



Sustainability Policy Statement

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Milford Grange National School



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Milford National School

Milford Grange National School, Plassey Park Rd, Sreelane, Castletroy, Co. Limerick, V94 W3W4 Tel: 061-339123

Sustainability Policy Statement



Scoil Áth'a Mhuilinn

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 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://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 Milford National 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 Milford National 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

The **mission** of Milford National School is to promote the fullest possible development of the child as a whole person.

To help achieve this ideal, **Milford National School** will provide a broad education in line with the curriculum Guidelines for Primary Schools allowing each child to reach the highest level of academic attainment consonant with his/her abilities and talents.

Milford National School recognises that the parents/guardians are the primary educators and that it is only through co-operation between the parents/guardians and the school that our ideal can be realised.

The **aims** of Milford National School are:

- To be a school of educational excellence providing a broad-based education for all pupils
- To promote the highest possible development of each child as an individual and as a member of society
- To encourage sound moral values, attitudes and habits leading to the child’s spiritual fulfilment
- To engender a spirit of ecumenism and dialogue in the pupils leading to an understanding of religious traditions and cultures other than their own
- To endeavour to create in each child an awareness of his/her own dignity and the dignity of others through encouraging a respect for the

rights and opinions of others irrespective of their race, social background, sex or religion

- To create in the child an awareness of the need to show compassion and care for less fortunate members of the community and to help form a true Christian conscience
- To enable the child to see himself/herself as a member of his/her local community and to encourage him/her to participate fully in community activities
- To encourage in the children a respect for property both personal and communal, in the school and in the environment
- To help the child towards a proper understanding of Irish culture, heritage and traditions
- To encourage in pupils an awareness of equality and a spirit of tolerance

Our school's vision is: We, in Milford National School, dedicate ourselves to providing a holistic education for our children, where potential and uniqueness of mind, heart, body and spirit are fostered and celebrated. In achieving this ideal we aim to promote self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence and a sense of belonging to our School Community. It is our goal to provide a culturally rich and multi-faceted education, striving for academic excellence, while mindful of the diverse learning needs of all our children.

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.
- 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 <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a1d6e-education-for-sustainable-development-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.

The first Green Schools committee was started in 2002 and the first Green Flag award was won by the school in 2003. Composting of organic matter, recycling of paper, ink-cartridges, batteries, plastic etc, a general clean-up of targeted areas around the school and the river-bank in U.L. and the setting up of an environmental and meditation area in the middle courtyard, were just some of the achievements of the first Green Flag committee. The school continued to pursue a strong environmental agenda for an Energy Awareness Programme in 2005, and for its Water Conservation Programme in 2007. In September 2009 the School Garden was started and located on the bank of ground at the side of the school. There are now eight working areas, one for each class grouping. There have been many bumper crops since September 2009, when the garden was first planted. Vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage, turnips, brussels sprouts, potatoes, herbs have been harvested.

The fourth Green Flag, in 2010, was won for the school's efforts for Sustainable Travel. Between May 2009 and May 2010 the school facilitated a reduction

from 80% to 40% in car use as a mode of transport to and from school. The fifth Green Flag was won in 2012 due to a two-year programme on Biodiversity. A Wildlife Area was established in 2011 and contains native trees, a log pile, butterfly, ladybird and bat boxes and in the summer boasts a variety of wild flowers. The front courtyard area was also developed as an Outdoor Classroom. Bird feeders set up in 2012 have increased the number of Bird Visitors to our school by almost 60%. In 2012 a CCTV camera was successfully installed into the Bird Watch House at the back of the school. .

The programme began with a review of waste management within the school. A competition was organised between classes. General waste reduction by over 50% and the majority of waste is now going to recycling. A clean-up of the locality was organised in conjunction with Annacotty Tidy Towns.

A raised awareness of Fairtrade was achieved by class visits from Fairtrade Limerick and the school entered the Fairtrade Christmas card competition. In March 2013 there was a Mayoral visit by Cllr Gerry McLoughlin, to launch Global Awareness projects, such as water conservation, support of charity shops such as Oxfam, supporting local produce etc.

The sixth Green Flag was won for the school's programme on Global Awareness and . International Day was held on February 5th 2014 to celebrate multi-culturalism within Milford NS. The children surveyed all the nationalities within the school. Each class picked a country and did a project on the chosen country. Many parents shared their expertise and knowledge with us. On the day the children created various international embassies in their classrooms and hosted visits from other classes, each child having their unique Milford NS passport stamped on entry. The children dressed in appropriate costumes, sang the songs of the chosen country, shared choice dishes from that country and answered questions. The day culminated in a multi-cultural parade after lunch in the school yard. The aim of the day was to raise awareness of different countries and different nationalities in our school.

On Thursday May 3rd our school was awarded its 8th Green Flag for the theme of Global Citizenship Marine Environment.

In conjunction with the above, previous Green Flag activities were maintained by

- 1.Litter Wardens cleaning the yard each day
- 2.Each class having a waste,energy and water monitor.
- 3.Regular visits from Geoff Hunt,environmentalist.

4. Maintaining bird feeders outside each class window over the winter.
5. Hosting regular WOW (Walk on Wednesdays) and COW (Cycle on Wednesdays) days.
6. Each class planting vegetables in the school garden
7. Maintenance of school Wildlife area.
8. Cooking the vegetables and showing the slow food process.
9. Bird houses hung on the North East side of the school.
10. Wild flower garden planted.

Our school has a Green Team comprising staff and students whose role is to promote environmental awareness, take action to improve sustainability, and implement eco-friendly initiatives such as energy conservation, waste reduction, and biodiversity enhancement. They lead projects like recycling programs, eco-themed events, and campaigns to foster a greener school environment.

- Our school engages with SEAI Education & Youth Programme's curriculum linked energy Resources, pupil Workshops and teacher CPD [Schools | Community Energy | SEAI](https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/)<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/>
- Our school engages with the [SEAI Energy in Education](#) resources and energy management tools in order to monitor and report energy consumption. Solar Panels have been installed in May 2024
- Our school engages with Green Schools, Picker Pals and Heritage in Schools in the area of sustainable development. We also created a film about Climate Change for the Fís Film Project.
- Student voice: We have a student council to promote the views of students on how we can reduce waste and be more energy efficient in our school.
- Awareness campaigns through SESE/SPHE curriculum: Staff and pupils are educated on how to conserve energy efficiently. Reducing unnecessary usage by switching off lights and electrical appliances when not in use. Reduction of our waste, children bring home uneaten food and we provide recycling bins and battery recycling.
- A new roof and doors have been installed in the past 2 years in Milford NS, this will benefit the school with heat management and energy conservation.

- Our school has a comprehensive and cohesive recycling policy in place, and uses recycled and recyclable materials whenever possible.
- Our school has comprehensive policies in place in respect of water conservation, waste, food waste, single use plastics and energy.
- Our school resources are procured and utilised taking into consideration their impact on the environment. We gather all the one sided printed paper for art activities or additional printing use. We create art from recycled materials. We enter art competitions with biodiversity and sustainability themes in order to spread awareness in our schools.
- 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. 6th class children complete a beach clean up as part of their annual school tour.
- Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning e.g. our school has a school garden and a courtyard area. We also have benches outside to facilitate outdoor learning in the fine weather. We endeavour to utilise our school environs and UL campus where we enjoy nature walks, river explorations and bird watching.
- Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity. We have a bug hotel, flower planters, lavender patch and vegetable garden area. We also have a meadow area in May where we have a strict No Mow May policy to encourage wildlife and facilitate biodiversity. Limerick County Council artist-in-residence, Ciara Normoyle, worked with students in 3rd and 6th classes, in collaboration with the teachers, over a period of 6 weeks on the theme of Biodiversity: Trees and Flying Insects (continuing our Cruinniú na gCrann theme) which culminated in wonderful wall-mounted ceramic leaves in the inner courtyard, as a fitting finish to celebrate Milford NS Year of Design 2015.
- Our school promotes sustainable transport including where possible, walking and cycling to school. We have a bicycle rack on the school grounds and actively encourage children to walk and cycle 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 e.g. ECO UNESCO, Green Schools, Picker Pals and Heritage in schools where biodiversity expert Geoff Hunt completes workshops with all classes.

Social Sustainability

- Our school ethos recognises the importance of and is sensitive to issues surrounding gender equity.

- Our students are provided with opportunities to develop and use their skills to participate in the solving of community problems at local level.
- Our school participates in Friendship Week and anti-bullying programmes.
- We engage in Wellbeing Wednesdays where each class completes lessons with the Weaving Wellbeing Programme. Classes enjoy Drop Everything and Dance, music in the yard, picnic lunches and less homework on Wednesdays.
- Our school ethos strives to prepare students for life as citizens of a global community.
- 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.
- Global Action Plan gives workshops on a range of Climate Action themes such as Biodiversity, Energy Conservation, Global Citizenship, Water, Water & Fast Fashion in Milford NS.
- The needs of all students in recognition of differentiated physical or learning abilities, are taken into consideration and accommodated.
- 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 involved in the decision-making process on resource allocation within our school. Our student council are involved in this process.
- Students are provided with opportunities to learn small business skills. e.g. Junior Entrepreneur Programme (JEP), Start Money Smart and Primary Times teaching children about the value of money.
- Our school's fund-raising activities reflect and actively demonstrate ethical and sustainable principles.
- Our school buildings are maintained to a high standard, with best practise in the area of sustainability in mind.
- Our school educates on, and promotes the principles of, a circular economy.

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 ethos, in tandem with the curriculum, strives to prepare students for life in an increasingly multicultural society.

- Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement, and encourages the community's involvement with the school.
- Our school has an active role in supporting cultural diversity both within the school itself, and in the wider school community.
- After earning our Green Flag for Global Awareness, 5th class worked on a mural with artist Ciara O'Dwyer and our school caretaker. The 3-dimensional wall mural depicts the inclusivity of Milford NS. "A Place for Every Face", may be found at the entrance to the school.

Teacher Competence

- Our Teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD. e.g. Summer course on Multimedia Projects on Climate and Sustainability by Oide Technology in Education and other providers of CPD programmes working in this area. A list was compiled and provided to inform teachers in our school of available CPD in the field of ESD.

Student Competence

- Our students are encouraged and supported to participate in peer to peer learning activities
- Our students are encouraged and supported to undertake action orientated projects eg. Creative Clusters with a focus on a sustainability, Bord na Mona Recycling and Upcycling project, Explorers Education Programme through the Explorers Ocean Champions School Project and the ESD art competition "What sustainability means to me", projects and in class tutorials with Irish Fisheries. The children in 6th class complete sustainability projects and present these to their classmates.
- Our school has a Student Council and Green Team who are involved in decisions about sustainable projects and initiatives.
- Our students are encouraged to volunteer for local community action on sustainability projects e.g. Tidy Towns, Picker Pals clean ups, Team Limerick Clean Up and other local community organisations working in this area. The children are encouraged to participate in local river clean ups and 6th class complete a beach clean up as part of their annual school tour.
- Our schools are involved in project based learning around real-life problems in the local community.
- We sign up for the Farm Safety webinars from AgriKids every year. The webinars offer a fabulous insight into work on Irish farms, and how the agricultural industry grows and produces food for us to consume.

Goals

Our school will aim to achieve our next Green Flag for Litter and Waste by 2026.

To align our school's Green Team goals with the *Looking At Our Schools* framework, focus on areas like "Leadership and Management" and "Teaching and Learning." We have set the following goals:

1. **Fostering student leadership** by involving students in environmental decision-making.
2. **Promoting active learning** through hands-on sustainability projects.
3. **Improving school culture** by embedding eco-friendly practices.
4. **Strengthening community ties** by collaborating on environmental initiatives.

These align with the standards of effective practice outlined in *Looking At Our Schools*.

Implementation, Communication, Monitoring and Review

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be implemented in October of 2024. In accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in Milford National School, and to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, it will be reviewed every two years, unless there is a compelling reason to review it earlier.

Ratified by the Board of Management, Milford Grange National School, Castletroy, Co. Limerick

Scheduled for review: **October 2026**

Signed Liam de Búrca

Date 16/10/2024

Chairperson