Sustainability Policy Statement

Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maol

Introduction

This policy was the result of the collaboration of the staff together with the Board of Management.

Rationale

All public service bodies are required under the Climate Action Plan to adhere to the Public Service Climate Action Mandate – and to develop Climate Action Roadmaps setting out how they will deliver on their energy efficiency and emission reduction targets.

Schools now have a separate Climate Action Mandate under which they are required to adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement. The School Sector Climate Action Mandate can be read in full here: gov.ie - School Sector Climate Action Mandate (www.gov.ie)

The second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030 also informs the content of the following Sustainability Policy Statement template.

ESD aims to ensure that "by 2030, all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development". (Sustainable Development Goal 4.7)

The following has been prepared as part the School Sector Climate Action Mandate, and in keeping with the principles and themes of ESD to 2030, and has been accepted by the Board of Management of our school.

Purpose

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement ("the Statement") is to outline how our school promotes sustainability and climate action, through our actions and activities. Sustainability can be defined as the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future.

Scope

Sustainability is a community issue and applies to all students, teachers and employees of our school. Parents and guardians should note, and where possible, promote, the Statement. The Board of Management of the school will ensure that decisions made in respect of the school align with the Statement.

Vision, mission and values

Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maol's Vision, Mission, and Core Values:

- Our school's vision is to cultivate a nurturing environment where every student is empowered to excel academically, socially, and personally, fostering a lifelong love for learning and a commitment to making positive contributions to society.

- Our school's mission is to provide a dynamic and inclusive education that celebrates diversity, promotes critical thinking, and instils a strong sense of responsibility towards oneself and others. Through innovative teaching practices and a supportive community, we aim to inspire our students to become compassionate leaders who embrace challenges with resilience and empathy.
- Our school's values are deeply rooted in excellence in education, care, equality, community, and respect. We strive to uphold these core principles in all aspects of school life, ensuring that every member of our community feels valued, supported, and respected.
- Our commitment to sustainability, environmental awareness, and climate action aligns seamlessly with our core values. We believe that by fostering a culture of responsibility and stewardship, we can empower our students to become proactive agents of change in safeguarding our planet for future generations. Through interdisciplinary learning experiences and community partnerships, we integrate environmental education into our curriculum, promoting sustainable practices and encouraging students to explore innovative solutions to global challenges. In doing so, we reinforce our dedication to excellence, care, equality, and respect, while fostering a strong sense of community and collective responsibility towards building a more sustainable and equitable world.

Whole School Approach to Sustainability

- Our school has adopted this Sustainability Policy Statement. It clearly details the aims and objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in our school, its relationship to the vision and mission of the school.
- Our school recognises Education for Sustainable Development as a cross-curricular theme, and this is co-ordinated effectively in our school. Opportunities are identified to introduce and address sustainability in the classroom, across all subjects i.e. S.E.S.E & S.P.H.E.
- The whole together will work together to develop the knowledge, skills, values and world-views necessary for people to act in ways that contribution to more sustainable living.
- All our school policies are aligned to the principles of sustainable development.
- Resources to assist in the teaching of sustainability are adequate and sufficient at all levels.
- Our school carries out regular self-evaluation of our teaching practices in the area of sustainable development.
- Our school is a member of the Irish Schools Sustainability Network (www.ISSN.ie)
- Our school keeps up to date with developments in ESD including by being registered for the quarterly ESD Newsletter

Environmental sustainability

Green-Schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues from the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of their school.

Our school is part of the Green Schools Programme and we were awarded our seventh green school's flag based on the theme Global Citizenship and Energy. in 2024.

Our school has a Coiste Glas comprising staff and students whose role is to reduce, reuse and recycle where possible. Our Green Schools Committee serves as the driving force behind fostering sustainability and environmental awareness within the school. They aim to foster a culture of environmental consciousness, help create a greener, more resilient future for current and future generations and empower the whole school community to become stewards of the environment.

Our school engages with SEAI Education & Youth Programme's curriculum linked energy Resources, pupil Workshops and teacher CPD

Our school engages with the SEAI Energy in Education resources and energy management tools in order to monitor and report energy consumption. It is our intention to reduce energy consumption as much as possible. We also follow the SEAI's guidance - Schools | Community Energy | SEAIhttps://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/

Our school engages with Global Goal Getters programme, One World, Trocaire in the area of sustainable development

Our school has a comprehensive and cohesive recycling policy in place and uses recycled and recyclable materials whenever possible. We swap old school uniforms, books and are a collection point for old batteries.

Our school has comprehensive practices in place in respect of water usage and conservation, waste, food waste, single use plastics, energy etc.

Our school resources are procured and utilised taking into consideration their impact on the environment. We share resources where possible rather than having a set for all classes i.e. maths sets, dictionaries, calculators etc.

Our school environment clearly displays information on sustainability and sustainable practices in prominent and accessible places.

Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment – we have regular litter pick ups.

Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning and gardening where possible and visit the local community garden.

Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity - we have a small wild meadow area, have planted over 50 native small trees and have a small vegetable garden. We have swift boxes and have insect hotel.

Our school promotes sustainable transport including where possible, walking and cycling to school.

Our school engages with the Safe Routes to School programme: https://greenschoolsireland.org/saferoutestoschool/

Our school engages with programmes that support and promote Environmental education such as, Picker Pals.

Our school engages with Global Citizenship Education programmes such as World Wise Global Schools https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/ or other programmes working in this area.

The needs of all students in recognition of differentiated physical or learning abilities, are taken into consideration and accommodated where possible.

All school staff are provided with the training in the area of conflict resolution, in order to support and affect positive student behaviour.

Economic Sustainability

A non-competitive ethos of co-operation and sharing of resources is modelled in our school's allocation of its resources.

Students are provided with opportunities to learn small business skills such as mini company i.e. Junior Entrepreneur Programme.

Cultural Sustainability

Our school ethos aims to foster students' self-esteem, along with a mutual regard and respect for fellow students, and positive social interaction and relationships.

Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement and encourages the community's involvement with the school.

Teacher Competence

Our teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD e.g. CPD in this area.

Student Competence

Our students are encouraged and supported to participate in peer-to-peer learning activities

Our school has a Student Council and Green Schools Committee who are very proactive and hard working;

Our students are encouraged to volunteer for local community action on sustainability projects such as Ballina Tidy Towns.

Implementation and review

This Statement was implemented on 02/10/24. To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed every 2 years or more frequently if necessary.