

Leaden Hall School Eco Commitment

Continuing our commitment to introduce and establish 'green' issues to the school and its community, we have been building on the momentum started in 2005 and since then have achieved Bronze, Silver and Green Flags with Eco Schools. We are also winners of the DCSF Sustainable Schools Teaching Award for the West of England in 2009. .

Eco issues are now accepted as important criteria within the school. In our activities, clubs, lessons, charity work and out of school too, we are working towards ensuring that adults associated with the school consider their impact on the environment.

We have Eco Monitors in each class, plus special members of Eco clubs whose responsibilities include publicity, investigations, imparting knowledge, and even gardening. Our Eco Committee includes all these members and teachers chosen for their special interests (birds, gardens) as well as parents and local dignitaries. Our aim is to keep our motto "We Go Eco" high profile and an integral part of our daily lives.

This Report will introduce you to some of ways we carry out our commitment to a sustainable future.

Eco Members

- Eco Monitors

Eco Monitors are elected by the members of a class each year, or term if the class wish, to represent their class on eco issues and to ensure that their class use resources wisely, recycle as much as possible and turn off lights and electrically powered equipment when not in use. Any project which the Eco Group supports is introduced in an assembly and then rolled out to the classes by the Eco Monitors. Responses are then relayed back through the Monitors to the Eco Group.

- Eco Group

Monitors can be members of the Eco Group too if they wish but the group is an 'activity' which meets once a week and each term the age range it includes might be different. The Eco Group is also a steering committee, considering new ideas and challenges and finding ways to relay them to the school and wider community. Most of the projects in this year have been led by the various members of the Eco Group. Anyone can be a member of the Eco

Group from Nursery to Year 6. Sometimes we just garden or make lavender bags.

- Teaching members

Some specific members of the teaching staff are on our Eco Committee because they have particular knowledge or interest in a subject, for example birds or our gardens or archaeology. We call on them to advise us on our projects.

- Community members

These might be parents or local dignitaries. Their responsibilities include out of school or school linked activities such as the Walking Bus, or involving other parents in energy saving schemes.

- Governing members

All our Governors are committed to supporting our Eco activities, however at least one Governor will attend our formal Eco Committee meetings and report back to the other Governors.

Publicity and Reporting

This is done in four ways:

- Assemblies – all new topics are introduced this way. We arrange new and exciting challenges and there are often prizes. We do practical demonstrations to prove our points – for example our solar powered fan and buzzer which two girls in year 1 helped the Eco Group display to the whole school. Sometimes we just have fun telling the school what we are up to, or involving them in our new songs or mottos.
- Yellow Pages – this is a weekly newsletter to all parents. We involve parents in our challenges too and this might include reply slips on the yellow pages. We also include 'tips' on green issues for parents to consider.
- Newsletters and Web Site – We have produced full colour A3 newsletters on our challenges which are distributed free. This is giving way to a newer method of communication as we are developing our Eco Website and Weaving the Web project group which will be podcasting.
- Notice Board – we have a large notice board at the top of the main stairs where everyone passes many times a day between lessons. Our displays change regularly and entice pupils and staff to consider eco issues, enter competitions or celebrate successes.

WeGoEco@leaden-hall.com is our email address specifically for Eco correspondence or replies to challenges.

Lessons in our Curriculum

Eco issues are an integral part of Geography teaching and learning throughout the year. Year 6 girls go to the Isle of Wight for a week to study the environment and their individually produced report files encourage them to consider every aspect of sustainability. Teachers are asked to consider eco issues in their lesson planning and schemes for all subjects and these will include art, music, international links and nature studies.

Community Issues

We keenly pick up on aspects outside school which we think should be improved. To see our range of activities over the last year please look at our Activities Report.

These activities in the past have included writing to local shops and stores regarding their use of plastic bags (and taking several thousand back), collecting elastic bands and returning them to the Post Office – we also invited the Post Office Manager to face our ‘any questions’ panel on eco issues, and writing to companies encouraging use of recycled cardboard boxes. Not all companies reply to our letters and many have standard replies, but occasionally we are delighted when we receive a personal reply explaining why a certain method of production has been employed. We congratulate these companies.

A few years ago we contacted the larger institutions (schools, café’s) in our immediate area and wrote on their behalf to the Salisbury District Council regarding waste recycling schemes. Although it didn’t happen immediately, we were told that the Council were looking into our request and now we have much more flexibility and collections from our school.

International Links

As an International School we are proud of our links with other countries. We run linked projects with schools all over the world within class time and through our ‘Project Group’. One great fun event was our International Festival which took the children off timetable for two days to ‘fly’ to visit fourteen different countries without increasing our carbon footprint! Every year we have a few children from Spain or France and for the second time have British Council support for a two year Comenius project. Our current project links Poland, France, Italy and Cyprus in a sustainability research “From Acorns to Eco Warriors” (described in more detail later).

Associations

We have many links with other associations who can and have helped us develop, promote and carry out our ideas. These include:

- The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust who regularly visit our school to run workshops and make suggestions about habitats and projects.
- World Wildlife Fund
- South Wiltshire Agenda 21 Forum
- Action 21
- RHS
- RSPB
- Soil Association
- Potatoes for Schools

Transport

Our Green Travel Plan, started in 2002, now includes four school bus runs different areas into Salisbury as well as a walking bus and encouragement to cycle. Every year we are seeing an improvement in the amount of children walking, cycling or coming to school on one of our busses. An enormous success pioneered, constantly encouraged and promoted by Jill Mitchell, our recently retired Deputy Head and our Governors both within the school and in the local press.

Recycling

Our Eco Monitors and club members are constantly on the lookout for more things to recycle. On a daily basis they recycle paper and card from the classrooms. Our kitchen staff recycle bottles, tins, plastic, cardboard, handtowels.

- Christmas cards (Woodland Trust)
- Shoes (ShoeBiz Charity)
- Clothes – Homeless, Woman's Refuge, resell, charity shops
- Batteries
- Mobile phones (Computers for Schools)
- Ink and laser cartridges (Computers for Schools)
- Toiletries (for the Woman's' Refuge)
- Yellow pages

Reusing

In our Autumn Fair we sell items we have 'remade' from things which would otherwise have been thrown away. Examples include bottles and jars (painted), lavender bags, cards, boxes (from old cards) and plant cuttings. Children often come into school with their own special ideas such as bird houses from old wine crates and so on. The list is seemingly endless. We

ran a competition to find 100 ways of reusing 'rubbish' and within a couple of weeks had more than 160 ideas!

Energy Challenge

One of our major challenges was to every family in the school. We asked them to record their gas and electricity readings over a three week period. The first one as a starting point, the second exactly one week later to show what a normal week used, and the third one week later after making efforts to cut back unnecessary consumption (turning off monitors, turning down the thermostat, not running the water unnecessarily etc). We were slightly disappointed that just under 20% of the families responded but it was a commitment over three weeks so although many started, some lost enthusiasm, or were away, or had many other reasons why they could not complete the set of numbers required. They were, however, very enthusiastic and encouraging about the challenge.

We concluded that, if our return sample was an accurate indicator (and why not?) then multiplied out by 250 pupils the conservative saving in financial terms would have been £2747 per year for gas and £8908 per year for electricity. These figures do not include temperature fluctuations although it was an unusually warm Autumn. The most interesting thing about this was that we did not ask anyone to turn down/off energy sources to an uncomfortable level, just where it wouldn't have mattered. A great result which we hope opened everyone's eyes to how they could improve their carbon footprint without a great effort. This challenge is being repeated in Autumn 2009 to compare results and will be adding a **Water Challenge** to help our community become aware of the value of clean water.

Birds

Every year we encourage everyone to take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch in January. We are lucky to have wonderful gardens leading right up to the river and water meadows so our birds are a delight to us. We have a bird hide with telescopes and binoculars which everyone can use and Eco Group sometimes meet there to plot and plan. We make bird boxes in DT and at the weekends in Moors Valley and were delighted when we secured financial support from the Berkshire Trust to purchase bird feeders. We set up a special bird feeding area right by our Conservatory where we also eat and we watch the birds munching their sunflowers while we munch our lunches (and breakfasts and suppers!). The parents of leaving children gave us a wonderful gift of a bird box with a camera and last year we watched six little blue tits hatch and feed. . At least 9 pairs of birds nested in our grounds and 8 of our boxes were used.

Eco Garden

Our Eco Garden has developed and grown over the years due to the enthusiasm of the children. We grow potatoes, raspberries, lots of herbs, peas, broad beans, runner beans, onions, carrots, beetroot, various cabbages, kale, leeks, spinach, tomatoes, courgettes, gourds, lavender and lots of flowers for the bees.

We are also lucky to have grounds cared for by our dedicated grounds men which includes apples and rhubarb. We have a school pond with fish and frogs and a grass snake.

Gardening club runs at least once a week during the lunch break for the daygirls, and many evenings and weekends for the boarders. It is a casual 'drop in' club and anyone can don a pair of plastic bags over their shoes (held on by elastic bands, dropped by the post men and recovered from the streets!) and get digging. Our vegetables and flowers form a wonderful set of lessons for Reception and Year 1 who are given worksheets with downloaded photographs to recognise and count. Boarders harvest the vegetables and take them to the kitchen where our Chef teaches the girls how to prepare and cook them... then we eat them for supper!

Projects

Project group is the gifted and talented group in Leaden Hall. It runs as an activity group after school and usually changes membership every term, sometimes running for two terms if the challenge requires. Children are encouraged to use their specific talents (like drawing, communicating, maths, literacy, dance) to work in a team with others. The projects are not always Eco but many include aspects which encourage the children to think widely about where and how they live on this planet. For example our International Festival, our early years Weather project investigating the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, our composting research and so on.

“From Acorns to Eco Warriors” – Comenius

Starting in Autumn 2009 our latest Comenius project called “From Acorns to Eco Warriors” is a two year, monthly challenge for four partner schools in France, Poland, Cyprus and Italy with Leaden Hall School as the lead school. It will cover every area of our curriculum and all pupils and teachers will be involved. This is our itinerary:

- Sept 2009 - Introducing Alfred & surveying our school grounds
- Oct 2009 - Litter – reusing our grounds in nature friendly ways
- Nov 2009 - Planning & evaluation
- Dec 2009 - Alfred's Recycled Christmas
- Jan 2010 - Music and dance to save our planet
- Feb 2010 - The value of clean air
- Mar 2010 - Song festival & fashion show
- Apr 2010 - Holiday - evaluations

- May 2010 - Create a board game to save the planet
- June & July & August 2010 - Evaluations & Meetings
- Sept 2010 - Guinness Book of Records, Temperature variations
- Oct 2010 - Junk Band & rehearsals
- Nov 2010 - Concert & CD to share
- Dec 2010 - Alfred's Christmas Recipes, water, taps.
- Jan 2011 - Healthy foods, art and lunches
- Feb 2011 - Food alphabet, languages, environments
- Mar 2011 - Local map, green spaces & natural beauty
- Apr 2011 - Ecology picnic for younger ones
- May 2011 - End of project evaluations – SOS Alfred Crisis Website

What next?

The trouble with sustainability and eco topics are that once you 'have a plan' it quickly branches into more plans and the timetable can't cope, so we must curb our enthusiasm a little and make choices. In our report on the Activities of the Eco Club you will see some of the ideas we have to run alongside our Comenius work in the coming year.

We are always pleased to talk to other interested schools, to share enthusiasm or help them get started. Contact us on WeGoEco@leaden-hall.com.

Becoming a sustainable school has encouraged us to get involved, take responsibility and most of all, have lots and lots of fun. Join us and find out for yourselves.