

Holy Family Junior School

Ennis

Co. Clare



Holy Family is a junior school, which caters for children from the ages of 4-7 years. The school has a special unit for deaf children. In total there are approx. 230 children on roll. There is a staff of sixteen teachers. The school is located in the Town of Ennis, County Clare on the west coast of Ireland.



Committee members at work!



Children committee members were selected by their teachers and classmates. They represent each of the three First Classes, the Deaf Unit and the Speech and Language Unit. The adult representatives on the Green School Committee volunteered to be part of the committee.

The committee meets once every half term. Children take abbreviated notes or a verbal summary in order to report back to their classmates. Minutes of the meetings are taken by an adult on a rota basis.

The Green School Co-ordinator and two Special Needs Assistants meet informally every Monday to ensure that Green School activity throughout the school is maximised.

Environmental Review

The school undertook an in February/March 2008. The following areas were assessed –

The Green school co-ordinator, School caretaker, and Senior Infant pupils (Age 6) examined the rubbish in bins that were collected weekly by Clean Ireland Recycling Company. Senior Infant children made a pictogram of their findings. Composition of classroom bins and staffroom bins were also assessed by pupils and teachers.

A Special Needs Assistant and First Class pupils (Age 7) inspected the school grounds for litter on five separate occasions. Each time they recorded and photographed areas where litter was found. They then drew a map of the school and marked on it all the litter hotspots.

Pupil's from the Unit for the Deaf with their class teacher designed a questionnaire for class teachers to fill out in order to determine how many pupils were using a reusable lunch box and bottle at school.

The Green school co-ordinator in co-operation with all class teachers drew up a table of curricular areas presently being taught that support the philosophy of the Green Schools Project.

Results

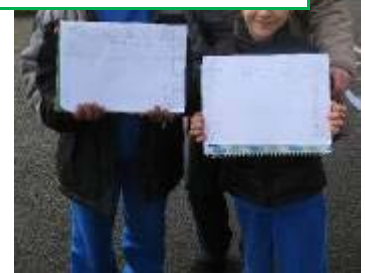
- Refuse – There was no recycling or composting in practice in the school prior to the Green Schools Initiative. Each week a 500 litre bin of wet waste was being collected by the bin company.
- Litter – Children in the school were not responsible for littering the yard as they are not allowed to eat outdoors. Because the school is situated in the town, litter is still a problem especially after the weekend.
- School lunches – 66% of children were bringing lunch boxes to school and 24% were bringing reusable bottles.
- Curriculum – Although litter, waste and other environmental issues were being taught in all class, children had very little hands on experience of reducing, reusing and recycling.



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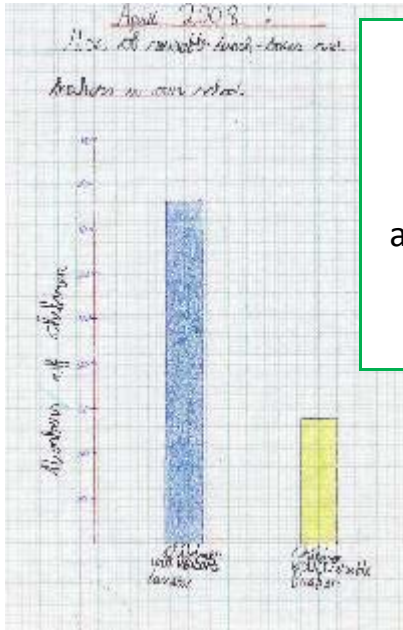
A

Refuse and waste before
commencement of Green
Schools Project



B

Map drawing of litter hotspots



C

Graph of lunchbox and reusable beaker usage before the project



D

Litter hotspot!

Action Plan

On completion of their environmental review, students and teachers quickly realised that their action plan should begin with a waste separation programme throughout the whole school. Up until then there was no recycling in operation. After that it seemed clear that other forms of recycling could be facilitated at school also (batteries, cameras, phones, ink cartridges and cans).

Monitoring and Evaluation



Our bins

At the Holy Family Junior School monitoring and evaluation is done in the following ways.

- Recycling – Children under the supervision of parents, teachers or an SNA collect recyclable materials from each classroom three times a week. While the boxes are being emptied children check to see that the bin contents are recyclable. If there are items in the bin that shouldn't be there children report this to the relevant class teacher.

- Composting – Similarly children and SNAs collect compost bins twice weekly and if there are items in the bin that shouldn't be there children report this to the relevant class teacher.
- Wet Bins – Popsy (School caretaker) empties wet bins each day and reports to the Green School Co-ordinator if there are items in the bin that shouldn't be there.
- Litter in the school grounds is monitored on a weekly basis by teams of litter pickers from First Class. They report any drop in standards to the principal.
- School Lunches - Twice a year a school lunch questionnaire is filled out by all class teachers to determine how many children use recyclable lunch boxes and drink containers. A campaign to promote the use of recyclable lunch boxes is then re-launched to convert the yet to be converted!
- Curriculum – Teacher observation, pupil feedback and pupil knowledge are the main tools used for evaluating curriculum teaching in the area of Green Schools.

The Schools has have made huge progress towards their goals.

- Wet waste has been reduced by 50% in six months. The school now recycle a 500 litre bin load of cardboard, paper and plastic each week.
- The school grounds now only presents with litter on a Monday morning. Litter pickers act quickly and clean up the hotspots during the week at school.
- The campaign to increase the amount of reusable lunchboxes and bottles brought to school meant that 8% more bottles and 4% more lunchboxes were used.
- The school were awarded joint third prize in the Ennis Best Kept Schools Competition 2008.

Linking with the Curriculum

All pupils in the school are exposed to and taught Green School topics thorough linkage with the primary curriculum. The school is a Junior School so the majority of pupils are aged between four and seven years. There are two children in the Deaf Unit and they are aged eleven and twelve. Altogether there are 230 pupils attending Holy Family Junior School. Each class group has a folder containing all Green School Curriculum links and related curriculum materials which are added to on an ongoing basis.



Proud as punch!
 “We won the tidiest classroom!”



Informing and Involving

The whole school community was informed of all aspects of the Green Schools programme by means of

- a) The School Newsletter – The principal Ms. Dilger often informed parents and children about Green School issues and events in the monthly school newsletter.
- b) The Green Schools Newsletter – The Green School Committee issues a Green Newsletter each term with progress reports and news of upcoming events.
- c) School Intercom – Pupils, teachers and our school principal makes Green School announcements



designed and created large posters and wall charts based on the school’s Green Code “We are green, we are cool, we are kind.”
 windows around the school advising parents on how they can help their children e.g. lunchbox and beaker campaign and recycling.

Bullb's

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 wot not grow. in spring They will be
 yello.

Emma

f) Green school committee dissemination – each member of the committee has a responsibility to relay information from the meeting to a particular class of pupils of member(s) of staff.

The whole school community is involved in the Green Schools programme.



Day of Action

The following activities took place on the school “Action Day”

- The whole school/parents and other community members participated in An Taisce’s National Spring Clean
- Students participated in face painting where they had the recycle logo drawn on their face
- All students drew a picture based on the theme REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE.
- Each class played yard games with an environmental theme

- Each class planted seeds
- Classes watched DVDs/videos based on environmental themes.
- Joan Tarmey from the environment section of Clare County Council gave a talk to students on litter and waste
- The school had an official tree planting ceremony



Composting made easy!



Orby 's message is loud and clear.



Green Day!



12 Clare Champion, Friday, May 9, 2008

Holy Family Green day

GREEN was the colour in the Holy Family Junior School recently when pupils and staff wore green to school as a symbolic gesture to mark their involvement with An Taisce's Green Schools' initiative.

National Spring Cleaning Day placed the students at the centre of activities and the green theme for the day included face painting and a colouring competition where the prizes were petunias for planting at home. Events also included tree planting, reed planting, yard games and a nature video in the afternoon.

The pupils also spent some

time busily tidying in their classrooms.

The school, with 235 pupils, ranging from ages four to eight, has for the past number of months embraced the idea of recycling, reusing and reducing, and National Spring Clean Day was a great opportunity to consolidate and acknowledge all that the pupils and staff have learned to date.

Miriam Lowe, Green Schools co-ordinator in Holy Family Junior School, is so happy with the progress to date that she envisages applying for the first green flag early in the next school term.

While there is a constant

demand for vigilance, Miriam is happy that pupils and staff are now very aware of waste and committed to its proper management in the school.

The Green Flag committee is very active, meeting fortnightly and producing a regular newsletter to inform all the school community of up-coming events and to help promote better management of waste.

To date, they have been very successful in their endeavours, with litter wardens on duty every day, a compost bin in operation, recycling bins in all classrooms and staffroom.

Principal, Sharon Dilger,

acknowledges the great effort of the committee and the commitment of the pupils and staff to maintaining the high standards of cleanliness that has always been associated with the school and most especially the commitment to recycling, reducing and reusing.

"It has been a shared learning experience for us all and while the focus has been on promoting a greener school, there have been other unexpected benefits also, most especially how our pupils have taken such responsibility and pride in the work being carried out," she said.



Contacts made with the wider community

- a) Diarmuid O'Donnell, Director of Clean Ireland Recycling came to speak to the Green Schools Committee on the occasion of its first meeting in February 2008. He spoke about the benefits of recycling and answered questions from children and adult committee members.

- b) Joan Tarmey, environmental officer with Clare County Council came to speak the classes about the theme Reduce Reuse Recycle to coincide with our Green Day celebration.
- c) Eight parents supervise the Recycling team three times a week as they collect recyclable materials from all the classes in the school.
- d) The Clare Champion newspaper reported on the schools Green Day activities in May 2008
- e) Ennis Tidy Schools Competition 2008 – The School were awarded third prize for the tidiest school in Ennis.
- f) The school combined National Spring Clean 2008 with their action day
- g) The school have started a fruit tree planting project in association with other County Clare community groups and hope to harvest apples, pears and berries in a few years time.

Ennis Tidy Schools Competition!

Winners of third prize!



Green Code

The Schools Green code is **“We are green. We are cool. We’re Holy Family Junior School.”**

The school had a competition between classes to create a green code for the school. The response was fantastic considering the ages of the pupils. A Senior Infant Class won the prize of a fruit hamper for their creativity as adjudicated by Mrs. Phillips (Deputy Principal) and Ms. Frawley (Class teacher and ICT Co-ordinator).

Each class has made a banner of the Green Code and these banners are displayed around the school. The children chant the code at assembly and in their classes when Green issues are being discussed.



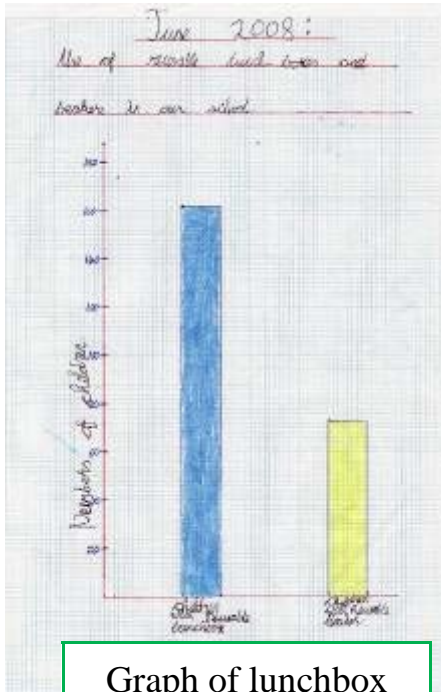
Senior Infants - Room 2
Winners of the Green Code
Competition!!
Fruit!! Yummy!!

. The experience of Green Schools has benefitted Holy Family Junior School in the following ways

- a). Six months after starting the project the wet bin waste has been reduced by half.
- b). before the project began the school had no involvement in recycling. Now a 500 litre recycling bin is full every week.
- c). Pupils, staff and parents are more aware of the importance of recycling and have undertaken best practice in doing so.
- d). Pupils and staff compost suitable waste and understand the process of composting.
- e). Parents have become involved in the project in a very meaningful way by supervising recycling teams as they do their work throughout the school. This is very beneficial for many reasons.
 - Parents have become naturally involved in the life of the school in a very practical way.
 - Parents see the benefits of the Green Schools programme first hand by witnessing the enthusiasm and commitment of the children.
 - Parents support the teachers by mentoring and supervising the children as they carry out their Green Schools duties.
- f). the level of team work has increased in the school, as all personnel work together to promote our Green Theme.

g). According to caretakers Popsy and Mikey, classrooms in the school are much cleaner since the introduction of the tidy classroom checklist and weekly award system.

h) Children are taking responsibility for keeping their environment clean and tidy and take great pride in their good work.



Graph of lunchbox and reusable beaker usage after the campaign.



A picture of our refuse and waste at present.

There was great excitement on the 8th of May when Green party T.D (member of parliament) and Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government , Mr John Gormley visited the holy Family Junior School on to present the green flag

