


# Eco-Schools Handbook

## for teachers (K-12)

MEMBER OF Greening Education Partnership
Getting every learner climate-ready

FEE

Eco-Schools

This publication was developed by the **Foundation for Environmental Education for the Eco-Schools programme**.

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To access the online PDF version of this publication please ask your national FEE member organisation or email info@fee.global.

**Cover design:** Saumya Grover and Nimet Huma Sabirli

# Foreword




The Eco-Schools programme was established in 1994 by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) to support educators and learners on a journey towards meaningful participation in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Since then, the programme has grown into one of the largest educational networks championing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across the globe. Thanks to an ongoing commitment towards greening education by educators and learners worldwide, the programme guides schools along an educational pathway which takes action on some of the most important environmental challenges of the 21st century.

With participation now spanning more than 100 countries, Eco-Schools empowers schools to integrate sustainability into the heart of everyday learning and practice. This handbook offers educators practical tools and inspiration through the Eco-Schools Seven-Step framework, alongside case studies from across the network that highlight the power of innovation, impact and collaboration. It invites schools to become active contributors to a global educational movement for sustainability.

Through student-centred, inquiry-driven and project-based learning, the programme helps learners connect with real-world issues in meaningful ways. Participation builds essential 21st century skills such as systems thinking, creativity and critical thinking - preparing young people to thrive in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. At the same time, it nurtures a sense of agency, responsibility and optimism that inspires students to become lifelong changemakers within their schools and communities.

**PPG is proud to support this Eco-Schools Teachers' Handbook, developed to strengthen capacity and promote quality education for sustainable development. In partnership with the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) we believe every school can become a place where sustainability is taught, lived, and shared.**

FEE extends our sincere gratitude to PPG for their generous support which made the production of this handbook possible.

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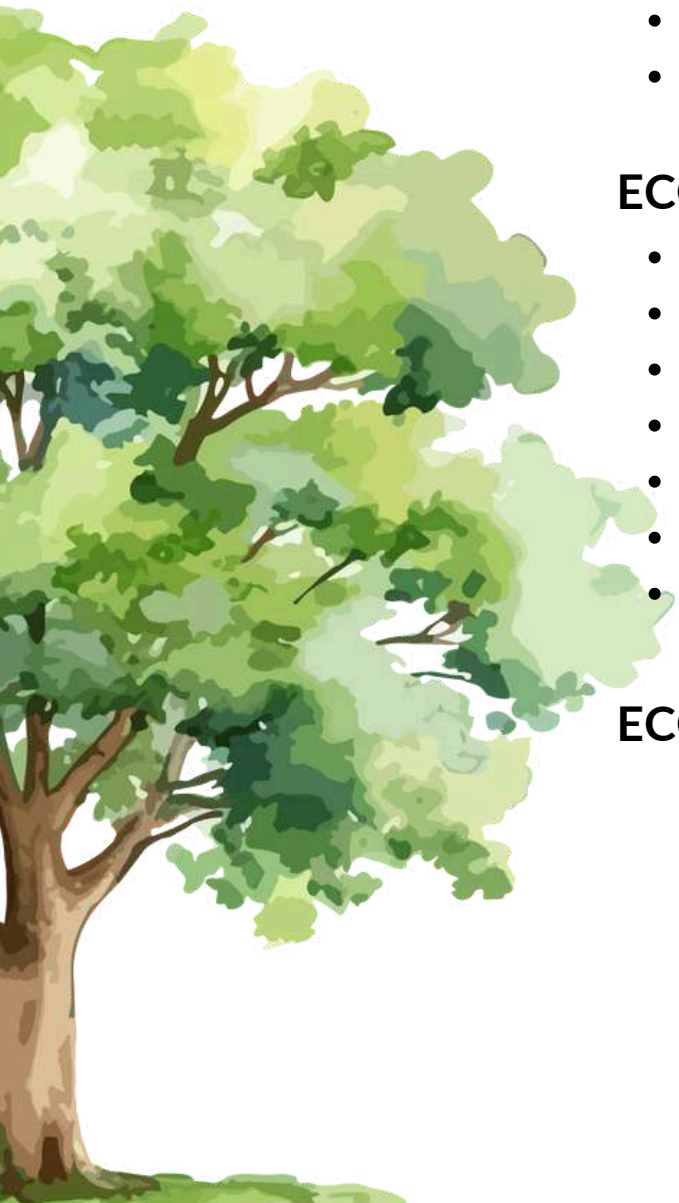

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# HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

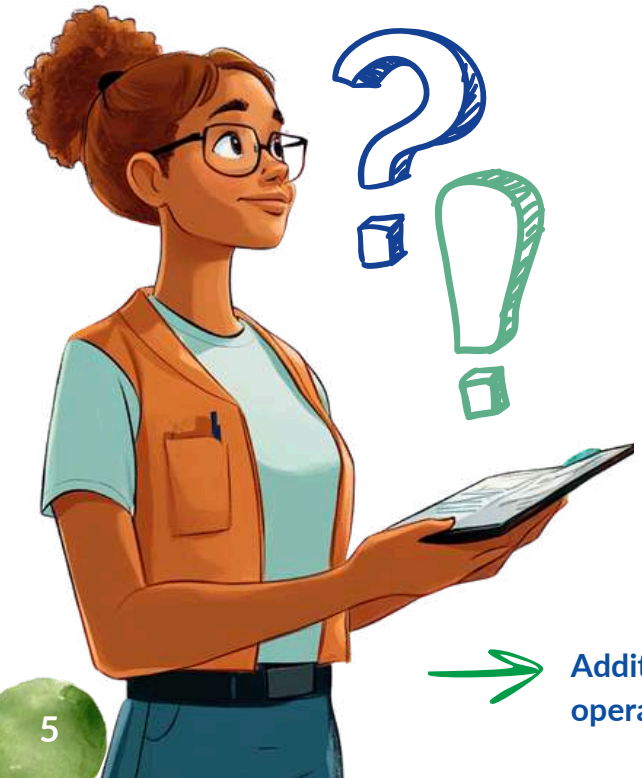
This handbook is a practical guide on how to implement the Eco-Schools programme in your learning environment. At its core is the Seven-Step Framework which is a simple, structured approach to embed sustainability across school life supported by advice, examples and activities which can help to guide you along your Eco-Schools journey.

The handbook supports schools in their alignment with the goals of the Greening Education Partnership (GEP), particularly in working towards the Green Flag. This is a recognised award for schools demonstrating excellence in sustainability. This handbook is part of a three-part series, which also includes:

- Eco-Schools in Early Years – focusing on sustainability in early childhood education.
- Climate Resilience and School Safety – supporting schools to prepare for and respond to climate-related risks.

To further support educators and practitioners, two online courses are also available on our FEE academy platform to help participants understand the Eco-Schools framework and embrace a whole-school approach to sustainability.

To further your learning and Eco-Schools journey, please use these additional resources alongside the handbook:



**FEE Academy –** Our online platform features two interactive courses that complement this handbook and strengthen your knowledge of the Eco-Schools methodology. You will receive a certificate as recognition of your learning upon successful completion of the course.

**UNESCO's Greening Curriculum Guidance** – A practical guide to embedding climate action and sustainability across the curriculum. (Read the guide)

**Green School Quality Standards** – A set of benchmarks for creating effective, inclusive and sustainable learning environments. (Explore the standards)

Together, these tools and resources will support you in delivering a transformative, student-led programme that integrates Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across all subjects!

**Additionally, national resources can provide local insights and language-specific materials. Access FEE's national operators (via the Eco-Schools website) or consult your Ministry of Education's website for further ESD guidance.**

# 1 LET'S GREEN OUR SCHOOL

## Introduction to the Eco-Schools Programme

### Welcome to the World's Largest Network for Greening Schools!

The Eco-Schools programme was founded in 1994, as the Foundation for Environmental Education's (FEE) pioneering education programme. Today, it has grown into the most extensive network of educational establishments advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across the world. Operating in over 100 countries, the global green network of Eco-Schools demonstrates the powerful impact that meaningful, sustainability centred learning can have on students throughout their lives. The effective Eco-Schools Seven-Steps methodology guides students and educators through a clear, participatory process which engages the whole school with themes of sustainability. By implementing a project-based learning approach, students can measure the tangible impact that their work has within their school community, inspiring ongoing change towards advocating for and implementing ESD. Adopting a transformative approach within education, the Eco-Schools programme champions sustainability in curricula, pedagogy, culture and community engagement. The Eco-Schools programme aims to equip the next generation of students with the necessary 21st century skills to meet challenges with the relevant knowledge and confidence to promote a greener future for all.



# SUPPORTING GLOBAL COMMITMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY EDUCATION

## Aligned with the Greening Education Partnership

The Eco-Schools Programme is a key driver of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and a proud supporter of the United Nation's Greening Education Partnership (GEP). Achieving the Eco-Schools Green Flag aligns schools with the Green School Quality Standard and contributes to the global commitment of greening 50% of schools by 2030.

## Contributing to Agenda 2030

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals established by the UN to tackle challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change by 2030. Eco-Schools supports progress toward all SDGs and specifically contributes to the following targets:




**SDG 4.7 (Quality Education)**
Ensuring all learners gain knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development.




**SDG 13.3 (Climate Action)**
Enhancing education, awareness and capacity on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Quality ESD through Eco-Schools also contributes to other transformative education goals, such as twenty-first-century skills and the long-term vision of the UNESCO 'Reimagining Our Futures Together: a new social contract for education' report. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707.locale=en

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Getting every learner climate-ready

# KEY TERMS

**The Eco-Schools programme will help you to effectively deliver the following interrelated and distinct educational approaches within your school:**

### Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education that equips learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to make informed decisions and take action towards environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society. ESD aims to empower people of all genders, for present and future generations, whilst respecting cultural diversity.

### Environmental Education (EE)

A process aimed at informing and inspiring individuals to understand and address environmental issues, cultivating informed decision-making and responsibility towards the environment.

### Greening Education

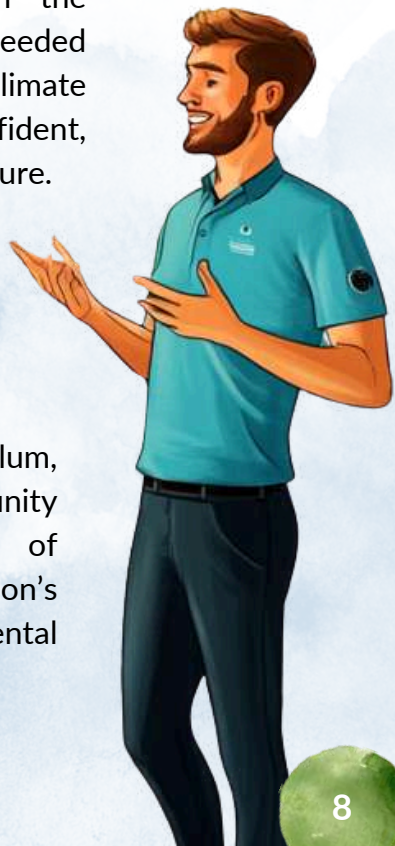
A holistic understanding of education's approach to the climate crisis. Greening education is a response to young people's demands for an education that prepares them with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to engage in transformative initiatives towards mitigation, adaptation and resilience to climate change. This is aimed at shaping green, low emission climate-resilient societies.

### Climate Change Education

Climate change education helps people to understand and address the impacts of the climate crisis, empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change. Building climate literacy inspires people to take confident, informed action for a more sustainable future.

### Whole-School Approach (WSA)

Integrates sustainability across all aspects of a school, including curriculum, management, operations and community engagement. It encourages a culture of sustainability by aligning the institution's practices and values with environmental responsibility.



# 2 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH ECO-SCHOOLS

This handbook will help you to establish the Eco-Schools programme in your school. Through a simple and flexible Seven-Step framework and a gold standard for project-based learning, you will be able to engage the whole school community in collaborative, creative and meaningful environmental change. Every school and community is unique and as a place-based educational methodology, the Eco-Schools framework encourages adaptation and personalisation to meet your own diverse needs and goals.

**FEE Academy for online courses on ESD, Climate Change Education and more (www.feeacademy.global)**

**Green School Quality Standards for best practices (link)**

**UNESCO's Greening Curriculum Guidance for practical strategies (link)**

Additionally, national Eco-Schools resources can provide local insights and language-specific materials. Access FEE's national operators (via the Eco-Schools website www.ecoschools.global/national-offices) or consult your Ministry of Education's website for further ESD guidance.



# A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TOWARDS ESD

**The Eco-Schools methodology embeds ESD through a Whole School Approach (WSA) which integrates sustainability principles throughout all aspects of an educational institution:**



## School Governance

Strong leadership and resource allocation are essential for effective ESD (Education for Sustainable Development). The Eco-Committee plays a key role in leading a whole-school approach towards ESD, ensuring student leadership and creating a shared and actionable vision of sustainability through the Eco-Code.



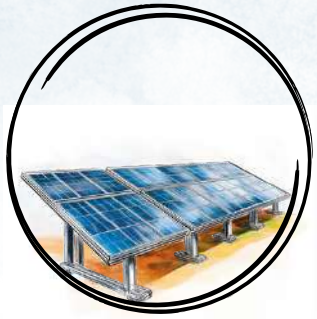
## Teaching and Learning

In Eco-Schools, sustainability and environmental themes can be used to **Activate the Curriculum** across all subjects and grades, improving key skills like critical thinking and collaboration. Active learning methods, such as project-based learning, help students grasp the complexity of sustainability and actualise locally relevant solutions.



## Community Partnerships

**Informing and Involving** the whole school and local community is vital. Eco-Schools encourage awareness, collaboration with experts and the application of real-world sustainability. Partnerships with local groups, businesses, community leaders and public spaces enhances learning and long-term impact.



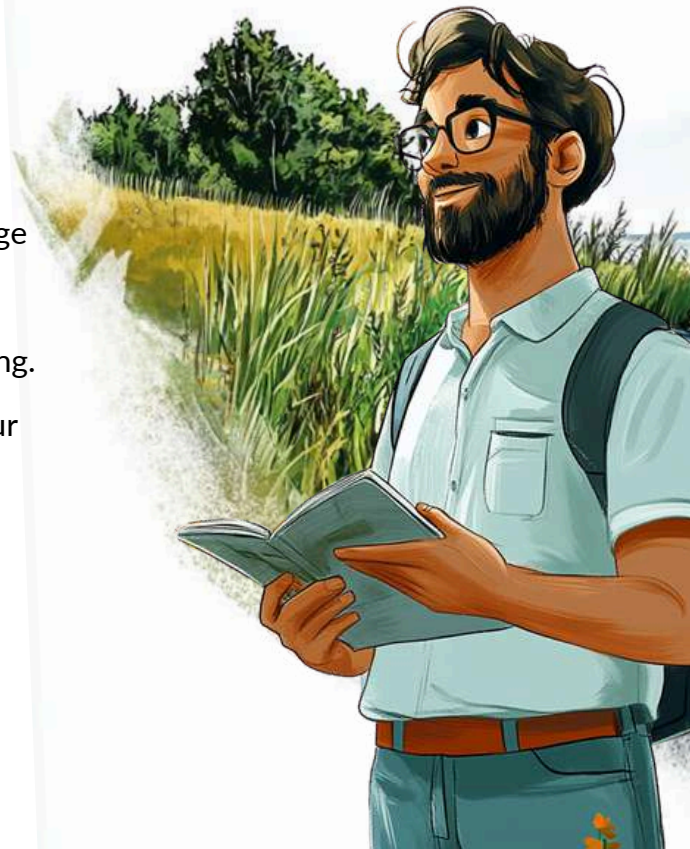
## Facilities and Operations

Eco-Schools assess performance through the **Sustainability Audit** to identify sustainability and educational goals and create an **Action Plan** which will be **Monitored and Evaluated** throughout the year. Embedding environmental responsibility into everyday practices and routines at school is central to promoting meaningful, lasting change.

# HELP! WHAT IF I HAVE NO EXPERIENCE WITH ESD?

**Everyone has to start somewhere on this journey. Explore the pathways that are available to help you enhance your knowledge and effectively address key Eco-Schools themes:**

- **External Training and Resources:** Access specialised programmes and materials on sustainability issues (for online courses, please visit Home | feeacademy).
- **Compulsory Professional Development:** Participate in required ESD training to provide all educators with specialised skills.
- **Optional Professional Development:** Engage in voluntary workshops or personal research on environmental topics.
- **Collaborative Learning with Students:** Explore sustainability alongside students for a shared learning experience.
- **Community-Based Learning:** Join local initiatives which promote sustainability education and engage experts from outside of school.
- **Peer Learning:** Share experiences and strategies with colleagues to enhance collective understanding.
- **Practice makes perfect:** Develop your confidence to tackle complex sustainability challenges in your pedagogical approach and everyday classroom practice.



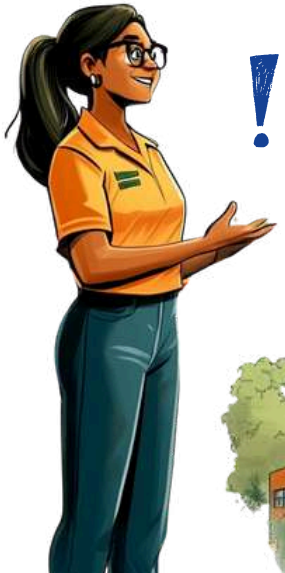
**Take a look at ecoschools.global, where the "Tools & Resources" page offers valuable input and shares best practices from around the world. You can also learn more through our online courses at feeacademy.global.**

# NAVIGATING COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES AND TOPICS

Sustainability challenges such as climate change are complex, interconnected and often don't have one 'straightforward solution.' You may have heard of these interconnected issues termed as "wicked challenges", which involves the interaction of diverse stakeholders with differing perspectives and competing interests. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) offers tools to educators and students alike with the knowledge, values and critical thinking skills required to navigate this complexity. It supports the development of agency and leadership, enabling individuals to move from awareness to meaningful action.

The Eco-Schools programme addresses sustainability challenges by engaging the entire school community, teachers, students, families and local stakeholders to explore these issues from multiple viewpoints. This inclusive process builds shared understanding and provides collaborative, community-based solutions. By developing agency and leading through action, young people become active contributors to a more just and sustainable future.








medium.com/age-of-awareness

## REMEMBER!

To recognise and celebrate the good practices already happening in your school and community and build on these too!

# DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCIES

**The Eco-Schools Seven-Step framework supports the implementation and achievement of quality education (SDG 4) by developing the knowledge and skills needed for a sustainable future.**

## with head, heart & hand

Rooted in a "head, heart and hand" approach, this model encourages learners to understand sustainability challenges (head), connect emotionally and ethically to their importance (heart) and take meaningful action (hand).

*»Education for Sustainable Development is an integral part of quality education. It enables every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.«*
UNESCO



- Normative competency
- Anticipatory Competency
- Systems-thinking competency
- Integrated problem-solving competency
- Strategic competency
- Collaboration competency
- Self-awareness competency
- Critical thinking competency

# PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN ECO-SCHOOLS

**Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a core approach in Eco-Schools, allowing real-world sustainability issues identified during your Sustainability Audit to be explored through collaborative, hands-on and solution-driven projects in class.**

## Key Elements of PBL in Eco-Schools:

- **Challenging Problem or Question:** Students explore a real-world sustainability, environmental or social issue aligned with their school's priority themes.
- **Sustained Inquiry:** Students research the issue, gather data and explore solutions over time to deepen their understanding.
- **Authenticity:** The project addresses real-world environmental challenges, making learning relevant and impactful.
- **Student Voice & Choice:** Students decide how to approach the project and express and act on their ideas, demonstrating their interests and creativity.
- **Reflection:** Students reflect on their progress, evaluate what works well and identify areas for future improvement.
- **Critique & Revision:** Feedback from peers, teachers and community members help students refine and improve their projects.
- **Public Presentation:** Students share the results from their projects with the school or local community, showcasing and sharing their sustainability initiatives.

(Taken from Seven Essential Project Design Elements – PBL Works)




**To find out more about PBL take our FEE Academy course**

# FACILITATING AND EVALUATING LEARNING THROUGH ECO-SCHOOLS

## Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Support Learning in Eco-Schools

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a structured framework for guiding and assessing student's learning within the Eco-Schools programme. By aligning educational activities with its hierarchical levels - remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating - educators can support a clear progression from fundamental knowledge to independent, sustainable action.

Pupils begin by acquiring essential sustainability knowledge and understanding their school's impact through a student-led **Eco-Committee** who conduct a **Sustainability Audit.** They then apply their findings by developing and implementing an **Action Plan** and embedding sustainability by **Activating The Curriculum**. As the programme progresses, pupils analyse and evaluate the outcomes of their efforts, **Measure Impact** and refine their approaches. Communication skills are developed by **Informing and Involving** the wider school and community, sharing achievements and raising awareness. Finally, learners synthesise their values and experiences into a shared **Eco-Code,** reflecting their commitment to lifelong sustainable learning.

This structured journey from foundational knowledge to creative action supports critical thinking, problem-solving and active citizenship which are the core aims of both Bloom's Taxonomy and the Eco-Schools approach.



**Create**
**Produce new or original work**
*Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate*

**Evaluate**
**Justify a stand or decision**
*Appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh*

**Analyse**
**Draw connections among ideas**
*Differentiate, organise, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test*

**Apply**
**Use information in new situation**
*Execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch*

**Understand**
**Explain ideas or concepts**
*Classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognise, report, select, translate*

**Remember**
**Recall facts and basic concepts**
*Define, duplicate, list, memorise, repeat, state*

Source: https://www.valamis.com/hub/blooms-taxonomy

# 3 GETTING STARTED WITH ECO-SCHOOLS

Eco-Schools

**The Eco-Schools programme will benefit your school and students by:**

- Embedding sustainable development principles into the curriculum.
- Creating an enriching learning environment and improving student-centred active learning pedagogies.
- Nurturing intrinsic values such as care, empathy, creativity and compassion.
- Improving the wellbeing of students and staff.
- Addressing key environmental, sustainability and educational challenges.
- Achieving financial savings.
- Involving the local community and integrating intergenerational and indigenous knowledge.
- Gaining new international connections and recognition.
- Instilling a sense of pride in the school amongst staff and learners.
- Positively impacting your local community as schools become hubs of societal transformation.



# WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN YOUR ECO-SCHOOLS JOURNEY?

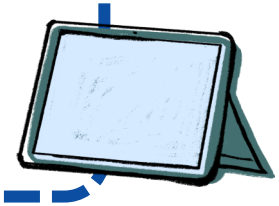


When you join the Eco-Schools programme, you become an important member of an interconnected network working towards greener education.

The Eco-Schools programme decentralises the process of greening your school, building a strong collaborative model to drive collective action.

Key participants include:

- **Students:** Lead initiatives, participate in projects and act as sustainability ambassadors.
- **Teachers:** Support students and integrate environmental education into the curriculum.
- **Family members:** Volunteer time and resources for Eco-School projects, share wisdom and enhance community engagement.



- **Community members:** Offer ideas, resources and support towards sustainability projects.
- **NGOs:** Provide expertise and resources related to priority themes.
- **Local Businesses:** Sponsor projects and resources or volunteer support.
- **Local Representatives:** Offer expertise, funding and resources for initiatives.
- **Youth Clubs:** Assist with project implementation and raise ongoing environmental awareness.
- **Experts:** Share knowledge, facilitate workshops and guide projects.
- **Cultural Leaders:** Promote sustainability and engage diverse perspectives.
- **Other Eco-Schools:** Partner with national or international Eco-Schools to evaluate performance standards, share ideas and best practices.



REMEMBER! → You are not alone on this journey. The Eco-Schools programme operates in over 100 countries across the world and actively encourages participants to share, collaborate and work together towards greening education initiatives.

# LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR 14 ECO-SCHOOL THEMES

## Eco-Schools' thematic approach:

Themes provide a framework to understand sustainability holistically whilst breaking it down into manageable concepts. You can begin by exploring, reviewing and prioritising themes during your sustainability audit.

## How to work with the themes:

The Eco-School themes are flexible and interconnected, reflecting the complexity of sustainability. Most projects will span across several domains and themes. As you plan your project, explore the themes that resonate with your school and community the most. Use the key ideas and explorative questions as a guide to shape your approach and drive impactful, lasting change.


Transport


Heritage & Culture


Climate Change


Rights & Responsibilities as Global Citizens


School Building & Grounds


Water


Biodiversity & Nature


Equality & Equity


Energy


Rivers & Coasts


Litter & Waste


School Safety


Food


Health & Wellbeing

The four essential cross-cutting themes are: Climate Change; Global Citizenship & Environmental Justice; Health & Wellbeing and Equality & Equity.



# 4 ECO-SCHOOLS SEVEN- STEPS FRAMEWORK

Eco-Schools follow a clear Seven-Step framework which can be easily implemented in every school. A student-led, project-based learning approach ensures that the whole school and wider community are actively engaged over time. Learners enhance their knowledge and skills whilst driving positive change in their schools and in the wider community.

## What are the essentials of the Seven-Step methodology?

The steps are not rigid or linear. Once established, they interlink and interact together as a constant process of learning, evolution and change. Importantly, this change is driven by the insights and reflections of students.





# ECO-COMMITTEE




The first step of the Eco-Schools programme is to establish an engaged, proactive Eco-Committee. This student-led group provides a space for democratic participation and open communication whilst developing critical leadership and teamwork skills. The committee meetings provide a space place where students, staff, and community members can openly discuss their ideas and plans, and drive ongoing engagement and meaningful action. The Eco-Committee promotes responsibility, creativity and active citizenship by coordinating and implementing the steps from start to finish.

## How to establish your Eco-Committee

Identify a responsible and enthusiastic coordinator (e.g. a teacher) to initiate the process.

Decide how your members will be recruited (e.g. by an election, self-nomination etc).

Inform students, staff and the community via newsletters, assemblies and posters.

Choose a suitable date and time and reserve an accessible meeting space.

Agree a fair and democratic process to establish committee roles (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer etc.)

Facilitate open discussions and welcome diverse perspectives to guide the committee's actions.

Invite interested family members or knowledgeable local individuals to join you.

Maintain teacher involvement to provide mentoring support and guidance as needed.

Encourage students to take ownership of the committee from the very first meeting.

Arrange regular meetings to discuss environmental and social actions for the school.

Ensure there is an emphasis on record-keeping as an essential organisational structure.

# Who should be included in your Eco-Committee?

The Eco-Committee should be an inclusive and welcoming space for everyone, aligning with the Eco-Schools theme Equality & Equity. Participation should reflect diversity in gender, age and ability, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to be involved, contribute and to have their voice heard. Particular attention must be given to accessibility for potential members with disabilities. Information about the committee should be available in a form which is visually and audibly accessible to all and meetings should be held in an accessible location. By actively creating an environment where every voice is heard and valued, the Eco-Committee promotes fairness, inclusion and shared ownership of environmental action. The Eco-Committee provides a supportive space for students to share their ideas, work and ambition to inspire the whole school community to be involved with environmental action.

## The Eco-Committee should comprise of...

- COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES
- MANAGEMENT
- TEACHERS
- PARENTS
- NON-TEACHING STAFF
- STUDENTS



The Eco-Committee should actively demonstrate democratic values by electing and rotating its members into different roles, such as chair, secretary, or spokesperson, in a fair and transparent way.

*»Achieving sustainable development requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values needed at the global, regional, national and local level.«*

UNESCO

# Eco-Schools in Action

## Election, structure and functioning of the Eco-Committee - Switzerland




At one Swiss Eco-School, students who are eager to join the Eco-Committee must apply based on specific criteria, expressing their intent and motivation. Applications can embody various creative forms, including letters, drawings, short messages or videos. An election is held to ensure a fair selection process, allowing students to vote for their committee representatives. This process also serves as a way to inform and engage the wider school community, with letters sent to guardians to raise awareness of this process.
Once the committee is formed, members define their roles and responsibilities, ensuring a clear structure has been agreed upon and outlined. Meetings are held regularly, with minutes documented for transparency and future reference. To streamline efforts, sub-groups are established, enabling members to share tasks effectively and fairly. Collaboration and teamwork is encouraged, as students contribute to the ongoing success of their Eco-Schools projects.

## The power of a community

The Eco-Committee plays a central role in embodying the whole-school approach to sustainability. By involving students, staff and the wider school community, it symbolises shared responsibility and collective action towards sustainability. This inclusive and collaborative structure creates a strong sense of unity and purpose across the whole school.
At a time when many young people are experiencing climate anxiety, the Eco-Committee offers a hopeful alternative to feelings of helplessness. Rather than being overwhelmed by global environmental challenges, students become actively engaged in creating positive change within their immediate environment. The committee empowers pupils with a sense of agency and renewed motivation by leading initiatives that improve the school grounds, reduce waste and promote biodiversity.
This visible and ongoing action not only improves the school's sustainability efforts but also increases emotional resilience. The Eco-Committee becomes a driving force of optimism, showing that meaningful change is possible when a community comes together with shared purpose.


Lettre de motivation
Eco-schools

Madame, Monsieur,

J'aimerais beaucoup participer au comité Eco-school du collège car je m'intéresse à l'écologie et à la planète. La Terre va de moins en moins bien et chacun doit agir à son échelle. J'aimerais avoir réellement l'impression d'agir contre la pollution et le réchauffement climatique. Nous avons la chance de vivre dans un pays peu pollué mais beaucoup d'autres personnes n'ont pas notre chance. Si je pouvais faire quelque chose pour la nature et aider les animaux qui peuplent la Terre, je serais heureuse.

J'espère avoir de vos nouvelles rapidement.


La planète

My name is Agnès. I am 9 years old. I want the planet to be clean and what makes me angry is that the planet is too polluted and people don't see that the planet is in danger. They throw away things in the water. The fish and the animals in the sea die. People who are poor and that have no protection from pollution they die. So I want to help the planet. Even if I don't do much I want the whole planet to be clean and for everyone to recognize what they are doing, for everyone and all the animals to be safe and for the planet to be cleaned up when we pollute it.

- We put plastic things in the sea and animals choke and die.
- Fuel flies in the air and people have to put paper on their noses.
- We put plastic in the forests and the plastic gets infilt into the soil....

## Eco-Schools in Action

# Eco-Schools Teacher, Damer's First School - England



**Eco-Committee setup checklist - Get inspired and take action!**

- ☐ Ensure every class has a student representative to include all voices from across the school.
- ☐ Provide clear guidelines for applying as a class representative (written application, proposal or video).
- ☐ Hold a fair and democratic vote to elect representatives.
- ☐ Connect the election process to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ☐ Place a visible ideas box in the school for all students to submit suggestions.
- ☐ Regularly review ideas from the box and provide feedback to keep everyone informed and engaged.
- ☐ Define roles within the committee (e.g., chair, note taker, recycling coordinator).
- ☐ Schedule weekly after-school meetings (around one hour each).
- ☐ Base discussions on the Sustainability Audit and the Eco-Schools Action Plan.
- ☐ Keep the committee focused on improving the school environment with sustainability centred learning.

## Utopian Ideas Wall:
## Sparking Inspiration for the Eco-Committee

Before launching the Eco-Committee, the school can take the first step to create a shared "Utopian Ideas Wall" where learners are invited to express their dreams and visions for a greener, more sustainable school environment. Students write or draw their ideas on post-it notes and add them to the wall over the course of one week.

After collecting these inspiring contributions, the school announces the formation of a new student-led initiative known as the Eco-Committee, whose mission will be to turn these utopian ideas into reality. This approach helps to build excitement and a sense of ownership towards environmental action, motivating students to get involved and work together to transform their school and community.

### Tips for success!

- *Try not to be daunted by complicated issues – begin with observation and open communication.*
- *Agree processes for collaborative decision making.*
- *Link initiatives together for a bigger, unified impact.*
- *Institutionalise and rotate the committee roles, so it is integrated rather than being seen as an 'add on'.*
- *Start with a fun icebreaker and maintain a respectful and engaging feedback culture!*

# What skills will students develop in the Eco-Committee?

## Play: What kind of Eco-Leader are you?

**Share this with the Eco-Committee and invite learners to reflect on the key skills they've developed.**
**They can tick all the Eco-Leader roles that describe them. It's likely that most students will identify with more than one!**

**The Leader – Leadership & Democracy**
Develop leadership skills and gain hands-on experience with fair representation and group decision-making.
You help guide the team, make space for every voice and keep things moving forward with confidence.

**The Change-Maker – Agency & Action**
Build a strong sense of agency as a changemaker, actively shaping your school and local environment.
You're not just talking about solutions, you're making them happen.

**The Decision-Maker – Responsibility & Collaboration**
Take responsibility through thoughtful, collaborative problem-solving and accountable decision-making.
You think things through and help the team choose wisely.

**The Diplomat – Debate & Negotiation**
Practise respectful debate and negotiation, learning to balance diverse viewpoints and build consensus.
You help people see eye to eye and find the best path forward together.

**The Peacekeeper – Emotional Intelligence**
Strengthen emotional intelligence by managing conflict, regulating emotions and staying focused on shared goals.
You create a safe space where everyone feels heard and respected.

**The Reliable One – Commitment & Philanthropy**
Show commitment through punctuality, regular participation and an altruistic spirit for the common good.
You bring energy and consistency and your team knows they can rely on you.

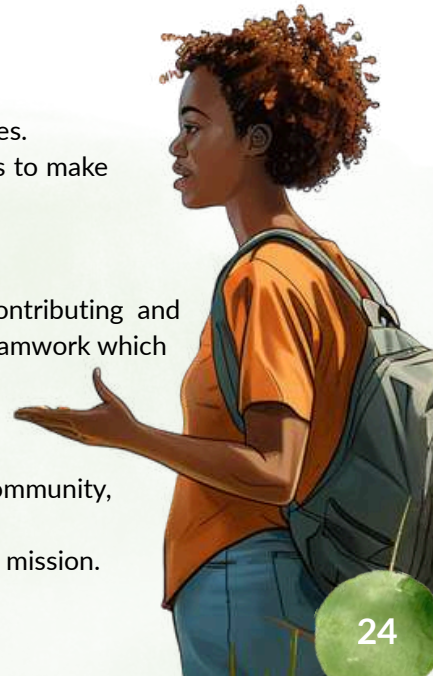
**The Citizen – Participation & Civic Engagement**
Recognise the power of active participation and civic responsibility in driving social and environmental change.
You lead by example not just for your school, but for a better world.

**The Communicator – Speaking & Engagement**
Communicate clearly and confidently, sharing ideas and collaborating with peers, staff and community partners.
You ensure that the message is heard and inspires action.

**The Critical Thinker – Problem-Solving & Analysis**
Apply critical thinking and problem-solving to real-world issues.
You dig deep, ask smart questions and look for creative ways to make a difference.

**The Team Player – Teamwork & Collaboration**
Work effectively in teams by actively listening, consistently contributing and supporting your peers. You know that real change requires teamwork which is something you enjoy.

**The Connector – Relationships & Belonging**
Build meaningful relationships within the school and wider community, promoting inclusion and belonging.
You make sure no one's left out and everyone belongs on the mission.



# Green Flag Performance Indicators

**To ensure the effectiveness of the Eco-Committee, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- Students are the driving force of the Eco-Committee (making up over 50%).
- Eco-Committee members remain on the committee for long enough to ensure continuity and a seamless handover into the next cycle.
- The Eco-Committee meets regularly (agree on how and when these meetings will take place).
- The Eco-Committee minutes are recorded and shared.
- The Green Flag application includes documented key decisions and actions.
- The Eco-Committee meetings are run by students.
- The entire student body is aware of the Eco-Committee members and roles.
- The Eco-Committee is elected or nominated by students and a culture of inclusivity is promoted.



## Participation in the Eco-Committee encourages 'joined-up' thinking!

The Eco-Committee takes a holistic approach where learners connect ideas to actions whilst uniting people across the school. Students use teamwork, critical thinking and inclusive dialogue to understand how different areas of sustainability and school life are interlinked. They practise respectful debate, build consensus and collaborate with others to co-create realistic and long-lasting solutions. This shared process strengthens their sense of agency, deepens their emotional intelligence and equips them with leadership and communication skills. As they navigate complex decisions together, Eco-Committee members learn how to align individual actions with collective goals which is an essential step in achieving meaningful, school-wide change.

### Don’t forget to take minutes!

High quality meeting minutes should include:

- A clear outline of the agenda.
- A list of attendees.
- A record of all discussions during the meeting.
- Action points for the next meeting, with assigned responsibilities.

# CARRY OUT A SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT



The Sustainability Audit enables students to assess sustainability themes within their school and community. It identifies both best practices and areas for improvement, guiding the Eco-Committee in setting key priorities for future development and improvements.
The Sustainability Audit is not a rigid checklist to be followed step by step. Every school is different and the audit should reflect its unique place-based context and challenges. At its core, the audit encourages learners to become active observers; to look closely at their surroundings, notice patterns, identify problems and ask critical questions. It's a process of becoming more aware, not just of the physical environment but of habits, behaviours and systems and how they interact with one another. By presenting their findings and working together on solutions, students learn to think critically, communicate effectively and collaborate with purpose. This process nurtures a sense of ownership and responsibility, helping learners shift from passive bystanders to engaged citizens who continuously shape their communities for the better.

## How to conduct the Sustainability Audit

**Start simple**: Focus on one theme at a time and launch each theme with an engaging introduction.

**Integrate learning**: Incorporate parts of the audit into regular lessons.

**Let students lead**: Encourage students to run the audit with staff, families and the wider community.

**Cover all themes:** Ensure the audit includes all key Eco-Schools topics.

**Track progress:** Review themes each year to improve continuously.

**REMEMBER** to document effective practices and ways to maintain them.

**Take action:** Use the results to set priority goals.

**Share results:** Discuss findings with the Eco-Committee and the whole school.

**Include experts**: Invite local specialists to connect learning to real-world issues.

# Eco-Schools in Action

## Sustainability Audit through peer-to-peer engagement - Slovakia



At *František Hrušovský Primary School* in Kláštor pod Znievom, students conducted a Sustainability Audit on Greenery and Nature Protection through peer-to-peer learning. Students in year ten created worksheets and games to teach year three about trees on the school grounds, using PlantNet, tree ID circles and learning activities like puzzles, Bingo and crosswords.

This interactive approach helped the younger students to explore deciduous and coniferous trees whilst their peers improved their presentation skills. Together, they mapped the school's environmental baseline, recording findings in audit sheets. The audit coincided with International Tree Day on October 20th and it informed the school's Environmental Action Plan.

Guided by regional, historical and environmental education, *František Hrušovský Primary* implements critical thinking, creativity and teamwork. Through research-based problem-solving and hands-on projects, students develop adaptability, collaboration and public speaking skills, with peer-to-peer learning embedded across all grades. By combining research, observation and interactive learning, students conducted a thorough assessment of their surroundings. The audit process encouraged teamwork, critical thinking and problem-solving whilst strengthening their connection to nature.

### Working across Eco-School Themes

By sharing information about the trees around their school, students activated the School Building & Grounds theme. Through peer-to-peer teaching across age groups, they also embedded the principles of Equality & Equity into the learning process.



## By taking part in the Sustainability Audit, learners will:

- Build a foundational understanding of environmental themes, guided by teachers introducing key concepts.
- Investigate their school's environmental and social impact, recognising achievements and setting priorities for action.
- Develop key skills in research, analysis and critical thinking whilst collecting and interpreting real data.
- Apply numeracy, language and science skills across subjects to support evidence-based decisions.
- Strengthen abilities in problem-solving, teamwork and decision-making, using criteria to set realistic targets.
- Explore broader sustainability issues by including community voices and diverse perspectives.
- Gain insight into environmental careers through expert input, learning to think and act like practitioners.
- Deepen their sense of agency by understanding barriers to change and the relevance of their actions.



# Green Flag Performance Indicators

**To ensure the effectiveness of the Sustainability Audit, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- ☑ Baselines and endlines are established.
- ☑ The audit is reviewed at least once a year.
- ☑ Learners are leading the Sustainability Audit.
- ☑ Distribution of tasks are shared across age groups, stakeholders and curriculum areas.
- ☑ Measurement indicators and methods are determined.
- ☑ The Sustainability Audit includes attention to attitudes, behaviour and knowledge.

## Tips for success!

- Introduce students to the the different aspects of the theme to establish the inquiry.
- Link sustainability efforts to learning for lasting impact.
- Highlight good practices and successes to inspire and guide future actions.
- Share findings and involve everyone to drive action.

## Template for Sustainability Audit

An Eco-Schools Theme Guide, which includes a sustainability audit table, is available both on the corresponding FEE Academy course and on the 'My Eco-Schools Journey' platform.



# ACTIVATE THE CURRICULUM

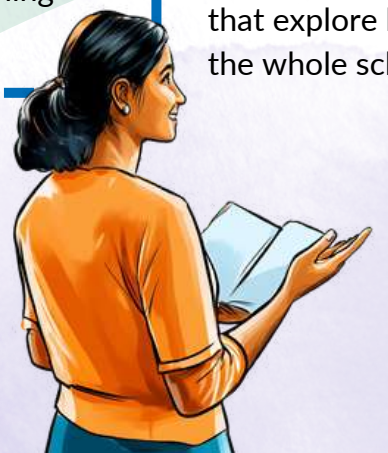
Once priority areas for action are identified, a curriculum audit allows teachers to adapt and enrich existing schemes of work by embedding relevant Eco-Schools themes. Teachers identify key concepts across subjects, explore the connectedness of these subjects and integrate themes by encouraging project-based learning.

This approach enhances engagement, critical thinking and problem-solving, making lessons more meaningful and relevant. Rather than adding to the workload, it strengthens existing educational resources by reinforcing key ideas and concepts.

Simultaneously, students are given the opportunity to set personal sustainability targets, just as they would in any academic subject or behavioural goal, increasing responsibility, reflection and lasting change.

## Don't worry if you are not an expert on the theme to begin with. Here are some ways to introduce curriculum learning on priority themes:

- Introduce the theme during a storytelling session with community members, particularly encouraging intergenerational sharing.
- Use local and global case studies to present real-world challenges.
- Organise debates or discussions where students research and brainstorm ideas.
- Facilitate reflective exercises to help learners explore their personal values and perspectives.
- Involve students in community-based projects or campaigns.
- Arrange school trips for immersive, real-world learning experiences.
- Screen films or documentaries that explore key themes and the whole school.
- Invite guest speakers to share their local knowledge, experiences and skills.
- Sharing your experiences and resources with colleagues makes us stronger. Together, we create real impact.





# How to structure a lesson plan

Before creating a lesson plan, an important question to ask is: What would I like my students to know or be able to do after this lesson?
Use this guiding question to formulate clear learning objectives using the structure: "Students will be able to..."
Develop 3 to 5 learning objectives - it is unlikely more than five objectives will be achieved within one lesson.
Number each learning objective, as you will refer back to them in your lesson plan table. This will help you to clearly identify which parts of your lesson directly supports each learning goal and ensure alignment between your activities and intended outcomes.

| Phase | Learning Objective(s) → add the number | Planned Lesson Sequence / Key Phrases | Teaching Materials / Resources | Social / Learning Format (e.g., group work, individual work) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Introduction / Presenting the Problem** | | | | |
| **Formulating a Hypothesis** | | | | |
| **Exploration / Development Phase 1** | | | | |
| **Exploration / Development Phase 2** | | | | |
| **Summary of Findings / Outcomes** | | | | |
| **Reflection on the Hypothesis / Revisiting Hypothesis** | | | | |
| **Consolidation / Reinforcement** | | | | |
| **Zoom out to see the bigger picture** | | | | |

# ‘Activating’ the curriculum rather than ‘adding’ to it

## Benefits of Activating the Curriculum for Students

By diversifying teaching methods and integrating project-based learning, the Eco-Schools approach is based upon competence-centred education. This not only enhances individual learning outcomes but also supports a wider range of learners, making it especially effective in classrooms with diverse needs.

Not all students learn the same way. Project-based learning provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate their strengths in different forms, increasing motivation and personal engagement. As a result, teachers often report greater student interest, higher participation rates and a noticeable improvement in attendance and confidence.

Motivated students are more likely to acquire a broad set of relevant skills, whilst also reducing pressure on teachers. When students are engaged and curious, the overall classroom dynamic improves, creating a more positive and effective learning environment for everyone.

## Curriculum Mapping

Is a strategy which can be made use of to address carefully defined needs. The mapping exercise can be used to embed ESD effectively into the curriculum without overwhelming students.

- Weave sustainability themes into all subjects rather than treating them as isolated units (e.g., using data analysis in mathematics to address waste reduction and analyse energy metrics for the school).
- Encourage teachers to collaborate in designing lessons that incorporate ESD, sharing resources to create a cohesive learning experience.
- Ensure ESD objectives are aligned with current curriculum standards, supporting educational outcomes without complicating them.



### Eco-Schools & Teacher wellbeing:

Many Eco-Schools teachers report that integrating sustainability themes positively impacts their wellbeing by providing a real-life connection and clear purpose to their teaching. They notice increased student attendance and engagement, which often makes teaching easier rather than adding to their workload. Given that teaching is a demanding profession, it is crucial to prioritise teachers’ wellbeing. Actively exploring real behavioural change through project-based learning not only supports students but also makes teaching more enjoyable and fulfilling.

*The Greening Education Partnership has set a target for 90% of countries to green their national curriculum by 2030, emphasising the urgent need for action in educational settings.*

Theme sheets on FEE Academy are here to guide you!

# Three Pillars of Greening the Curriculum

**Did you know that most lessons are planned with only cognitive learning objectives? Use this three-pillar guide to elevate your ESD teaching and enhance learning outcomes!**

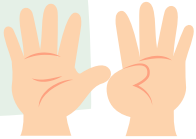


## Cognitive Knowledge

Focuses on acquiring **knowledge** in the field of ESD, critical thinking and systems thinking.

**Learning** about specific topics like climate change, biodiversity, circular economy...

e.g. Students are able to define the term '*Biodiversity Hotspots*'.



## Behavioural Knowledge

Encourages **active participation**, problem-solving and real-world application.

**Implementing** school recycling programmes, energy-saving initiatives or local community projects.

e.g. Students are able to create a biodiversity-friendly area on their school grounds.



## Socio-emotional Knowledge

Develops **empathy**, **resilience**, and **ethical responsibility** towards nature and global citizenship.

**Reflecting** on environmental justice, participating in debates on ethical consumption, encouraging curiosity towards nature...

e.g. Students are able to show empathy and curiosity toward biodiversity and its structures.

*Challenge:* **When creating lesson plans in the future, always include at least one learning outcome focused on behavioural or socio-emotional knowledge. This approach enhances student engagement and increases a more holistic understanding of sustainability. You can use the symbols above (brain, hands and heart) as a reminder to keep this objective on track!**

# Eco-Schools in Action

## A different approach to learning about polymers - Montenegro

At *Vuk Karadžić Podgorica Eco-School* in Montenegro, the chemistry department transforms theory into action. Whilst learning about polymers within class, students collected used PET bottles and processed them using a device called PETko, which converts the plastic into filaments for 3D printing. This hands-on approach helps students to better understand the structure of polymers whilst also protecting the environment by repurposing PET waste. The filaments are used to create 3D-printed items such as charms, fridge magnets and souvenirs. These are then sold and the money generated goes directly back into the Eco-School budget to support future sustainability projects.

Through this initiative, the school promotes environmental awareness, circular economy practices and student engagement, all whilst building a greener future together!





### Working with an Eco-School Theme

**By recycling PET bottles into new products, the students actively engaged with the theme of Litter & Waste.**

## Template for lesson planning with ESD

Whilst planning a lesson which integrates ESD, remember to focus on the behavioural, or socio-emotional aspects of learning whilst exploring sustainability and environmental topics.



## Green Flag Performance Indicators

**To ensure the effectiveness of activating the curriculum, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- A curriculum audit has been carried out to support the integration of priority Eco-Schools themes across subjects and grade levels.
- More than 50% of teaching staff have received training in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) or Climate Change Education (CCE).
- Project-based learning and other active pedagogies are regularly used by teachers to explore priority themes in a hands-on, student-centred way.
- Data from the Sustainability Audit is actively used in class activities to drive inquiry, analysis and further action planning.
- Community members have contributed local, traditional, or indigenous knowledge and green skills to enrich curriculum learning on Eco-School themes.
- Sustainability practices (e.g. zero-waste, local transport) are embedded in the planning of all school events, trips and meetings.
- The school has increased the amount of time students spend learning outdoors across multiple subjects.



### Tips for success

- Keep curriculum mapping tools simple and learner-friendly.
- Focus on learning outcomes, rather than content only.
- Activate socio-emotional and behavioural knowledge as well as cognitive knowledge.

# CREATE AN ACTION PLAN



After identifying key challenges in the Sustainability Audit, it's time to create an Action Plan which is one of the most crucial steps in the Eco-Schools journey. This plan translates learning into concrete action by outlining specific tasks, responsibilities and timelines, whilst actively engaging students, teachers and community members during the process.

Beyond organising activities, the Action Plan helps embed sustainability into daily practice, transforming knowledge into behaviour. It inspires learners to develop essential life skills such as planning, collaboration and accountability. Most importantly, by taking real steps toward positive change, students shift from a place of potential anxiety to one of agency and optimism, reinforcing that their actions truly matter.

## How to establish your Eco-Schools Action Plan

**Present Your Audit Findings:**
Start by sharing what the audit revealed. Include both strengths and areas for improvement.

**Choose up to 3 Priority Themes:**
Select a few focused areas based on urgency, student interest and practicality. Less is more!

**Set Clear, Realistic Goals**
For each theme, define what success looks like. Use audit data to help track progress over time.

**Break It Down into Actions:**
Turn each goal into small steps. Who does what? When? How?

**Assign Roles & Build Teams**
Make sure everyone has a role and is included. Build ownership and energy!

**Identify Resources & Budget**
Discover what's needed - materials, funding or expertise.

**Involve Experts & Mentors:**
Invite local professionals, craftspeople, or parents to support implementation.

**Involve the whole school:**
Many goals can only be achieved with collective effort.

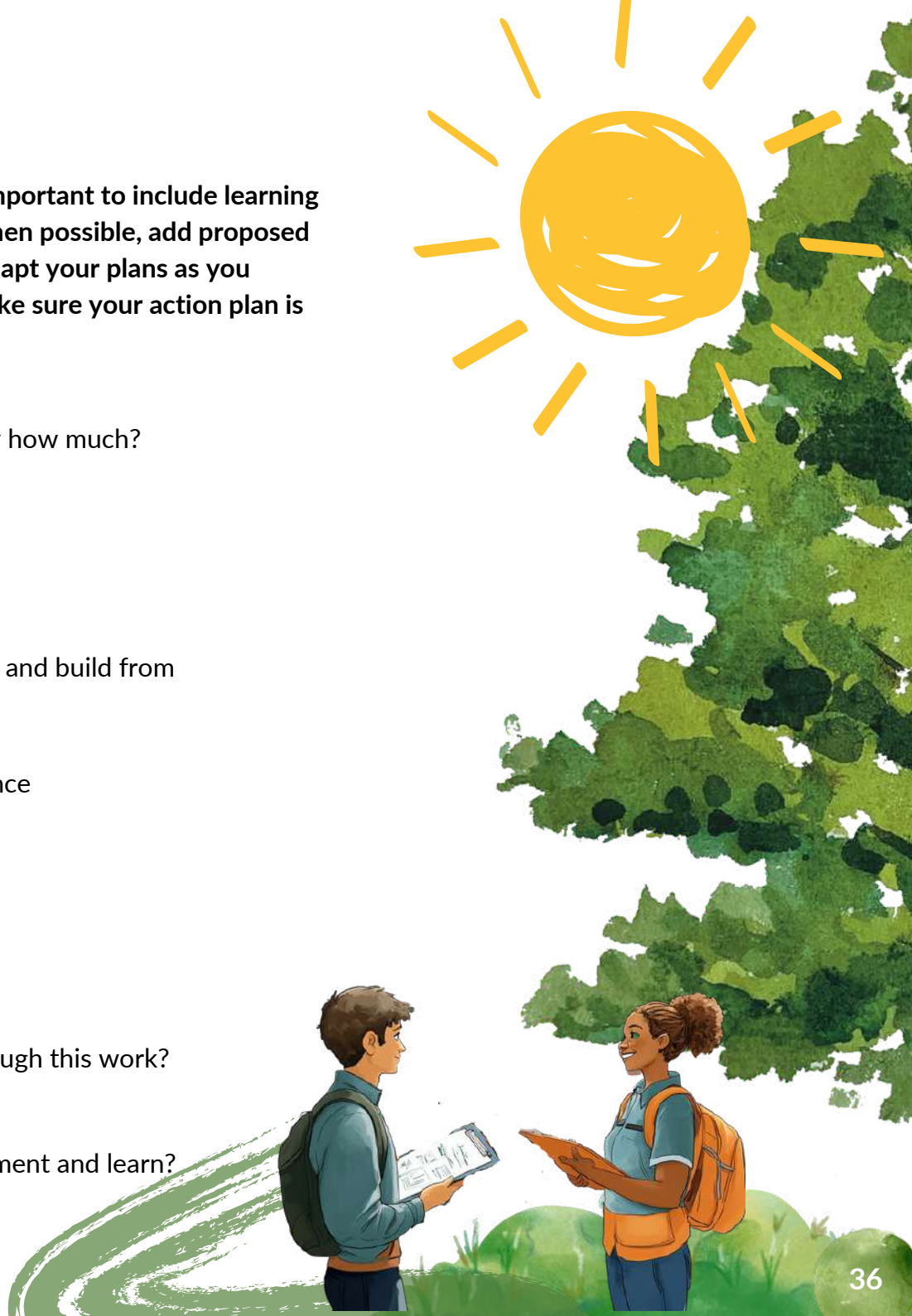
**Share & Celebrate Your Plan**
Display the final plan in a visible way, charts, bulletin boards, or digital updates and celebrate the teamwork that brought it together!

***»Greening every school means empowering all learners to become agents of change for sustainable development and climate action.«***
UNESCO

# SMARTER Goals within the Action Plan

**Effective goals are achievable, specific and measurable. It is also important to include learning objectives, reinforcing the educational process of Eco-Schools. When possible, add proposed dates for when the action will be completed and be prepared to adapt your plans as you experiment, learn and discover new knowledge along the way. Make sure your action plan is SMARTER....**

| | |
|---|---|
| **S**pecific | What do we specifically wish to achieve? By how much? |
| **M**easurable | Can we measure improvement in this goal?<br>What evidence of change can we observe? |
| **A**chievable | Something realistic - start with small actions and build from there! |
| **R**elevant | What is the current situation? What difference do we hope to make? |
| **T**ime-bound | How long do we expect this action to take?<br>When will we next review it? |
| **E**ducational | What learning outcomes can we realise through this work? |
| **R**esponsive | How are we adapting our plan as we experiment and learn? |



# Action Plan - Template



Template available on FEE Academy!

**Issues identified during the Sustainability Audit:** _____

**Theme of the Action Plan:** _____

| What are our Goals? | Which actions will we take? | Who is responsible? | Which resources are needed? | What is our timeline? | How do we measure our success? | Actual Results: |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

## Eco-Schools in Action

# Turning Indigenous Knowledge into Action through Strategic Planning - Bangladesh



Faced with a serious water shortage due to their remote, hilly location, students at *Long Baint Tong Para School* in Bangladesh recognised that access to clean drinking water was directly affecting their health and learning. As part of their Eco-Schools journey, they began by identifying water scarcity as a priority issue through their Sustainability Audit. With the support of teachers and the local community, the Eco-Committee developed a detailed action plan rooted in indigenous knowledge. Together, they researched local practices and selected native tree species such as Yodoma Sing (Bischofia javanica) and Chalta (Dillenia indica) known for their water-retaining properties. These fast-growing trees were planted across three acres of land as a nature-based solution to help restore the water table and retain moisture in nearby water bodies.

This carefully planned reforestation initiative not only addressed the water crisis but also helped students to develop key skills in environmental problem-solving, community engagement, planning and implementation. Their success demonstrates how student-led action planning, when guided by local knowledge and ecological understanding can lead to lasting, sustainable change.



### Working with an Eco-School Theme

By planting native trees using indigenous knowledge to create safe, drinkable water, the students actively engaged with the Eco-Schools themes of Heritage & Culture, School Grounds and Water.

# Example Action Plan Goals

**Recycling Programme:** Placing clearly labelled bins in all classrooms and common areas, conducting an awareness campaign and monitoring the waste reduction monthly and aiming to reduce non-recyclable waste by 50% within the next academic year.

**Energy Conservation:** Reduce the school's energy consumption by 20% by installing energy-efficient lighting, setting up automatic timers for heating and cooling systems and conducting monthly energy usage audits, achieving this within the next 12 months.

**Water Conservation:** Reduce water usage in the school by 15% by installing low-flow faucets and toilets, conducting regular maintenance to prevent leaks and running an educational campaign about water conservation, reaching this goal within 9 months.





## Tips for Success!

- Set Achievable Goals: Begin with clear, realistic targets to build enthusiasm and momentum.
- Involve everyone! A whole-school approach includes students, teaching and non-teaching staff, stakeholders, community members, parents ...
- Empower Learners: Engage students fully; planning itself is a valuable learning process.
- Review Regularly: Check progress, adjust as needed and strengthen commitment.
- Communicate your Action Plan and Celebrate Milestones. A structured communication strategy is key to maintain motivation and teamwork.
- Make sure your curriculum planning and Action Plan Goals are aligned to achieve the learning outcomes.

# Green Flag Performance Indicators

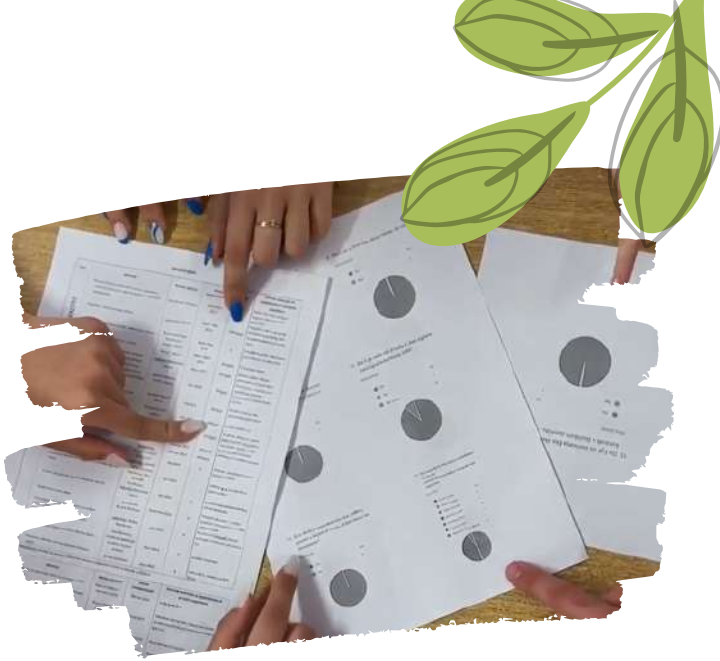
**To ensure the effectiveness of the Action Plan, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- The Action Plan is SMARTER.
- Indicates areas of action for environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability.
- Ensures distribution of tasks among students is publicly available.
- Includes a communication strategy which is continuously updated.
- Maps out areas for improvement on campus.

## In creating an Action Plan, learners will:

- **Turn knowledge into action**, building a sense of agency and reducing feelings of helplessness.
- **Develop active citizenship** by leading projects that create real impact in their school or community.
- **Strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving** by analysing priorities and identifying meaningful actions.
- **Collaborate and negotiate**, balancing diverse views and working toward shared goals.
- **Build emotional intelligence** through empathy, patience and values-based decision-making.
- **Manage resources** wisely by estimating time, costs and setting priorities.
- **Think creatively** and critically by questioning existing approaches and imagining innovative alternatives.
- **Practice transformative competencies** such as resilience, responsible decision-making and navigating complexity.
- **Clarify perspectives and values**, recognising cultural influences in shaping ideas and priorities.
- **Build leadership by taking initiative**, sharing responsibility and seeing actions through to completion.

# MEASURE IMPACT



In this step, learners assess the progress of their Action Plan by tracking outcomes against set targets. They practise key STEM skills, such as data collection, analysis and evaluation, whilst monitoring real-world impact. This encourages scientific thinking, numeracy and evidence-based reflection. Regular check-ins help to identify what's working, where adjustments are needed and how to improve results. Measuring impact also promotes resilience, critical thinking and adaptability. Celebrating achievements reinforces the value of each contribution and motivates continued commitment.

## How to Measure Impact

Refer to your Sustainability Audit to establish baseline metrics and targets.

Use the Action Plan targets to determine how progress will be measured.

Identify who will be responsible for conducting ongoing monitoring, involving students as much as possible.

Choose appropriate tools and methods for data collection (e.g., surveys, audits and metre readings).

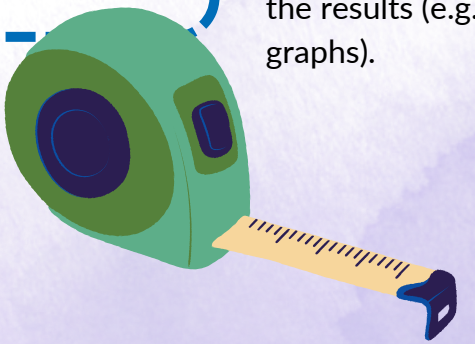
Find opportunities in class to evaluate, analyse and present the results (e.g., using tables and graphs).

Assign Roles & Build Teams. Set a timeline for when data will be collected to ensure regular updates.

Regularly update the school community on progress, celebrating successes during assemblies and events.

Continuously reflect on progress, identify areas needing corrective action and adapt the Action Plan accordingly.

Remember to inform the whole school about successes and promote it to the wider community.



# STEM Skills in Eco-Schools Project-Based Learning



## Science

- Observe, measure and monitor environmental changes.
- Conduct experiments and investigations (e.g., soil testing, biodiversity counts).
- Apply scientific reasoning to understand environmental challenges.
- Use evidence to evaluate impact and propose sustainable solutions.

## Technology

- Use digital tools to collect and visually display data (e.g., spreadsheets, apps, sensors).
- Create presentations or videos to communicate findings.
- Engage with mapping tools, online research or environmental monitoring platforms.
- Learn how green technologies function (e.g., solar panels, recycling systems).

## Engineering

- Design and build models or systems (e.g., compost bins, water filters, energy-saving devices).
- Apply design thinking to solve local sustainability problems.
- Test and refine eco-friendly solutions based on feedback.
- Develop prototypes collaboratively and optimise them for impact.

## Mathemetics

- Collect and interpret data (e.g., waste audits, energy usage).
- Create graphs and charts to communicate findings.
- Estimate costs, track budgets and plan resource allocation.
- Analyse trends and compare before/after scenarios to evaluate change

## By measuring impact, learners will:

- Develop effective analytical, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Develop a growth mindset that drives motivation and achievement.
- Learn the importance of a review system and use reflection as a key learning outcome for transformation.
- Build resilience and learn how to bounce back from both failures and successes through implementation of the Action Plan.
- Be open to critical feedback, simulating real-life situations.
- Grow in confidence and agency as they recognise and celebrate successes.
- Learn to work together with dedication and determination.
- Strengthen problem-solving by investigating and evaluating outcomes against a set of agreed criteria.

## Eco-Schools in Action

# Jars of Change: How students made every meal count - Estonia



Faced with significant food waste in their school dining hall, students at *Paldiski Ühisgümnaasium* in Estonia recognised that reducing this waste was not only an environmental concern but also a social responsibility. Through their Sustainability Audit, they identified lunch time leftovers as a key issue and decided to take action as part of their Eco-Schools journey.

With the support of teachers, kitchen staff and local partners, the Eco-Committee developed a practical and impactful Action Plan. They measured how much food was regularly wasted and calculated how much could realistically be saved and repurposed. Using this data, the students designed a system to collect, store and redistribute leftover food to a local food bank.

They calculated how many jars were needed, where they could be stored safely and how to organise regular deliveries. By understanding and measuring how much food fitted into each jar, they were able to quantify their impact precisely, tracking how many portions were saved from waste and redirected to those in need.

By overseeing and measuring the process, the students continually improved the system, reducing resource use and making the donation chain more efficient and effective with every cycle.

This hands-on project not only addressed food waste but also equipped students with real-world skills in data collection, planning, logistics and social responsibility.




### Working with an Eco-School Theme

By donating food leftovers to the local food bank, students actively engaged with the Eco-Schools themes of Litter & Waste and Food, turning awareness into meaningful action.

## Some targets to aim for:

- **Energy**: At least 20% reduction in electricity usage (in kWh)
- **Transport**: At least 10% increase in use of sustainable transport (bike, walk, bus)
- **Biodiversity & Nature**: At least 10% increase in local biodiversity (count of native species: plants, insects, birds, etc.)
- **Water**: At least 20% reduction in water usage (in litres)
- **Litter & Waste:** At least 20% reduction in general waste produced on campus (in kg)
- **Food:** At least 20% reduction in food waste (in kg)
- **School Building & Grounds:** At least 20% increase in outdoor learning time (in minutes)
- **Rivers & Coasts:** At least 20% reduction in marine litter collected in the surrounding community (in kg)
- **Climate Change:** At least 30% increase in student awareness of climate change and carbon footprint (measured through pre/post surveys)
- **Health & Wellbeing**: At least 30% increase in awareness of healthy habits and emotional wellbeing (student survey)
- **Heritage & Culture**: At least 30% increase in students' knowledge of local and global cultural practices (measured via project reflections or surveys)
- **Rights & Responsibilities as Global Citizens**: At least 30% increase in understanding of global interdependence and active citizenship (student survey)
- **Equality & Equity:** At least 30% increase in awareness of inclusive values and practices (student survey)
- **School Safety**: At least 20% reduction in reported safety risks or incidents (tracked through school safety logs)



## Green Flag Performance Indicators

**To ensure the effectiveness of the 'Measuring Impact' step, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- ☑ Students are actively involved in monitoring and evaluation.
- ☑ Results are compared to the Sustainability Audit baseline.
- ☑ Targets show clear progress or are adapted based on reflection.
- ☑ Environmental literacy is assessed through values-based reflection and behaviour.
- ☑ Findings are displayed in school and shared with the wider community.
- ☑ Monitoring covers a range of Eco-Schools themes.
- ☑ Community members are informed and may support evaluation.

### Tips for success

- Reflect on M&E results and use them to revise and improve your Action Plan.
- Plan regular reviews and adjust your communication strategy to stay goal oriented.
- Track learning progress to ensure goals are being met. Remember, a process can still achieve a learning goal even if the project's outcome was unsuccessful.

# INFORM AND INVOLVE

Informing and involving is a continuous process that is naturally integrated into every stage of the Eco-Schools programme. By actively engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, both within and beyond the school, you strengthen the learning taking place in an Eco-School and enhance the impact of your projects.
Effective student-led communication is key, promoting inclusion, active citizenship and meaningful connections across the school community. Over time, Eco-Schools practices, projects and learning will extend beyond the classroom, transforming your school into a local hub for sustainability.
This step includes taking a whole-school approach, reinforcing the idea that no one is tackling climate change alone and that it takes a collective effort to build community and shared responsibility. Additionally, the Eco-Schools Twinning Programme offers an international exchange opportunity, enhancing global learning and cross-cultural collaboration. Through twinning, schools can connect with other Eco-Schools worldwide, share best practices and deepen their understanding of sustainability from a global perspective, enriching the Eco-Schools experience even further.




## How to Inform and Involve:

Use stakeholder mapping to identify, engage and involve key individuals and groups.

Incorporate local, traditional and indigenous knowledge to deepen understanding.

Take projects and learning from the school into the community to encourage broader engagement.

Develop ongoing communication strategies to share Eco-Schools news using various channels.

Collaborate with local media, municipalities or businesses to amplify your message and build lasting partnerships.

Encourage students to assume leadership roles in presenting and promoting Eco-Schools activities to peers, parents and the wider community.

Link with Eco-Schools from different contexts to compare situations and exchange ideas.

Highlight the connection between local actions and global issues.

Organise exhibitions, events or open days to showcase student-led projects and invite community participation.



# Eco-Schools in Action
# Waste Redesigned: Informing and Involving the Whole Community - India



As part of the Eco-Schools Inform and Involve step, *ASN Senior Secondary Schoo*l hosts events that actively engage the whole school, the surrounding community and key stakeholders. Navonmesh 2025 and Waste Redesigned are two flagship initiatives which demonstrate this commitment in action.

The school's annual exhibition, Navonmesh, showcases student-led innovations for sustainability. Professors from Delhi Technological University, along with school leadership engage with students as they present creative solutions for a greener future. Waste Redesigned runs alongside this programme and transforms waste into useful and decorative items, involving over 10,000 participants including parents, alumni, local organisations and staff. Communication is sustained through newsletters, social media, and workshops, encouraging widespread awareness of the 5Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle) and instilling a culture of environmental responsibility. Together, these events strengthen community connections and establish the school as a local hub for sustainability and innovation.

## Working with an Eco-School Theme

By transforming waste materials into useful and decorative items, the ASN Senior Secondary School activated the Eco-Schools Litter & Waste Theme



***»Education for Sustainable Development is an integral part of quality education. It enables every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.«***

UNESCO

## By Informing and Involving, learners will:

- Learn to communicate values and share their passions and ambitions effectively.
- Gain training in using diverse communication tools and celebrate success.
- Develop skills in public speaking and influence collective action at school and in the wider community.
- Contribute to environmentally responsible community practices, sharing a sense of collaboration and purpose.
- Understand how to function and interact within a complex society; a key 21st century competency.
- Realise their roles as global citizens by linking with schools in different local and international contexts.
- Explore how local issues are shaped by global perspectives and diverse cultural experiences.
- Recognise the broader impact of their actions, both within school and across households in their community.

### Tips for success!

- Ensure that you don't treat this step as an afterthought. Communication and involvement should be integrated into every step of the process, not just at the very end.
- Ensure communication is a two way process and encourage inputs from knowledgeable family members and community groups to gain support, advice and feedback.



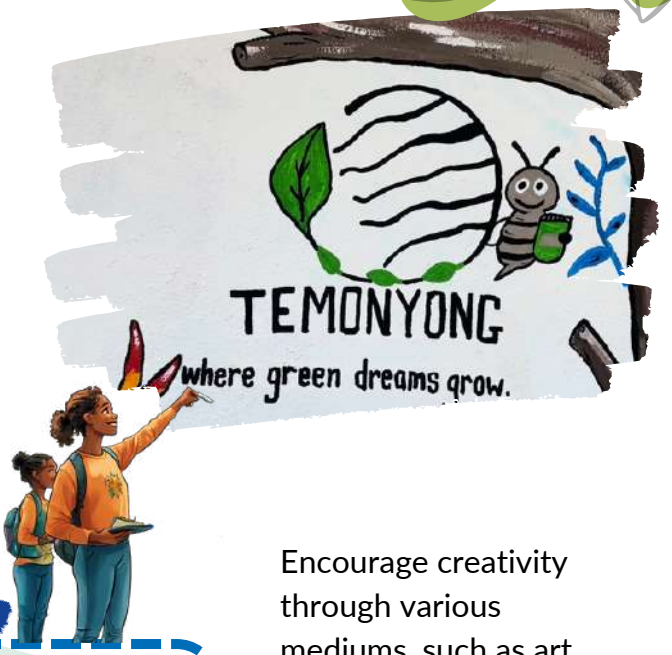
# Green Flag Performance Indicators

**To ensure the effectiveness of the Inform and Involve process, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- Student participation in Eco-Schools events and activities, such as action days and theme days.
- Increased awareness of the Eco-Schools programme within the school community.
- Links have been established with the wider community through the Eco-Schools programme.
- The school actively shares its initiatives and successes with the Eco-Schools network.
- There is engagement and visibility on social media platforms to promote the work taking place at the Eco-School.
- Actions and sustainability practices are implemented at home by students and families.

# PRODUCE AN ECO-CODE

An Eco-Code embodies the core values of an Eco-School, embedding sustainability into the school's identity, policies and everyday life. Developed through inclusive participation of students, staff and the wider community, it reflects a whole-school commitment to positive change. This co-creation process strengthens the sense of belonging, purpose and unity around a common vision for a greener future. When learners see their values and voices represented in the Eco-Code, it builds motivation, strengthens citizenship and contributes to positive wellbeing. This can reduce anxiety and increase pride by being part of a community working together towards a better world. By encouraging a culture of collaboration, the Eco-Code becomes more than a statement, it becomes a living symbol of shared responsibility and hope.




## How to produce an Eco-Code

Involve the whole-school in the development of a memorable statement, which embodies the school's commitment to sustainability. Competitions are a great way to engage everyone.

Ensure the Eco-Code reflects the chosen priority themes of the school and the new values and standards that guide student behaviour and decision-making.

Recognise that there is no fixed format. The Eco-Code can be a slogan, song, poem or formal policy. Choose whatever works best for your school!

Encourage creativity through various mediums, such as art, rap, or video, allowing students to express their identity and shared values.

Integrate the Eco-Code into the school's Strategic Plan or regulations to reinforce its importance.

Use the Earth Charter-Code of Ethics for inspiration, promoting a broader ethical commitment to sustainability.

Treat the Eco-Code as a living document that can evolve over time, reflecting the school community's ongoing journey toward sustainability.

Make the Eco-Code visible across the school grounds and integrate it into the school's identity and daily culture.

# Eco-Schools in Action

## Where Green Dreams Grow - Malaysia



At *Sekolah Kebangsaan Temonyong school* in Malaysia, the Eco-Code is more than just a slogan. It's at the heart of the school's identity and sustainability journey. What began as a simple discussion within the Eco-Committee transformed into a partnership where teachers and students came together to craft a message that would unite the entire school under a shared environmental vision. What emerged was more than a code; it became a widespread culture across the school.

The students played a key role in shaping every aspect of their Eco-Code. From brainstorming ideas to designing the school's sustainability logo using Canva and even contributing to the slogan, their voices were central in this creative process. "We chose 'Where Green Dreams Grow' because our school is more than just a place for climate action - it's where small ideas grow into lifelong values," one student proudly shared.




The Eco-Code is not just something to display, it's performed every day. Students turned it into a song which was sung in their mother tongue of Malay, to ensure every member of the school and wider community could connect with the message. A mural was painted to make the Eco-Code visible every day, reminding everyone of their shared commitment and goals.

This creative and inclusive approach helps shape positive behaviours across the school. The Eco-Code gives direction to every green project, from action planning to community engagement. It builds pride, confidence, leadership and teamwork amongst students which are skills that go beyond environmentalism and nurture active citizenship.

The school's approach shows how a well-crafted, student-powered Eco-Code can strengthen identity, unify action and embed sustainability into the very fabric of school life.

## By creating an Eco-Code, learners will:

- Understand the importance of setting shared norms and adhering to them, encouraging long-term behavioural change.
- Gain confidence in their ability to influence their environment and drive transformation within their school and community.
- Enhance creativity and collaboration through the development of a collective statement of purpose.
- Reflect on their own values and identity, using the Eco-Code as a tool to communicate their learning.
- Recognise the broader implications of their actions and commitment to sustainability beyond the school setting.
- Engage in a process of self-formulation of a code of behaviour, cementing personal transformation and responsibility for life.



## How the Eco-Code links to the Earth Charter

The Earth Charter was developed over twenty years ago and presents sixteen principles under four pillars: Respect for the Community of Life, Ecological Integrity, Social and Economic Justice and Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace. It promotes global interdependence and shared responsibility for the wellbeing of people and the planet.

Connecting your Eco-Code to the Earth Charter offers an ethical framework for sustainability that emphasises acceptance, peace and global citizenship, guiding students in their environmental actions and decisions.

To find out more visit:
earthcharter.org

Earth Charter

## Green Flag Performance Indicators

**To ensure the effectiveness of the Eco-Code, the following performance indicators should be met:**

- ☑ The Eco-Code aligns with the school's Action Plan, demonstrating a cohesive commitment to sustainability.
- ☑ The Eco-Code is prominently displayed throughout the school, serving as a constant reminder of the whole school's commitment.
- ☑ The Eco-Committee actively seeks suggestions from the entire school community when developing the Eco-Code, ensuring inclusivity and diverse perspectives.
- ☑ The Eco-Code is regularly updated to reflect the evolving goals and values of the school community.

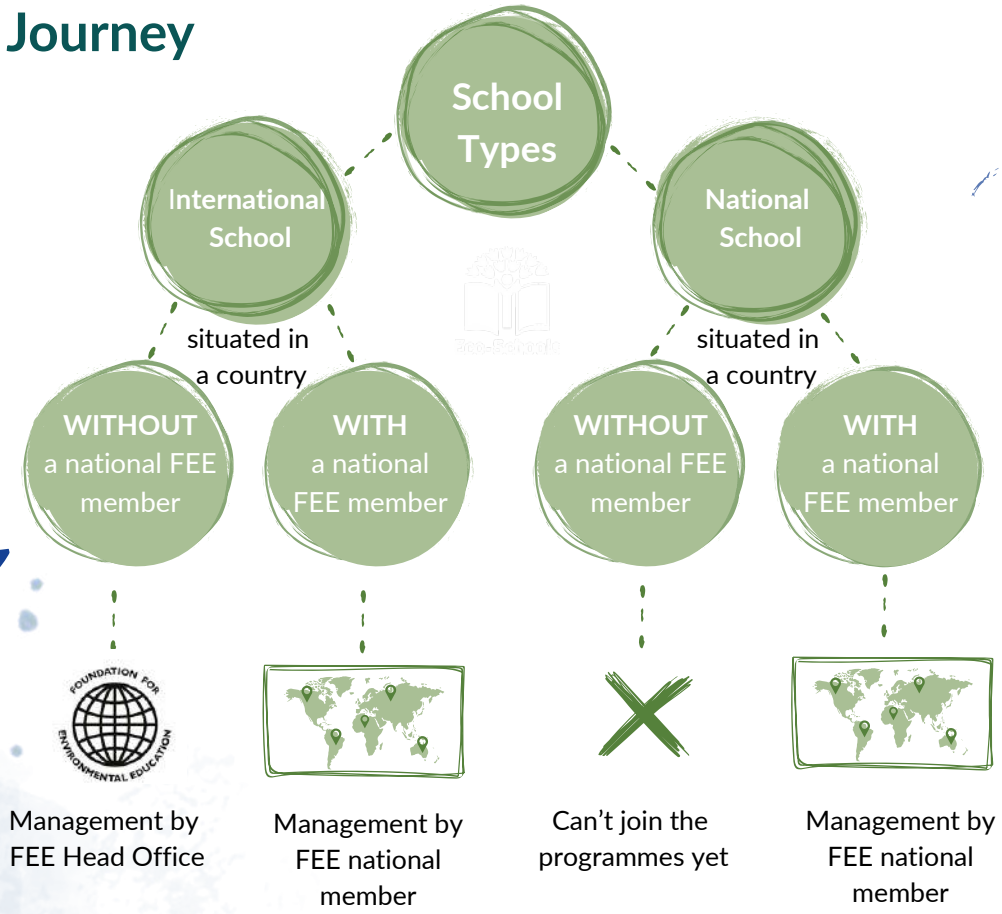
### Tips for success!

- Ensure your Eco-Code is shared effectively to solidify school-wide identity and belonging.
- Involve everyone in creating the Eco-Code to build ownership and connection.

# From First Steps to the Green Flag: The Eco-Schools Journey




Find out how to join!




Find out more and get involved at:
www.ecoschools.global/joinus

## Green Flag Assessment

The Green Flag is the culmination of a school's commitment to sustainability through the Eco-Schools programme, typically awarded after around two years of active implementation. The assessment is conducted either by the FEE Head Office or the national Eco-Schools organisation, depending on the country.

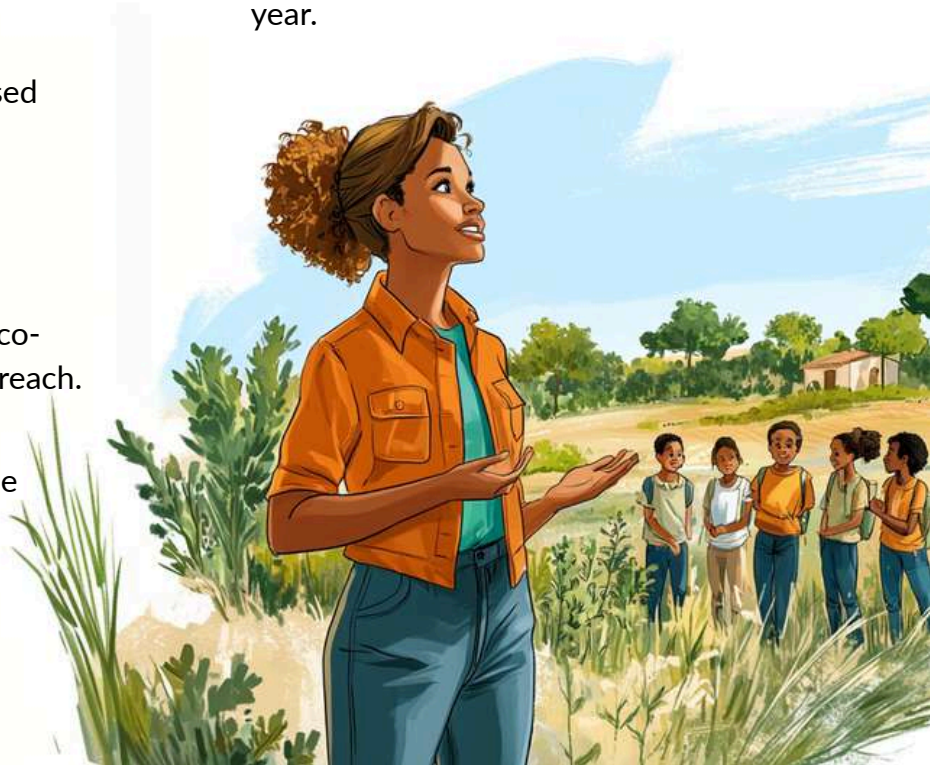
Rather than a formal inspection, the assessment should be a collaborative dialogue between the assessor and the school community. It focuses on reflection, shared learning and recognising progress. The process celebrates achievements whilst identifying opportunities for continued improvement, reinforcing the idea that sustainability is an ongoing journey, not a one-time goal. The Green Flag is both a recognition and a motivator for continuous growth, deeper integration of environmental practices and stronger pupil involvement over time.

# 5 ECO-SCHOOLS CONTINUITY & RETENTION

Implementing the Eco-Schools Seven-Step Framework typically takes around two weeks of focused effort for a school to feel prepared to apply for the Green Flag, guided by the Green Flag Performance Indicators throughout the journey. However, Eco-Schools is not a one-time process. It's a long-term commitment that continues well beyond the first Green Flag. In many schools, the programme has been running for over thirty years, continuously equipping generation after generation of learners with 21st-century skills and shaping them into responsible and active global citizens.

## Continuous Improvement:

- Add at least one new theme each year that the school focuses on.
- Review and reflect on progress across all previously implemented themes.
- Introduce peer-to-peer mentoring where experienced students guide new Eco-Committee members.
- Establish a "Green Alumni" network to connect past student leaders with current efforts.
- Invite every new staff member to embody the Eco-Schools spirit.
- Set more ambitious targets based on past successes and current capacities.
- Strengthen links with local government, NGOs, or other Eco-Schools to expand impact and reach.
- Organise an annual school-wide sustainability celebration to showcase progress.
- Integrate Eco-Schools themes more deeply into curriculum subjects each year.



# Eco-Schools in Action
## The golden thread of learning - Wales

*Ysgol San Sior* in North Wales has been part of the Eco-Schools programme for thirty years! Building upon a strong legacy of commitment to environmental projects, the headmaster, Mr. Jones encourages students to link learning through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and Eco-Schools themes such as biodiversity and nature, health and wellbeing, litter and waste and care for the school grounds.

Over three decades, the school has implemented a series of environmental projects which have been adopted from nursery to year six, encouraging a whole school approach towards sustainability. There is a 'golden thread' of continuity in the learner's experience that is evident at *Ysgol San Sior.* Inspiring projects include tending to a chicken flock where students collect, package and sell eggs locally. These carry a zero-carbon label, which teaches children about food mileage, sustainable farming practices and a circular economy. There is also an apiary onsite, where year six students have the opportunity to spin honey and sell this at a local honey fair. The students have also hosted workshops and talks on the topic of microplastics in honey. The profits from these enterprises go back into future environmental projects at the school which is part of their action plan.

In his own words, Mr. Jones stated that 'an Eco-School is where children are encouraged to take an interest and have respect for the world in which we live.' Integration with the Welsh curriculum, an emphasis on student voice through the Eco-Committee and continuous 'brwdfrydedd' which is the Welsh word for motivation or enthusiasm emphasises the school's continuous commitment to caring for the planet in their school and wider community.



# Funding Eco-Schools for Lasting Change

Sustaining the Eco-Schools programme over time requires not just passion and commitment, but also practical planning, especially when it comes to funding. Securing financial support is essential to ensure continuity, expand impact, and retain long-term engagement across the whole-school community. Whether through partnerships, grants, or student-led fundraising, creative and inclusive funding strategies can help embed sustainability into the life of the school for years to come.
A well-supported programme encourages continuity and retention, allowing each generation of learners to build upon the achievements of the last.



**Parent-Teacher Association (PTA):** Engaging the PTA to raise funds through events and initiatives that benefit the Eco-School programme.

**Donations and Fundraising by Staff/Volunteers:** Organising events led by staff and volunteers to generate financial support.

**No Financial Support Needed:** Indicating the programme can be sustained through existing resources or volunteer efforts without additional funding.

**Philanthropic Donations:** Seeking contributions from philanthropic organisations or individuals dedicated to environmental education.

**Fundraising Organised by Learners:** Encouraging students to lead fundraising efforts, inspiring ownership and engagement.

**School Budget:** Allocating existing funds to support Eco-School initiatives.

**Corporate Sponsorship:** Partnering with businesses or corporations that provide financial support or resources in exchange for visibility.

**NGO Projects:** Collaborating with NGOs that offer funding or resources for school sustainability initiatives.

**Student-Led Income Generation:** Creating opportunities for students to earn money through eco-friendly projects benefitting Eco-School initiatives.

**Government/Municipality Support:** Securing grants or funding from local or national government agencies for sustainability projects.

# Strengthening Continuity & Retention Through Eco-Schools Activities

Ongoing engagement through regular Eco-Schools activities plays a vital role in sustaining momentum, deepening learning and ensuring long-term participation in the programme. These activities create a dynamic learning environment that supports continuity, increases cross-cohort knowledge transfer and long-term programme retention. They help embed Eco-Schools principles into the heart of the school's identity, ensuring it's not a one-off project, but a living, evolving and enjoyable journey.

**Sharing Sessions:**
Regularly scheduled events where students present their Eco-Schools projects and reflect on outcomes. These sessions facilitate peer learning, build presentation skills and showcase impact across year levels.




**Education Awards:**
Celebrating achievements at school-wide or community events motivates learners and staff alike. Recognition reinforces the value of continued participation and builds pride in the programme.




**Global Action Days:** Participation in international campaigns like FEE's Global Action Days connects schools to a global movement. Themed around ecosystem restoration, climate action and sustainability, these days inspire collective action and reinforce the school's role in the larger environmental context.




**Twinning and School Partnerships:**
Linking with Eco-Schools in other regions or countries helps learners compare environmental challenges and solutions, exchange cultural perspectives and form lasting friendships around shared values.

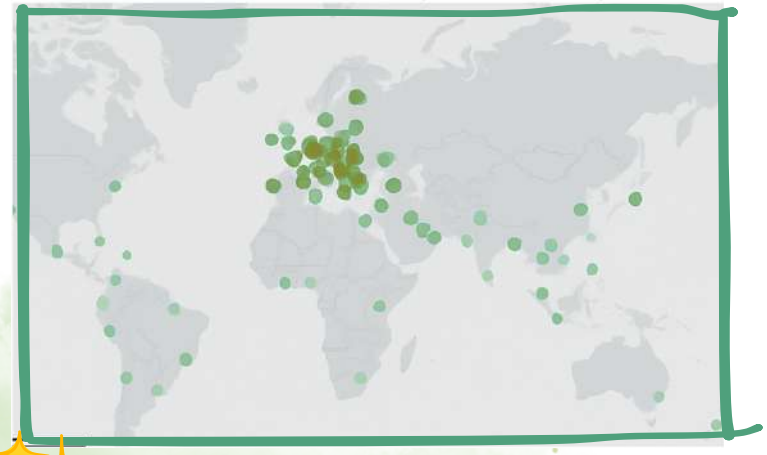


To find out about these activities and more visit: ecoschools.global and FEE.global

# Eco-Schools and Global Learning: Sustaining Engagement Through Worldwide Collaboration



The Eco-Schools programme keeps students and educators engaged over time by connecting schools across the world in a shared commitment to sustainability. By linking local efforts to a global network, it creates ongoing motivation and a sense of purpose. Schools learn from each other's successes and challenges, building a strong community that encourages lasting involvement and continuous growth. This global collaboration nurtures sustained participation and inspires collective action for a more sustainable future.



**Through this global network**, Eco-Schools build a bridge from local initiatives to worldwide collaboration, enhancing the reach and effectiveness of sustainability education. By staying connected and learning from one another over time, schools nurture lasting engagement, deepen their commitment and ensure that sustainability practices are continuously reinforced and built upon.

## Key Aspects of the Eco-Schools Global Learning Approach:

- Promoting Holistic Education: Instils understanding of the interconnectedness of environmental, social and economic issues from local to global scales.
- Embodying Active Citizenship: Empowers students to engage in decision-making and community action for meaningful change.
- Encouraging Collaboration: Engages students, teachers, families and the wider community, furthering appreciation of diverse perspectives.
- Enhancing Cultural Awareness: Integrates local and indigenous knowledge, building respect and acceptance across different cultures.
- Developing Critical Thinking: Encourages students to evaluate their actions and adapt strategies through ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- Empowering Identity and Values: Uses the Eco-Code as a collective expression of shared values and commitment to sustainability.
- Aligning with Sustainable Development Goals: Supports the SDGs by embedding sustainable practices in education, strengthening global impact.

# READY TO BEGIN?
# LET'S GREEN YOUR SCHOOL!



This handbook has been created to equip you with the tools, understanding and inspiration to bring the Eco-Schools Seven-Steps to life in your classroom and across your school. Whether you are at the beginning of your Eco-Schools journey or building on existing efforts, remember: you do not need to be an expert, just open to learning and growing alongside your students. Eco-Schools is about taking action through clear, supportive steps guided by learners who are leading the way towards a greener tomorrow.

By starting today, you are helping your students grow into confident, informed changemakers and laying the foundation for a more sustainable and inclusive future within your school and community. The Eco-Schools programme is proud to support educators and learners by planting seeds of inspiration, collaboration and action which continue to grow through a global green network of innovative educational establishments who champion ESD.

As Pramod Kumar Sharma, Senior Director of Education at FEE, reminds us:

***»Eco-Schools delivers quality education by embedding sustainability at the heart of learning; an urgent and transformative response to the multiple, interconnected crises humanity now faces. The programme bridges classroom knowledge across subjects with real-world application through a transdisciplinary, student-led, whole-school approach. It empowers learners with agency, engages and supports communities, and transforms schools into dynamic centres driving local change with global impact. I call on education systems around the world to join and scale up this movement, not only to meet the targets of the Greening Education Partnership, but to go beyond them, building a just and sustainable future for all!«***



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Eco-Schools

MEMBER OF Greening Education Partnership
Getting every learner climate-ready

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