



St. Joseph's National School,

Hilltown, Ballymitty,

Co. Wexford.

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Principal: **Ms. Audrey McCarthy**

Sustainability Policy Statement

School Sector Climate Action Mandate | ESD to 2030

ROLL NUMBER	PUPILS	PRINCIPAL	STATUS
175540	142	Audrey McCarthy	Approved

1. Introduction

All public service bodies are required under the Climate Action Plan to adhere to the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. Schools have a separate School Sector Climate Action Mandate, under which they are expected to adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement.

This Statement is informed by Ireland's second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, ESD to 2030. It brings together what we are already doing in Ballymitty and the practical steps we hope to take next. Our aim is to help children understand and care for the world around them.

2. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Statement is to describe how St. Joseph's N.S., Ballymitty promotes sustainability and climate action through teaching, learning and everyday school life. For us, sustainability means looking after people, our school, our community and the natural world, while making sure that future generations can enjoy them too.

This Statement applies to all 142 pupils, the Board of Management, school leaders, teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff and others working in the school. Parents, guardians and community partners are invited to support its aims. The Board of Management will, where practicable, ensure that decisions made on behalf of the school align with this Statement.

3. Our vision, mission and values

St. Joseph's N.S. is a rural, co-educational Catholic primary school at the heart of the Ballymitty community. We have 142 pupils, including children in our three special classes for pupils with autism. We are surrounded by green fields and trees and can see the seasons changing around us. We want every child to feel welcome, safe and included in the life of the school.

Our school motto is Kind Hands, Kind Feet, Kind Words, Kind Hearts. We believe those kind hands and hearts should extend to how we treat our school grounds, our local community and the natural world. Sustainability in Ballymitty is not a separate subject or a once-off project; it is part of learning to care for our shared place.

This vision particularly supports SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

4. Whole-school approach

We will take a whole-school approach. Children, staff, families and the wider community all have something to contribute.

- School planning: our gardening committee will help coordinate the development and use of the garden, and we will consider sustainability when making relevant decisions about our grounds, resources and day-to-day practices.
- Teaching and learning: children will learn about sustainability through classwork, discussion and practical activity, both indoors and outside.
- Children's voice: pupils will be encouraged to suggest ideas, help to make decisions and take responsibility for suitable jobs in the garden and around the school.
- Inclusion: we will plan activities so that children with disabilities and additional needs can take part, with accessible routes, visual or sensory supports and adapted tools where needed.
- Staff learning: staff will share ideas and take part in useful professional development when opportunities arise.
- Community: parents, grandparents, local volunteers and groups including Ballymitty Hall, the Women's Shed and the Wexford Barn Owl Project will be welcomed to share their knowledge and help where appropriate.
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5. Our garden: current and developing strengths

We are not starting from scratch. Our rural setting, the work already completed through our garden project, Rooted in Inclusion, give us a strong base. The garden includes, or is being developed to include:

- our Rooted in Inclusion Garden Project, created as a place where every child can learn and belong;
- the Heptagon House, our central growing and STEAM hub, where children can sow, measure, observe, investigate and care for plants;
- a separate sheltered Outdoor Classroom for lessons, small-group work and community workshops, supported by tool storage and composting facilities;
- a sensory garden planned around sight, sound, touch, taste and smell, together with a Sensory Garden Hut, accessible paths and calm spaces for children who need them;
- a music area with seating and a small stage, where children can perform and make and use instruments from reused and recycled materials;
- a storytelling area beneath the trees for reading, oral language, drama, local stories and quiet reflection;
- our community garden, mini orchard of five apple trees and soft-fruit walk, where children and local people can plant, harvest and learn together;
- a community planting area and raised beds which children, families and local groups can use for growing;
- our honesty box, where produce grown in the garden is shared and sold, helping children learn about food, value, trust and the local community;
- a dedicated biodiversity and nature-discovery area, with a school-parent link to the Wexford Barn Owl Project, where children can learn about owl boxes, habitats, pollinators and local wildlife;
- an Enchanted Forest Walk which invites children to move, explore, imagine and notice nature closely;
- the ordinary daily work of reducing waste, saving water and energy and reusing what we can.

6. Commitments and actions, 2026-2027

During the 2026-2027 school year, we will focus on a small number of useful and achievable actions:

PRIORITY	COMMITMENT
Our policy	This Statement was approved by the Board of Management and is now published on the school website and will be reviewed it each year.
Children's voice	Through the Green School and a Gardening Committee and class groups, give pupils a clear role in choosing jobs, caring for the garden and sharing what they learn with other classes.
Using the garden	Make regular use of the Heptagon House, Outdoor Classroom, Sensory Garden and Hut, music and storytelling areas, orchard, soft-fruit walk, raised beds, biodiversity area and Enchanted Forest Walk across the school.

PRIORITY	COMMITMENT
Biodiversity	Build on our parent link with the Wexford Barn Owl Project and work with others who have local knowledge to improve habitats, explore owl-box possibilities and notice changes through the seasons.
Growing and composting	Grow some food in the raised beds and develop a manageable composting system so that children can learn what happens to food and garden waste.
Water and energy	Explore safe rainwater collection, sensible water use and suitable solar lighting in the garden, subject to safety, suitability and available funding.
Including everyone	Make sure that children in our three special classes and children with additional needs have real opportunities to use and care for the garden in ways that suit them. Our nurture groups will also use the garden to support relationships, confidence, wellbeing and regulation.
Working together	Develop the community planting area with children, families and local groups, including Ballymitty Hall and the Women's Shed, and invite the wider community to take part in practical activities during the year.
Sharing produce	Continue to use our honesty box for suitable garden produce, with children involved in growing, harvesting, presenting and deciding how any proceeds will support the garden.

7. Curriculum and learning

Sustainability fits naturally across the Primary School Curriculum, including Science, Geography, SPHE, Mathematics, Literacy, Visual Arts, Physical Education and wellbeing. Children will have opportunities to ask questions, observe, measure, record, solve problems and work together. Wherever possible, learning will lead to a practical action in the school or garden.

8. Responsible use of resources

- prevent waste and promote reduction, repair, reuse, recycling and composting before disposal;
- avoid unnecessary single-use materials and excess printing where practicable;
- buy durable and responsibly sourced items where this is practical and affordable;
- use energy and water responsibly and encourage pupils and staff to identify avoidable waste;
- care for school grounds without unnecessary harm to habitats, soil or biodiversity.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

We will review progress at least once each year. We may use children's feedback, photographs, classwork, planting and harvest records, simple biodiversity observations and records of community involvement. The purpose is to see what is working and decide what to do next, without creating unnecessary paperwork.

A brief update will be given to school leadership and the Board of Management. Where external funding is received, the school will keep the necessary financial records and complete any required report.

10. Communication, review and ratification

Following approval, this Statement will be published on the school website and communicated to the school community. It will be reviewed annually, or earlier if required by changes in Department guidance, school circumstances or identified priorities.

Adopted by the Board of Management on	Sept. 16 th 2026
Signed (Chairperson)	Mrs. Mary Hayward
Signed (Principal)	Ms. Audrey McCarthy
Next review date	September 2027