

St. Mac Dara's Community College



St. Mac Dara's Environmental and Sustainability Policy

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Mission Statement

We, the community of this College, through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad-based education for all, to foster respect and dignity and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their potential.

Policy Introduction

In St. Mac Dara's Community College we care greatly about environmental issues and as a result we are part of An Taisce's Green School Programme. This involves setting up a committee of teachers, pupils and parents?

The aim is to make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and ethos of the school. These efforts are awarded through An Taisce's Green Flags for schools. This is central to our mission statement in St. Mac Daras's, by using "a collective approach to provide a broad based education for all" and to "promote a safe and just environment".

Green Flag

The Green-Schools programme (internationally known as "Eco-Schools") promotes and acknowledges longterm, whole school action for the environment. In Ireland, Green-Schools is run by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce (The National Trust for Ireland) in partnership with local authorities and corporate sponsors.

It started in Ireland since 1997 and has grown each year. Currently well over a half of all Irish schools are participating, and over 2,000 schools have been awarded flags (www.greenschoolsireland.org).

The aim of Green Schools is to increase students' awareness of environmental issues through classroom studies and to transfer this knowledge into positive environmental action in the school and in the wider community. A seven-step process (similar to the EMS/ISO 14001 certification/EU EMAS (Eco-Management Audit Scheme) sees schools tackling the issues of waste and litter, then energy, water and transport and more.

Student involvement is a priority, and as such we will include students from across year groups and aim to have at least two members from the Student Council on board.

The award must be re-applied for every two years.

Need for Policy

An environmental policy is necessary for the following reasons:

- 3.1 Care of the person (*cura personalis*): a clean and healthy working environment and respect for the wider environment are necessary for the personal development of each individual associated with the school. High standards in caring for the environment enrich the carer as well as protect the environment;
- 3.2 Environmental problems: The College must be aware of, and respond to, unprecedented environmental challenges: the rapid use of fossil fuels and resultant global warming, future oil shortages, the scarcity of clean water, the creation and disposal of rubbish, protection of plant and animal species and ecosystems, and related issues;
- 3.3 Sustainable development: development that meets the needs of the present generation should not jeopardise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Ireland is committed to this principal, and signed up for Agenda 21 (the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992), and the Department of Environment has a Sustainable Development Strategy. We in St Mac Dara's support the concept of sustainable development;
- 3.4 Legal Requirements: The College must comply with the letter and the spirit of relevant Irish and EU environmental laws, directives and regulations;
- 3.5 Economic reasons: the conservation and wise use of electricity, heating fuel, water and other resources, and the minimisation of waste, will save the College money;
- 3.6 College pride: to give the College community pride in its physical surroundings and approach to environmental issues. St Mac Dara's is used by visitors every year, and it is important that school is, and looks, clean and tidy. The sports grounds should be litter-free to reflect well on the school.

Policy Objectives

Through this policy St Mac Dara's intends:

4.1 to promote environmental awareness and conservation amongst the College community, and to encourage it to actively participate in solving environmental issues affecting the school;

4.2 to encourage staff and students to examine and interpret the environment through the subject areas of the curriculum, and to be aware of it through co-curricular activities;

4.3 to provide students and staff with an appropriate environmental education so that they acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment both locally and globally;

4.4 to promote the concept of "reduce, re-use, recycle" amongst students and staff;

4.5 to reduce any waste of energy and resources amongst students and staff, and thereby reduce the Community's ecological and carbon footprint;

4.6 to ensure that visitors to the College respect the College environment and leave a minimal environmental impact

Policy Aims

- To achieve the Waste & Litter and Biodiversity Green School flags by 2022
- To understand the impact of the actions of people on the environment
- To explore how we can enhance our environment for future generations through energy conservation, reducing waste, composting, recycling and reuse
- To promote animal husbandry through the acquisition and care of hens on site
- To become aware of the impact of air, water, waste and litter pollution on natural and manmade environments
- Develop an understanding of conservation e.g. Recycling, energy and water
- Develop responsible ownership of the classroom and school environment
- Promote alternative methods of transport to and from school e.g. cycling, scooting and walking to school.
- To foster a sense of responsibility for the long term care of the environment and a commitment to promote the sustainable use of the Earth's resources through personal lifestyle and participation in collective environmental decision making.
- To enable the child to live as an informed and caring member of Local, National, European and Global Communities.
- To acquire open, critical and responsible attitudes towards the environment.

- Through explanation, investigation and hands on experiences the children will acquire skills to help care for our environment immediately and have a long term impact. This will be achieved through planting vegetable patches, wildflower meadows and tending to our hens.

Policy Implementation

The College will endeavor to implement the goals by means of the following.

- **Green Flag activities:** by using the Action Plan as a practical means of involving students and staff, and by monitoring its goals on a regular basis. The re-award of the Flag depends on the implementation of the Action Plan.
- **Legal compliance:** by complying with relevant Irish and EU environmental laws, regulations and directives.
- **Energy conservation:** by striving to reduce College use of electricity (for example, switch off lights when not in use, use automatic sensor switches, programming computers to switch off a fixed time after log out).
- **Heating/lighting:** by adjusting the heating systems to avoid overheating, and reducing heat loss through doors and windows.
- **Recycling and Conservation:** by recycling efficiently. The College currently recycles paper, cardboard, plastic bottles with the implementation of our reusable bottles and lunch boxes campaign. We plan to introduce a food waste programme in the near future

By conserving paper: College policy asks staff to minimise the amount of photocopying they do and to use the print to file functions on our new copiers. Your information for classes will be saved and can then be shared via the Interactive Whiteboards and the use of Microsoft teams. Many important College policies are now shared via Microsoft 365 and the Teams functions

Teachers' notes and homework can be made increasingly accessible via Microsoft Teams and in future, as appropriate, and more homework can be done on-line.

The use of text messages to parents' mobile phones has greatly reduced the need to print and send notes home in schoolbags.

- **Waste Management:** by segregating waste appropriately, and disposing of each type of waste correctly. Litter control is an integral part of this: students must be encouraged to be responsible and keep classrooms clean. The College strives to ensure that all bins are clearly marked Recycle / General Waste. We are also introducing a compost bin to every classroom, base area and staff room.

- **Sports Grounds:** by keeping the sports grounds litter-free, and recycling waste from them. This is a whole school approach, enhanced by weekly litter pickups by the TY's and the introduction of weekly pickups in CSPE classes.
- **Transport:** by reducing transport-related carbon emissions by encouraging the use of public transport; walking, cycling, scooting and carpooling to and from school
- **Purchasing Policy:** The College should consider the environmental aspects of the acquisition, use and disposal of goods and services, when these are purchased. For example, switching to recycled paper; purchasing Fair Trade goods; when purchasing food, take "food miles" into account and use local suppliers where possible; for cleaning materials and chemicals, use green detergents where possible
- **Surroundings:** by encouraging students to grow trees/plants/flowers to enhance their environment through our sensory garden and the planting of wild flower gardens.
- **Water Conservation:** The introduction of the storage of rain water to use for irrigation of any ecology projects and outdoor and indoor plants.
- **Hens:** We are currently in the process of introducing a sustainable small farmhold area for holding hens, with a foster home in place for the hens during the summer.
- **Bug Hotels:** Bug hotels are being introduced to encourage solitary pollinators in the school.

Achieving Objectives

To achieve the objectives of this policy St Mac Dara's will:

7.1 fully involve the Maintenance Department;

7.2 continue the College's Green-Schools involvement;

7.3 give re-use and recycling a high profile and include environmental issues in school assemblies;

7.4 promote awareness through the school Newsletter, the school website and the school twitter page

7.5 increase environmental education across the curriculum and in co-curricular activities; for example, TY presentations to CSPE classes throughout the school

7.6 encourage participation in environmental competitions, exhibitions, seminars and lectures,

7.7 inform students, staff and parents of achievements in this area.

7.8 ensure that "green" criteria, including energy efficiency, are used and promoted in any new buildings/ re-builds/restoration work.

Evaluation

This effectiveness of this policy can be judged from the following indicators:

8.1 a litter-free, clean school environment;

8.2 the retention of the Green Flag and the obtaining of further Green Flags;

8.3 reduced bills for electricity, heating fuel, and water and for waste disposal.

Policy reviews will be organised by the Board of Management on a regular basis, involving the College Administration, the Maintenance Department, the Green Committee and the Student Council.

Signed:  Principal.

Date: 29/3/2022

Signed:  Chairperson Board of Management.

Date: 29/3/2022.