

### Education for Sustainable Development

Schools are strongly encouraged, in preparing their school development plan, to address ways in which they might promote sustainable development through the school's teaching and learning, leadership and management and engagement with its community.

Schools are at the forefront of sustainable development – through their core function of delivering high quality and relevant education, they have a central role in equipping our young people with the skills and attitudes they need to sustain our future economic and social development in the medium and longer term. That includes the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, as well as the self-confidence and social responsibility that are so important in shaping the entrepreneurs, employers, employees and community representatives of the future.

The most widely known international definition of Sustainable Development is:

*“Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup>*

Sustainable development seeks to improve the quality of people's lives without compromising the life-support system on which we all depend – the earth. It involves thinking differently about how we live and work and is itself sustained by the skills, knowledge, innovation and creativity of citizens.

The Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>2</sup> points out that it is important for young people to develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours needed to live more sustainably through their formal and informal education. This can be achieved through the promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across the curriculum and through particular curricular areas such as Personal Development & Mutual Understanding/Learning for Life and Work.

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Common Future (The Brundtland Report) – Report of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development, as quoted in Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland: First Steps Towards Sustainability.*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/sustain-develop.pdf>

However, ESD is more than environmental and citizenship education. The focus is on a concern for people and, in the context of schools, encompasses:

- Curriculum – motivating and equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to make informed and responsible decisions, promote healthy lifestyles and progress to future education and employment;
- Campus – the construction and operation of the school’s buildings, its internal and external environment (including to support the delivery of the curriculum), and the management of its resources (e.g. waste management, energy efficiency, procurement procedures, fair trade, active travel); and
- Community links – addressing the school’s relationships with its local community and working in partnership with other schools, colleges, business and voluntary and statutory agencies, and community groups, for example through extended services and the community use of school premises<sup>3</sup>.

Schools can therefore provide an exemplar of sustainable development in action, helping to build coherence among a range of school policies and practices for the benefit of children and their families.

Many schools recognise the potential of sustainable development to transform the experiences and outcomes of pupils, whilst improving the environmental performance of the school and contributing to sustainable communities.

However, it is recognised that schools are at different stages in promoting ESD and will identify priorities on the basis of their own self-evaluation.

A range of materials are available to support schools in considering ways in which they might promote sustainable development:

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<sup>3</sup> Article 140 of the 1989 Education Reform Order enables school Governors/trustees and managers to consider making school premises available (when not required by or in connection with the school) for use by members of the community served by the school.

- *The Education for Sustainable Development Good Practice Guide*, available via <http://www.selbclounagh.org/files/ESD2005.pdf>.
- The ETI report on *Effective Practice in Education for Sustainable Development in a Sample of Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools in Northern Ireland*, available via <http://www.etini.gov.uk/>.
- DE Guidance on *Community Use of School Premises*, to be made available via [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).
- DE Guidance on *Community Relations, Equality & Diversity Policy*, available via [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).
- The Equality Commission provides advice and publications to support schools in promoting equality and good relations, available via <http://www.equalityni.org/>, such as *Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts - A Strategy to meet our needs for the 21st Century*.
- The Sustainable Development Commission produces a range of materials and case studies, available via [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/northern\\_ireland.php](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/northern_ireland.php) and <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/schools.html>
- Eco-Schools, available via <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>
- The Environmental Education Forum NI, which has produced a resource guide, available via <http://www.eefni.org.uk/>.
- Resources produced for schools in England, available via <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/>.
- The Education for Sustainable Development & Global Citizenship website for schools in Wales, available via <http://www.esd-wales.org.uk/english/welcome.asp>.
- Sustainability and Environmental Education exists to enable the education sector to engage with ESD and environmental education, available via <http://www.se-ed.org.uk/>
- Resources are also available from a range of charities and interest groups.