

**Subject:** Eco Schools Programme Update  
**Date of Meeting:** 16 March 2009  
**Report of:** Acting Director of Strategy & Governance  
**Contact Officer:** Name: Sarah Costelloe Tel: 29-3331  
E-mail: sarah.costelloe@brighton-hove.gov.uk  
**Key Decision:** No Forward Plan No. N/A  
**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report explains what the city council's Eco Schools work entails and how it fits into a wider Environmental Education programme.
- 1.2 The work described helps meet the council priority to "protect the environment while growing the economy".

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 (1) That the Sustainability Cabinet Committee note the report.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

##### Eco Schools in Brighton & Hove

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove has one of the most successful eco schools programmes in the country. This has steadily increased since May 2007, with good progress from schools moving from Bronze to Silver and then onto the top Green Flag level. Currently, over 80% of state schools in the city are at least registered on the Eco Schools Programme, with 62% achieving award status (see appendix 1).

##### What is Eco Schools?

- 3.2 Launched in Brighton & Hove during 1998, Eco Schools is an international environmental award scheme for schools, rewarding and accrediting schools that have made a commitment to continuously improving their environmental performance.

- 3.3 Most children and young people care deeply about environmental issues. They can learn about these issues in the classroom as well as through the media. They want to 'help the planet' but knowing what to do and how to do it is not always easy. Eco Schools is rooted in a genuine desire to help children become more effective and involved citizens, and promotes valuable life skills such as leadership, independence and social responsibility. The Eco Schools programme is the ideal and easy-to-understand framework on which teachers can 'hang' all their environmental education work.
- 3.4 Eco Schools is much more than an environmental management system for schools. It is a whole-school programme for promoting environmental awareness and sustainability issues in a way that links to the National Curriculum, developing skills of participation and responsible action. It is also an award scheme that will raise the profile of the school in the wider community, and carries a great deal of kudos too.

### **What are the benefits of becoming an Eco School?**

- 3.5 The Eco Schools programme can help schools to:
- Improve their school environment, indoors as well as outdoors.
  - Reduce litter and minimise waste.
  - Reduce energy and water bills.
  - Promote healthier lifestyles.
  - Address traffic congestion and road safety issues.
  - Encourage citizenship and wider global perspectives.
  - Develop the creative curriculum.
  - Forge international links with other schools.
- 3.6 The Eco Schools programme brings additional benefits:
- Recognition and publicity.
  - Funding opportunities and budget savings.
  - Links to the National Curriculum.
  - School improvements, both physical and attitudinal.
- 3.7 Eco Schools enables excellent progress towards achieving objectives laid out in Every Child Matters, published in 2004. This details the aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:
- Be healthy
  - Stay safe
  - Enjoy and achieve
  - Make a positive contribution
  - Achieve economic well-being
- 3.8 These key aims underpin the National Curriculum and the Schools Evaluation Framework used by Ofsted during the inspection process. In a May 2008 report on schools and sustainability, Ofsted recommends that local authorities and their partners should 'develop a common vision for a sustainable community in which the contribution of schools is explicit and work together to implement it'. It is clear that Ofsted value this work and the whole school ethos it engenders.

### **How do schools get involved?**

- 3.9 Schools can apply to join this free voluntary scheme via ENCAMS (formerly known as the Tidy Britain Group). Once a school has registered they receive a handbook, an information CD and access to a website giving lots of practical advice on how to set up Eco Schools within a school, and how to maximise the positive effects of the programme.
- 3.10 Once registered the school has to set up an eco committee, which ideally should be student-dominated, as the children and young people should be at the centre of the decision making process.

### **How is progress assessed?**

- 3.11 Schools can achieve each stage in their own time. The first level is the bronze award, followed by the silver award, and the ultimate goal is the coveted Green Flag status which is awarded after an external assessment.

### **How does the local authority support the Eco Schools scheme?**

- 3.12 Since its inception, Eco Schools has been supported by the Environmental Education Officer as part of a wider Schools Environmental Education Programme, previously delivered by 1.5 FTE officers and now delivered by 1 officer (a part-time Environmental Education Officer working three days a week, and a Support Officer for 2 days a week).

### **What else has the Environmental Education programme delivered in 2008, apart from supporting Eco Schools?**

- 3.13.1 A programme of PSHE lessons on Environmental Education themes, delivered to every child in year 7 (Litter), year 8 (Recycling), year 9 (Vandalism) and year 10 (Global Environment) at Dorothy Stringer School, plus many other series of one-off visits to schools within the city. This supports the work of colleagues at City Clean across a range of areas, most notably in the drive to increase recycling rates and promote new collection arrangements.
- 3.13.2 Several competitions to highlight events such as Fairtrade Fortnight in February, and World Toilet Day in November.
- 3.13.3 The Young Environmentalist of the Year Award Ceremony (2008).
- 3.13.4 Eco weeks at Carden Primary School, Somerhill Junior School, Saltdean Primary School and Brighton College Pre-Prep School, and Green Activity Days at Cardinal Newman Catholic School and Dorothy Stringer High School.
- 3.13.5 A pilot art & film education project - More Plastic than Plankton - in which an artist worked with students from Somerhill Junior, St Luke's Junior, St Mark's CE Primary, Westdene Primary, Coldean Primary, Portslade Infants and Carden Primary.

- 3.13.6 Cool Seas Roadshow - visiting 10 schools over 2 weeks (St Marks CE Primary, Carden Primary, West Hove Infants, Hangelton Infants, Woodingdean Primary, St Luke's Infants, Queens Park Primary School, St Mary Magdalene RC Primary, St Peters Infant & Nursery and Moulsecoomb Primary School), delivering interactive presentations on the marine environment to approximately 6,000 children.
- 3.13.7 An Eco Schools Twilight training session for teachers.
- 3.13.8 A teachers' inset training session in partnership with the BBC Breathing Places officer on the subject of school grounds improvement.
- 3.13.9 A Climate Change Workshop, hosted by Brighton & Hove High School and attended by student delegates from ten local schools (Somerville Junior, West Hove Junior School, Lancing College Prep, St Luke's Junior, Middle St Primary, St Andrews C.E. Primary School, St Mary Magdalen, Cardinal Newman, Hangleton Junior, Westdene).
- 3.13.10 Supported the Heritage & Environment Festival and teacher inset hosted by Moulsecoomb Primary School.
- 3.13.11 A DVD project about vandalism, working with the Media department at Dorothy Stringer School.

**What other resources directly support the council's first priority to "protect the environment" through schools work?**

- 3.14 There are a range of council officers providing services which support this priority and which directly contribute towards sustainable development education in schools. The Healthy & Extended Schools Team has achieved great success in implementing a programme that also meets many sustainability targets around food and local well-being. A School Travel Planning Officer will have developed travel plans for all the city's schools by March 2010, similarly contributing to travel and traffic targets. Until recently, a School Grounds Biodiversity Action Plan Officer was employed to get 70% of schools using their 'outdoor classroom' by 2011. Despite great success, most notably the development of grounds at Moulsecoomb Primary School, this post expired at the end of last year due to grant funding coming to an end. For more information, please refer to appendix 2.

**4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Children & Young People's Trust and sustainable schools contacts have been consulted.

**5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The resources associated with the Schools Environmental Education programme are managed through the sustainability budget.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley*

*Date: 16/02/09*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from the report.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Oliver Dixon*

*Date: 26/02/09*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 All Green Flag primary schools achieved above average results in 2007 KS2 assessments. The two state secondary schools with Green Flag status both achieved above average exam results. None of the secondary schools achieving average GCSE results of less than 40% have made any progress with Eco Schools, although two of them are registered.
- 5.4 Although no formal monitoring of the equalities impact of the schools Environmental Education programme has taken place, there is some concern that resources may be disproportionately favouring high achieving, well-resourced schools. This should be addressed in future service planning.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 Authority support for the development of whole school environmental programmes supports sustainability across schools and the city, promoting long-term sustainable development and behaviour.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.6 With a strong focus on the consequences of anti-social behaviour in KS3 lessons, the environmental education programme is able to positively affect juvenile petty criminal behaviour. Litter and vandalism, and their consequences, are a frequent focus of the environmental education programme.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.7 There are “victim of success” risks of the Schools Environmental Education and Eco Schools programmes becoming overstretched – this is being addressed through internal Strategy & Governance discussions about resourcing.
- 5.8 There are both risks and opportunities regarding integration of environmental education programme – based in Strategy & Governance - with all CYPT’s schools work.

Corporate / Citywide Implications

- 5.9 Protecting the environment by promoting long-term sustainable development is a key priority. A fully resourced environmental education programme is able to deliver a range of positive activities for all young people, particularly those with behavioural, emotional and social needs. Most importantly, it is crucial in fostering the environmentally aware behaviours and attitudes increasingly required of future citizens.

## **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

### **Sustainable Schools Framework**

- 6.1 The Sustainable Schools Framework is a clear, comprehensive government strategy supporting work across 'eight doorways'. The aim is to develop existing programmes, e.g. Eco Schools, i.e. building on rather than replacing/undermining existing programmes of support. The government have stated that it 'would like every school to be a sustainable school by 2020' but has provided little to resource this with. Some schools and authorities engaging with this framework have found the s3 self-audit tool complex and time-consuming. The lack of an award system, like that used in Eco Schools, makes it difficult for schools to celebrate their progress and motivate students to build on success. The framework is non-statutory.
- 6.2 The framework was assessed by the Healthy & Extended Schools Strategy Group in early 2008. It was generally agreed that, although the strategy is ambitious, without central funding from DCSF it remains difficult to justify allocation of resources to its implementation. The Sustainability Team continues to invest in developing its highly successful Eco Schools work, while an informal Internal Sustainable Schools Network is used to disseminate information from DCSF and GOSE to relevant council officers.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Some concern about poor awareness of the extent and external profile of Eco Schools and the Environmental Education programme, at the same time as an increase in the number of schools requiring environmental education support.
- 7.2 Every Child's Future Matters: 'it may not be possible to deliver ECM at all unless sustainable development [...] becomes one of its leading considerations'.
- 7.3 Ofsted report on Schools and Sustainability May 2008: key recommendation to 'give a higher priority to sustainable schools...funding for central and local initiatives... making it an integral part of [school] improvement plans'.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Chart: Brighton & Hove Eco Schools February 2009
2. Table: Council support for school sustainability
3. Case studies: Dorothy Stringer High School & Hove Park School

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. Every Child Matters: Change for Children, DfES 2004
2. 2006 DfES Sustainable Schools Consultation: response from Brighton & Hove, Sustainability Commission, September 2006

### **Background Documents**

1. Schools & Sustainability, Ofsted May 2008  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Management/Schools-and-sustainability/>
2. Every Child's future Matters, Sustainable Development Commission, June 2007  
<http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=578>
3. Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, DfES 2006  
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DFES-04232-2006&>

