aspects of the <i>Green-Schools</i> programme? - Describe your day of action. - Please describe any contacts made with the wider community (for example, using outside help, involving parents, publicity gained, industry links).
Green Code	Please reproduce your school's Green Code. Describe how it was agreed and how it has been integrated into school life.
General	- How has the experience of <i>Green-Schools</i> benefited your school? (If you wish you can also include any difficulties you encountered with the <i>Green-Schools</i> Programme). - Please add any additional information you feel is relevant to your application (This is optional – but should be limited to five A4 pages).



3.3 Submitting a Successful Application – Top Tips!

The following is a list of suggestions and tips to help with your successful application for the Green Flag award:

Step	Top Tip
1. Committee	While there are no set rules for its structure, remember that students should make up the majority of the committee, not teachers!
2. Review	Again students should be involved in (or responsible for) the review as much as possible. Make sure you give plenty of detail on the procedure and results of your review in answering the application questions.
3. Action Plan	As was stated in Section 2.3, it is important to remember that the action plan is not a review of the work that has been carried out. Rather it should be a list of actions and targets set out from the results of the environmental review, to be carried out by specific individuals/groups within specified time frames, in order to achieve quantifiable goals. Publicise your action plan on your <i>Green-Schools</i> notice board, and make sure you have included a copy of your action plan (which should be in table format) in your application.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	Use charts and graphs where possible to evaluate your progress, display these results on the <i>Green-Schools</i> notice board and be sure to give some examples of these graphs/charts in your application.
General	The most important factor in your application is to insure all the questions in Section 3.2 are answered clearly, and completely and to the best of your ability. Perhaps you can delegate the responsibility of answering the questions to students on your committee. (Some of the best applications for the <i>Green-Schools</i> award have been put together entirely by students). If you wish to add any additional information you feel is relevant to your application, please do, but remember that you shall also be visited by an assessor, and you may be able to show much of this work to the assessor at this time. <i>Any extra information given with your application should be limited to five A4 pages.</i> Finally, a simple format for your application will be fine! Don't worry about putting your application in a fancy folder, with individual plastic sleeves for each page – instead think about producing your application by reusing old pages, printing on both sides, etc. Remember, you can also submit your application in electronic or CD-ROM format.



3.4 Application Procedure

Photocopy and carefully fill out the *Green-Schools* Award application form on the following page, and attach it to your application (i.e. the questions you have answered from Section 3.2 and any other additional material you wish to submit). Please send *three copies* of the whole application to:

***Green-Schools Office, Environmental Education Unit, An Taisce,
Unit 5A, Swift's Alley, Francis Street, Dublin 8,
Email: greenschools@antaisce.org***

Once the *Green-Schools* Office has received your application, the procedure for assessing your school is as follows:

- 1) An Taisce reviews application and makes recommendations if needed.
- 2) School implements recommendations and sends report to the *Green-Schools* Office.
- 3) Assessor visits the school.
- 4) *Green-Schools* evaluation committee makes decision whether to award the Green Flag.

Schools can submit an application for an award at any time of the year. However, there are two sets of award ceremonies during the school year; the first takes place in February/March, and the second takes place in May. If you wish to be awarded at the earlier date, you need to have your application in before the 1st of December, while the deadline for the second set of awards is the 1st of March. If you feel your school is ready to apply early in the school year, the *Green-Schools* Office would recommend that you aim for the December deadline. This will help to prevent large numbers of applications coming in late in the school year, thus ensuring that all applications can be processed before the end of the school year. Any applications received after the 1st of March may be carried over until the following school year.

It should also be noted that you can make your application in electronic or CD-ROM format.

3.5 Renewing the Award

Once you have been awarded your Green Flag you will need to renew the award every two years thereafter. To maintain your flag, you will need to show that you have maintained the successful implementation of the Litter & Waste theme and built on this by integrating the Energy theme into your *Green-Schools* programme, e.g. schools that have been awarded the Green Flag for their achievements on Litter and Waste should be able to show that they have also integrated aspects of the Energy theme into their programme in their renewal application. Similarly the themes of Water and Travel will be integrated into your programme when it comes to renewing your award for the second and third time respectively.

To renew your award, use the same application form and list of questions as for your initial application stating clearly that you are applying for renewal. The *Green-Schools* Office will inform you when this is required.

Note: Many schools submit quite large-sized applications when seeking their first Green Flag. It is not necessary to submit such large applications when renewing your flag. We recommend you keep it brief while at the same time answering all the questions in full and providing supporting documentation, be it figures, graphs or charts, photographs, etc. When it comes to renewing keep an eye on our website (www.greenschoolsireland.org) for dates, procedures, etc.





Green-Schools Award Application Form

To be completed after you have established the seven essential elements of the *Green-Schools Programme* and achieved some of your action plan targets. *Please re-read sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 before submitting your final application.*

Please photocopy this form. ☐ Tick this box if you are renewing your award

Name of school

Address

County

Email **Telephone**

Please complete this form and submit it with your answers to the questions in Section 3.2 of this Handbook. Please number each answer and in addition you may enclose up to five other items no larger than A4, e.g. press cuttings, photographs, or children's work. Please remember to enclose your action plan in table format and to put the school's name on every sheet.

N.B. Please submit *three copies* of your application
(two will be sent to your assessors before their visit)

We, the undersigned, declare the attached as a true record of our *Green-Schools* experience and apply for the *Green-Schools Award* on behalf of our school.

Principal:

Name

Signature

Green-Schools Co-ordinator:

Name

Signature

Date of submission



Useful Contacts

ENFO

Environmental Information Service

17 St. Andrew Street, Dublin 2

Telephone: (01) 888 2001

LoCall: 1890 200 191

Fax: (01) 888 3946

Email: info@enfo.ie

Website: www.enfo.ie

Department of Education and Science

Marlboro Street, Dublin 1

Telephone: (01) 8896400

Website: www.education.ie

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Custom House, Dublin 1

Telephone: (01) 8882000

LoCall: 1890 20 20 21

Website: www.environ.ie

Local Authority

Environmental/Local Agenda 21 Officers

Many authorities have officers who are working on waste reduction plans, environmental improvement schemes or developing Local Agenda 21 projects.

These officers usually work with schools.

The Blackrock Education Centre

Kill Avenue, County Dublin

Telephone: (01) 236 5000

Fax: (01) 2365050

Email: bec@blackrockec.ie

Website: www.blackrockec.ie

IPCC

Irish Peatland Conservation Council

Lullymore, Rathangan

Co. Kildare

Telephone: (045) 860133

or (045) 860481

Email: bogs@ipcc.ie

Website: www.ipcc.ie

National Environmental Education Centre

Knocksink Wood, Enniskerry

Co. Wicklow

Telephone: (01) 2866609

Irish Wildlife Trust

Sigmund Business Centre

93A Lagan Road, Dublin Industrial Estate

Glasnevin, Dublin 11

Telephone: (01) 860 2839

Fax: (01) 830 8914

Email: iwt@eircom.net or enquiries@iwt.ie

Website: www.iwt.ie

ECO-UNESCO

26 Clare Street, Dublin 2

Telephone: (01) 662 5491

Fax: (01) 6625493

Email: ecounesco@eircom.net or

info@ecounesco.ie

Website: www.ecounesco.ie

Friends of the Earth Ireland

9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

Telephone: (01) 639 4652

Email: info@foe.ie

Website: www.foe.ie

Conservation Volunteers Ireland

Steward's House

Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin 14

Telephone: (01) 495 2878

Fax: (01) 495 2879

Email: cvi@cvi.ie

Website: www.cvi.ie

For Further Information about Green-Schools

Please contact:

Green-Schools Office

Environmental Education Unit

An Taisce

Unit 5A

Swift's Alley

Francis Street

Dublin 8

Telephone: (01) 4002222

Fax: (01) 4002285

Email: greenschools@antaisce.org

Website: www.greenschoolsireland.org



N O T E S



N O T E S

