

## **Muinebheag Vocational School, Muinebheag, Co. Carlow**

**Muinebheag Vocational School, Co Carlow is a rural school with an enrolment of 120 mainstream students, 150 post-leaving certificate students and 25 teachers.**

The Green-School's committee is representative of the entire school community. It is made up of students (each class is represented), teachers, the principal, caretaker and parents. The committee meet on a regular basis to discuss Green-School issues.

The Committee began their Environmental Review with a litter survey and identified the need to introduce a policy of reduce, reuse and recycle and to keep the school a litter-free zone.

When deciding on what methods to use to conduct a Litter and Waste review, the committee sourced ideas from the review section of the Litter and Waste handbook. Committee members visited each class to get ideas and suggestions on how improvements could be made in the areas of litter and waste management in the school.

With the help of the caretaker they then looked at what waste prevention, reuse and recycling already existed in the school. They also undertook a 'Waste Stream Survey,' a survey to address the needs of each teacher in their classroom regarding waste segregation. The school also conducted a waste audit and a litter audit.

In 2005 there was very little recycling taking place in the school. Practically all of the waste was going to landfill. There were no recycling bins in the school. However, the school now has a recycling centre and 3 large recycling bins outside.



Once they had begun recycling, the school became curious as to what happens to the materials that they were sending for recycling. The school decided to carry out some research to see where the recyclables go after they are collected. It was found that cardboard is sent to Smurfit in Dublin and is then sold on the open cardboard market, and newspapers are sent to Waterford, they are separated and baled there and are then sent to Smurfit in Dublin, where they are then shipped to the Far East.

The committee also distributed a questionnaire which went to all students and it included a section where they could give their suggestions. 88% of students agreed that there is a litter problem in the school. Photographs were taken of litter black spots both inside and outside the school as a visual representation of the problem.

Following on from the Environmental Review the Committee developed an extensive Plan of Action. They decided to set up a recycling system and to carry out a paper audit. They also consulted all teachers to identify their needs. Litter wardens were elected to patrol the playgrounds after breaks. They also drew up a rota for litter monitoring.



By sticking to their Action Plan, and through close monitoring and evaluating, the waste and litter situation in the school has improved greatly. The school has dramatically reduced the amount of waste it is sending to landfill, with only one small bin being sent weekly.

In order to increase the whole school community's awareness of their efforts to reduce litter and waste in the school, the students designed posters and placed them around the school.



Through their work in the Green-School's Programme, Muinebheag Vocational School have established a number of valuable community contacts including Carlow County Council, Whelan Waste Disposal, Local Councillor Denis Foley and many articles on the school's Green-School efforts have appeared in the local papers.

