



Progress Summary for Mainstreaming Sustainable Schools





Contents

Introduction	1
Success of other initiatives	2
Contribution from NGOs	4
Sustainable Schools Framework	5
Findings from the Regions	7
Case Study	10
Conclusion	11

Introduction

There can be few naysayers when it comes to the principles of Sustainable Schools or its aim for all schools to be Sustainable Schools by 2020. Research published by DEFRA in May 2008 shows that the will is there - 92% of young people say they want more climate change information in school and 84% think their school could take some action in combating climate change. However, the same research shows just 8% of young people think their own school is actually doing something about climate change. And that's the rub. The practical application of the Sustainable Schools Framework throws up lots of issues, which can broadly be summarised as falling into two areas:

- a sense of confusion about the sustainable goals schools should be aiming for
- a perceived lack of support from local and regional government structures in some areas

This summary came about because there was a need to gather together the anecdotal evidence from around the country in order to present a picture of how Mainstreaming Sustainable Schools was progressing.

To give some national context: in September 2007, Ofsted included two new questions in the self-evaluation form to assess the impact of Sustainable Development in schools. To date, no formal analysis of these questions has taken place, but anecdotal feedback suggests they are not answered in much depth and therefore more needs to be done to embed sustainability in schools. (The self-evaluation form is currently under review and so the form may change to include more questions around sustainability in the future.)

A beacon of excellence: Ringmer Community College

Sustainability has become an integral part of the school and its community within the last few years. The school has a staff member who is their Eco Co-ordinator. Part of Eco-Schools, they have their own dedicated area of the website. 227 of the 800 pupils are eco-reps; there are a minimum of two per form group. All new pupils are inducted in their feeder schools about the work the school does on sustainability. Prospective parents are shown around by eco-representatives during school open days and they are all shown a short film the school put together after winning the Ashden awards, which illustrates some of the work they are doing.

All new staff are also inducted into the sustainability work within the school and as part of the interviewing and recruitment process the school have now introduced a question asking about the candidate's understanding of sustainability, since the school sees this as an important part of their ethos.

The publicity the school received as a result of winning all the awards, has given the school a wider recognition of its work not only with parents and the local community, but on a regional and national level. They have since been asked to speak at a number of seminars in London and across the South East, sharing their work in sustainability. Those pupils involved in the talks and award ceremonies have been influenced significantly by their involvement in the work and shown great improvement and enthusiasm for their work.

The school has just been given approval for a new biomass boiler, which they have been able to finance through the additional publicity and recognition of such national awards.

Website - <http://www.ringmer.e-sussex.sch.uk/eco/>

In 2008 the school won 3 awards:

> The Chairman's Awards

> The Ashden Award for sustainable energy use

> The DCSF National teaching awards for a Sustainable School in the SE

Schools and Sustainability – A Climate for change was published in May 2008 by Ofsted. Inspectors visited a selection of primary and secondary schools (41 in total) to assess teaching about sustainability and progress towards meeting the expectations of the national Framework for Sustainable Schools. Key findings included:

- Little emphasis on Sustainable Development and limited awareness of national and local government.
- Promotion of Sustainable Development through National Curriculum subjects was inconsistent and uncoordinated.
- In many of the schools Sustainable Development was a peripheral issue, often confined to extra-curricular activities and involving only a minority of students.
- A small number of schools placed considerable emphasis on Sustainable Development. In these cases, teaching was good, lessons stimulating and pupils took an active part in improving the sustainability of the school and the wider community.
- Primary schools were more successful at promoting Sustainable Development than secondary schools.
- Schools were more successful in developing pupils' understanding of local rather than global issues of sustainability.
- Although local authorities have policy statements on sustainability, these tended to focus on corporate issues relating to public services and rarely refer explicitly to the responsibilities of schools.

Success of other initiatives

The extremely high level of take up of two DSCF initiatives, **Healthy Schools** and **Travel Plans** is indicative of how success can be achieved when there is clarity of target and support in the region.

In the case of Healthy Schools there are 150 local programmes supporting schools in achieving National Healthy Schools Status, demonstrating what can be achieved when local and regional government support is offered.

As for Travel Plans - all schools are required to have one in place by 2010. Travel plans are defined with clear targets - so far many schools have indicated that the requirements for becoming a Sustainable School are anything but clear.

Travel plans as at March 2008

Region	Eligible schools*	Total	% schools
East of England	2902	2241	77%
East Midlands	2294	1577	69%
North East	1284	887	68%
South East	4047	2686	66%
West Midlands	2668	1974	74%
London	3048	2058	68%
Yorkshire and Humber	2503	1879	75%
North West	3632	2345	65%
South West	2676	1679	66%

*eligible schools includes independent schools

Registrations and achievement of Healthy Schools status as at 20 Jan 09

Region	Eligible schools	Participating	% participating	Achieved	% achieved
East of England	2589	2470	95%	1580	61%
East Midlands	2084	1987	95%	1345	65%
North East	1182	1152	97%	812	69%
South East	3368	3280	97%	2404	71%
West Midlands	2389	2366	99%	1701	71%
London	2428	2382	98%	1739	72%
Yorks and Humber	2290	2238	98%	1726	75%
North West	3198	3142	98%	2456	77%
South West	2366	2360	100%	1881	80%

Our evidence suggests that the Local Authority co-ordinators do mention some of the links that Travel Plans and Healthy Schools have with Sustainable Schools but that there is no real connection.

Therefore there is a route here in every Local Authority that could open the relevant doorways and start schools recognising that they have already made a good start on the Sustainable Schools Framework.

Similarly, if these co-ordinators could help schools reflect their activities as part of Sustainable Schools in the appropriate part of the Ofsted self-evaluation form, that would be major progress.

Once the schools see their way in, they can look at other doorways – and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can really help with this.

Contribution from NGOs

An enormous number of NGOs are working in this sector, seeking to deliver many aspects and aims of Sustainable Schools. Many offer recognition schemes (such as the RSPB, UNICEF, RHS) and some are mentioned in the document 'Sustainable Schools: How national recognition schemes can support your school's progress', which can be found at www.teachernet.gov.uk Two different approaches, and their potential use to schools, are profiled below.

Eco-Schools in England status as at 20 Jan 09 – data supplied by ENCAMS

Region	Eligible schools*	Registered	Bronze	Silver	Flag	Total	% schools
East of England	2589	479	341	215	59	1094	42%
East Midlands	2084	357	323	253	100	1033	50%
North East	1182	181	195	154	40	570	48%
South East	3368	683	628	403	156	1870	55%
West Midlands	2389	544	459	302	158	1463	61%
London	2428	434	279	147	40	900	37%
Yorkshire and Humber	2290	341	252	145	44	782	34%
North West	3198	821	609	424	152	2006	63%

Eco-Schools is an international award programme which guides schools on their sustainable journey providing a framework to help embed these principles into the heart of school life. The Eco School programme's Green Flag award is endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a global indicator of excellence in sustainability. It is delivered by the charity Keep Britain Tidy across England.

Around half of all schools have to date registered with Eco-Schools, and a similar number have achieved the self-regulated Bronze award. Fewer have achieved the Silver award and a much smaller proportion have succeeded in achieving the Green Flag. However, the schools that have achieved the Green Flag are actually a long way towards being a Sustainable School and this is something that could also be picked up by Local Authority co-ordinators.

Groundwork's **One World Schools** works with children in and out of school to illustrate how our individual actions can make a difference to both our immediate surroundings and the global environment. Groundwork works with all school stakeholders including governors, bursars and premises officers together with teachers, classroom assistants and pupils. Groundwork is often able to advise schools on potential sources of funding to cover Sustainable Development thus offering potential resource for Local Authority co-ordinators.

There are two umbrella bodies, involved in this agenda both supported by the DCSF. **SEEd** (Sustainability and Environmental Education) and the **DEA** (the Development Education Association). SEEd works to deliver a joined up approach to the vital contribution NGOs are making towards delivering the Sustainable Schools Framework. DEA is an education charity that promotes global learning so that children and young people in the UK have a good understanding of the wider world. Both have publicly committed to sharing, learning and developing new ideas and seek to understand what changes are happening through relationships with government, business, teachers and NGOs.

The Sustainable Schools Framework

Our regional evidence shows that the awareness of the Sustainable Schools Framework is probably higher than initially assumed. An interesting backdrop is a recent measurement of how many people have taken the trouble to get information on the Sustainable Schools Framework. In the last two years, the DCSF has created a number of resources which have been made available either by download from the Sustainable Schools website or by ordering a hardcopy via Prolog.

The following results represent both hard copy and download totals from 1 Jul 08 until 30 Nov 08, including an average monthly run total. The line items highlighted represent the key documents supporting the delivery of a Sustainable School.

The table on the next page shows that awareness does not seem to be the problem – but clarity around the goals of Sustainable Schools and delivering those goals in conjunction with support from local and regional government is where the challenges lie. The regional evidence gathered is split into observations from regional, local and school levels – giving a general snapshot of the progress of Mainstreaming Sustainable Schools across England.



Document	Date published	Downloads (1/7 to 30/11/08)	Hard Copies Ordered (1/7 to 30/11/08)	Total	Monthly run-rate
Top tips for sustainable purchasing in schools	Oct-08	538	486	1,024	205
Top tips to develop the global dimension in schools	Sep-08	372	1,674	2,046	409
Planning a Sustainable School: Driving school improvement through Sustainable Development	Apr-08	2,261	2,532	4,793	959
Sustainable School self-evaluation tool (s3)	Jul-08	311	1,519	1,830	366
Sustainable Schools National Framework poster	Apr-08	1,068	2,454	3,522	704
Sustainable Schools teaching resource: Primary	Dec-07	1,448	1,374	2,822	564
Sustainable Schools teaching resource: Secondary	Dec-07	728	679	1,407	281
Climate change film pack: Guidance for teaching staff	Nov-07	365	58	423	85
Top tips for sustainable school travel	Sep-07	454	1,686	2,140	428
A governor's guide to Sustainable Schools	Jun-07	1,577	2,153	3,730	746
Top tips to reduce waste in schools	May-07	725	857	1,582	316
Top tips to reduce energy and water use in schools	May-07	720	579	1,299	260
A bursar's guide to sustainable school operation	Apr-07	725	2,023	2,748	550
Sustainable Schools: A brief introduction	December 2006, updated October 2008	1,084	662	1,746	349
		12,376	18,736	31,112	6,222

Findings from the Regions

As part of the information gathering process, each English region was asked to conduct a survey of 12 schools in areas that the researcher was not familiar with. Each school was asked the same set of questions:

Regional 12 School Analysis

If the school has registered for any of the schemes around at the moment eg Breathing places, Eco-Schools etc	84%
If the school has undertaken additional activities as a direct result of registering for a scheme.	73%
If the school has make links between the Healthy Schools, travel plans and other schemes and Sustainable Schools.	76%
If the school has reported their Sustainable School activities in their SEF and if so, would they be prepared to share the information.	26%
If the school has worked closely with any particular NGO	41%

The proportions of this exercise were fairly consistent across the regions. Therefore this analysis shows:

- Schools are keen to register to schemes that are free and offer them something in return, usually resources, online or real.
- Schools claim that this does stimulate additional activity.
- These schools also claim to make the links to Sustainable Schools but then fail to report it on their self-evaluation form.
- NGOs are a significant provider/ contributor to the work schools do in this area.

- Awareness of Sustainable Schools may be greater than had been thought but activity is restricted to current schemes and fails to stimulate the schools to go further.

A review of the regional evidence has highlighted issues as well as good practice at Regional, Local and School levels.

Regional Level

- Government Office support for the Schools Framework has been central to the progress that has been made in Mainstreaming Sustainable Schools but different Government Offices have concentrated resources in different ways.
- Some Government Offices have appointed dedicated staff to develop networks for sharing best practice, disseminating the available resources and promoting the Sustainable Schools Framework to Local Authorities in their region.
- Some Government Offices have concentrated their resources into developing networks and contacts to undertake research into gaps in the provision of information about sustainability that cause barriers to the mainstreaming process in the region.
- There is a lack of clarity in what is expected of Government Offices and their Local Authorities as to who should be leading at which level in the process. This has resulted in the different emphases in different regions and a lack of ownership and priority at some points in the process.
- Some Government Offices feel there is a gap between them and schools and feel they have had little involvement in the Regional Sustainable Schools Awards process for example. They appear to have little feedback from the schools and operate in isolation to some degree.

- There is a need for development of contacts between Government Offices, the Sustainable Schools Framework and Initial Teacher Training establishments so that newly qualified teachers recognise they can make a contribution to the whole school approach regardless of their specialisms or key stages.
- Although networks have been developed in most regions, there is still scope for greater flexibility, inclusion and expansion of these networks to cater for the broader participation that is needed as understanding and participation becomes more widely accepted. They have strived to be joined up at the beginning but now need to ensure they are as fully inclusive as possible in order to mainstream the Sustainable Schools Framework.

Local Level

- Very mixed picture with Local Authorities - with some very different levels of engagement, some very supportive, some aware but not promoting and some doing nothing.
- Many Local Authorities do not see it as a priority because there is no measured product required or targets set that they need to report on.
- As above Children and Young Peoples Services do not see it as a priority.
- Where there is committed Local Authority support, funding is often provided to support additional activity.
- Lack of clarity about the links between Local Area Agreements and the Sustainable Schools Framework which is hindering the perception of the Sustainable Schools Framework as having any degree of priority within Local Authorities.

- There is a perceived need to help Local Authorities recognise the added value that NGOs can contribute to this agenda directly in schools and how they can encourage and support this type of approach including sharing of best practice.
- Some Local Authorities have nominated a lead person for the Sustainable Schools Framework to ensure ownership and to enable the cross dept working within the Local Authority that is so essential for success at school level.
- There is evidence that this is still a work in progress for many Local Authorities.
- Many Local Authorities understand the contribution made by Healthy Schools, Travel Plans etc and tend to rely on the statistics for these initiatives to demonstrate their involvement in the Sustainable Schools Framework. This leads to confusion at all levels, and may give a falsely positive picture about how much real engagement is taking place under the Sustainable Schools Framework at school level (the 12 Schools Table above suggests 76% for example, but staff conducting the regional surveys estimate it's closer to 20% of real engagement.
- Individuals working in a range of Local Authority departments may be passionate about this agenda but this can lead to one department having an undue emphasis in their schools and failure to promote the whole school approach.

School Level

- There is a misconception that there should be an end product and that there must be some kind of end point when a school can claim to be sustainable. Schools want to know how they decide when this point has been reached.

- Many schools are not really clear on what they are being asked to do as there are so many choices in doorways and routes through the Sustainable Schools Framework.
- The importance of this agenda is recognised by staff and there is plenty of enthusiasm but this is tempered by the perception that there is insufficient time to do it with everything else they have to do.
- Schools respond best in those Local Authorities where sustainability is being promoted through a range of other initiatives.
- The Sustainable Schools Framework tools are useful where they have been properly read and understood. Many schools however have only given them a superficial study and then developed the perception that it is rather daunting.
- Some schools not engaged in Sustainable Schools remain unconvinced about the value added to pupil achievement in schools actively involved in the Sustainable Schools Framework.
- Many schools that have made good progress feel this is due to a nominated and usually dedicated individual taking the lead to coordinate the Sustainable Schools Framework activities. Some schools have given official recognition to such a role.
- The greatest numbers of schools that are most advanced in their progress towards becoming sustainable appear to be based in regions where: Government Offices have dedicated schools coordinators working in cooperation with Local Authorities, who in turn have nominated individuals working with schools where there are lead members of staff who can promote and disseminate best practice and encourage the 'whole school approach' essential to success.

Case Study

Bydales Technology College

Marske by the Sea, Cleveland, TS11 6AR

Bydales Technology College is a medium-sized state secondary school in Redcar and Cleveland Borough, in the North East region. They are situated in Marske by the Sea, a coastal village, and have a large playing field with woodland on the west boundary, the beach on the North, housing to the South boundary and a main road/housing to the East. The school was rebuilt under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme in 2006 and their partner is Carillion.

The school began its sustainability journey in 2003 by taking part in a Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council funded / Groundwork South Tees led project focussing on schools doing the Eco-Schools programme. The school worked through the Eco-Schools topics, carrying out various actions from recycling different materials to creating a memorial garden in the school grounds, energy saving drives to healthy living initiatives. The eco-committee invited BioRegional, an environmental charity, to visit the school when the re-build was being planned, and the committee (made up of pupils, staff, community members and local voluntary sector and local authority staff) decided to include sustainability features in the new build. Specifically, they wanted a large wind turbine in the field, solar panels and a wetland on the school field. The wind turbine was



declined planning permission but the school was successful in obtaining a small wind turbine, solar panel and hydrogen fuel cell, although these are mainly used for awareness and education as they are not large-scale enough to generate sufficient electricity.

The school has held annual 'Eco-Weeks' since becoming an Eco-School in 2003, where pupils are taken off their usual curriculum timetable to take part in activities with an Sustainable Development theme. During these weeks, partner organisations, such as local NGO's, businesses and community groups, lead groups of young people in their learning about Sustainable Development.

The Director of Technology College / Assistant Head Teacher, Mrs Seana Rice, now leads Sustainable Schools initiatives in the school, and, with the help of the Education Officer from Groundwork South Tees, applied for £5000 from the National College of School Leadership to form a 'Community of Practice' of Sustainable Schools in their local area. Initially they involved five partner primaries in the project but have since expanded this to include two secondaries also, and have supported another cluster of Sustainable Schools in setting up their own Community of Practice. Activities the cluster have collaborated on to date include the writing of a research project on Leadership of Sustainable Schools, bringing a Climate Change Exhibition to Bydales - visited by seven other schools and was open to community groups during evenings and a drop in session during the weekend. They also worked with local businesses in Marske to make a 'no plastic bag village' – with pupils designing reusable bags, which have been made up and are now on sale. The school is also leading on a community eco-footprinting scheme, obtaining the footprints of local people and school visitors using the WWF online resource.

The school, as part of it's enterprise scheme, has a Fair Trade shop in the foyer, which sells various products from around the world and is open during lunchtimes, break times and during community events. Staff have also worked with Groundwork South Tees to design and create an allotment on the grounds, built by pupils on a City and Guilds in Horticulture, who were previously

classed as hard to reach. They obtained £10,000 funding from Breathing Places (Big Lottery / BBC funding) to create the allotment and are hosting a CPD session, delivered by Groundwork South Tees and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, for schools in the area. They are also using the Breathing Places funding to improve the wetland, which was created as a land drain when the new building was created.

The school is currently at Eco-Schools Silver award, and due to apply for Green Flag this academic year. They won Gold at the Redcar and Cleveland School Travel Planning Awards and also won a prize at the Renew Tees Valley Energy and Environment Awards. It is taking part in Healthy Schools and Mrs Rice is a representative on the Redcar and Cleveland Sustainable Schools Network, which is made up of NGO, Local Authority and School staff and is dedicated to raising the awareness of Sustainable Schools Framework in the borough, currently the group is consulting on the development of a corporate strategy to cover the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Framework, with funding from Government Office North East.

Conclusion

By showcasing the Bydales Technology College in Cleveland, we have saved the best until last. This school has taken up what is on offer from the Local Authority, Eco-Schools and Groundwork. It has attained funding from the Government Office. It has joined up all the available support and has a nominated staff member (in this case, the deputy head teacher) in the school to spearhead the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Framework.

For some, the Sustainable Schools Framework by 2020 is perceived as a distant target. Although staff and pupils alike are willing, they need clarity on goals and clear direction on where they can get the Local Authority or NGOs support at a local level.

In order for there to be more examples like Bydales Technology College the single thing that would make the difference is to move from notional support to nominated support at regional, local and school level.



This summary was compiled by Groundwork UK, with evidence gathered from Groundwork's education practitioners in each English region.

March 2009