

PRESS RELEASE - International Green Flag Award for 343 Irish Schools

25th February 2010

An Taisce's Green-Schools programme is going from strength to strength as a further 124 schools nationwide have achieved the coveted International Green Flag for the first time in recognition of their efforts in reducing litter and waste, and a further 219 schools have successfully renewed the Green Flag for the themes of energy conservation, water conservation and sustainable travel to school.

These schools will be awarded their Green Flags by An Taisce at various venues throughout the country and will subsequently take their new flags back to school for a local flag raising ceremony in recognition of the efforts played by the whole school community in their programmes. During the award ceremonies An Taisce will acknowledge the continued commitment of the schools in driving the programme forward and pay tribute to the efforts of the local authorities in working with schools on the ground.

There are currently over 3,300 primary and secondary schools taking part in the programme across Ireland and almost 1,900 schools have been awarded the Green Flag. As a result students, teachers and school communities are having a very positive impact on the environment and dramatically reducing their carbon footprints.

In recognition of this Anthony Purcell, Green-Schools Manager said *'schools are coming up with new and innovative ways of reducing the amount of waste generated at school, reducing energy and water consumption and taking sustainable options when travelling to school'*. Mr. Purcell added that *'Green Flag certification is awarded to schools that have successfully followed the Green-Schools methodology, adapting its application to meet their specific needs and achieving their own determined, concrete objectives. With its participatory approach, involving pupils themselves in both activities and the decision-making processes, Green-Schools can be an important instrument for promoting the values of participation and citizenship'*.

This is the 13th year of Green Schools in Ireland and recent research on the economic value of the programme to schools in Ireland has revealed that the programme has saved schools in Ireland a minimum 2 million euro in waste, electricity, water and fuel costs over the school year 2008-2009. The results reveal a minimum of 12 tonnes of waste diverted from landfills in Ireland every school day by schools undertaking the programme, 3.7 million units of electricity saved, 200 million litres of drinking water saved, and around 500,000 litres of transport fuel saved over the school year. These are conservative estimates and considering the programme also involves the wider community, the overall savings could be several times the 2 million euro saved by the schools. As the number of schools participating is growing every year, this year's savings are expected to be even higher.

The Green-Schools programme is operated in partnership with Local Authorities and is supported by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and Department of Transport. The programme also has a number of commercial sponsors. These include Repak, ESB Independent Energy and the Wrigley Company Limited.

Repak are the lead sponsor of Green-Schools in Ireland and Dr. Andrew Hetherington, CEO, commented that....' *"An Taisce's Green-Schools programme is one of the most successful Eco-Schools programmes that takes place in 47 countries. Repak recognises this and the greater impact the programme has on the wider community in changing behaviour and increasing understanding of our environmental impact.*

Repak's sponsorship of the Green-Schools programme aims to help An Taisce increase participation from 75% to over 95% of all Irish schools over the 5 years of the sponsorship. We are delighted with the continued growth in both registrations and number of new flags awarded. Since the beginning of the school year last September over 200 new schools have registered for the programme, 124 schools have received the prestigious Green Flag for the first time and 219 schools have renewed their Green Flags. There are now over 3,300 schools participating in the programme, representing 682,000 students and 46,000 teachers nationwide.'

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Overview of Programme

Green-Schools, (known internationally as Eco-Schools), is an international environmental management education programme, environmental management system and award scheme that promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole-school action for the environment. Green-Schools is an initiative of FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education). Green-Schools began as a pilot project in the UK, Denmark, Germany, France and Portugal in 1994. Currently 47 countries from Europe, Africa, South America, Asia and Oceania are participating in the Eco-Schools Programme. There are now 32,156 schools participating in the programme worldwide and over 9,898 have been awarded the Green Flag.

The Green-Schools programme is based on a seven step environmental management system and continual improvement process which is very much student led and also involves the wider community. The programme also promotes good citizenship among participants. Green-Schools is a themed programme with schools initially working on the theme of Litter and Waste and then moving onto themes such as Energy, Water and School Travel. Schools that successfully implemented the programme are awarded the Green Flag. The award must be renewed every 2 years.

Note to editors: A list of award ceremonies, dates, venues and times is given below:

Venue, date and Time	Schools from:
Lifetime Lab, Lee Road Cork, Thursday 25 th February 11am	Cork City, Limerick City and County
Lifetime Lab, Lee Road Cork Thursday 25 th February 2pm	Kerry and Waterford County
Radisson SAS , Athlone Thursday 25 th February 11am	Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath, Offaly and Leitrim
Lifetime Lab, Lee Road Cork Friday 26 th February 10.30am	Cork County
Croke Park, Dublin Tuesday 2 nd March 10.30am	North Tipp and Meath

Croke Park, Dublin
Tuesday 2nd March 2.30pm

Wicklow and South Dublin

Hotel Kilkenny, Kilkenny
Tuesday 2nd March 11am

Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford City,
South Tipperary

Croke Park, Dublin
Wednesday, 3rd March 10.30am

Cavan, Monaghan and Louth

Croke Park, Dublin
Wednesday, 3rd March 2.15pm

Kildare

Galway Bay Hotel, Galway
Wednesday, 3rd March 10.30am

Mayo, Galway City and Galway County

Galway Bay Hotel, Galway
Wednesday, 3rd March 2pm

Clare and Sligo

Croke Park, Dublin
Thursday, 4th March 10.30pm

Laois and Dublin City

Croke Park, Dublin
Thursday, 4th March 2.15pm

Fingal and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown.

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