



Introductory Statement

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

Rationale

Rathcormac National School aims to become a sustainable school by reducing our ecological footprint through adopting sustainable practices in our everyday lives.

We will achieve this by integrating sustainability into many areas of the curriculum, instilling a sense of ownership and pride in improving the environment and participating in Green Schools.

We will aim to lead the community by demonstrating exemplary practices in waste management, water and energy usage, and develop the school grounds to promote biodiversity.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school

Sustainability is central to the ethos of Rathcormac National School and we strive to aesthetically reflect the natural beauty of our Parish of Drumcliffe and its countryside, identifying its local history and heritage.

Aims

By introducing this policy, our school hopes:

- To become aware of the impact of air, water, waste and litter pollution on natural and manmade environments.
- To develop an understanding of conservation e.g. Recycling, energy and water.
- To develop a responsible ownership of the classroom and school environment.
- To 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 life style 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
- To understand the actions that people can have on the environment.

Procedures and Guidelines

How to reduce the school's ecological footprint...

Energy

- Reduce the use of energy consumption within the school.
- Use resources and equipment as efficiently as possible.
- Include students in the process of developing and maintaining an energy efficient school through participation in Green Schools.

Waste

- To minimise rubbish and recycle our waste throughout the school, as much as possible.
- Students to take responsibility for disposing of food scraps, paper and rubbish in the appropriate manner.

Biodiversity

- To utilise our garden area to its full extent and continue to develop it.
- To involve community members in maintenance of school garden.

Water

- To reduce the water consumption within the school.
- To use resources and equipment as efficiently as possible.
- To monitor water usage and report wastage.

Implementation

The school will continuously participate in Green Schools and work towards obtaining Green Flags. The whole school community will be involved in the work of the Green Schools Committee through regular updates on our Green Schools notice board and through our website.

Energy

- Promote a 'switch off and save' rule for technological equipment, lighting and heating/cooling particularly when leaving the classroom to go the yard.
- Students to engage in units of work relating to energy in SESE.
- Members of the Green Schools Committee will act as classroom energy monitors ensuring that all appliances are completely switched off when not being used in an effort to conserve energy.
- The school delivers an annual report with energy saving plans to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

Waste

- Students are consistently reminded to dispose of waste and recycled products in the appropriate manner.
- Food waste is disposed daily and transferred to the correct bin.
- Paper into recycling bins.
- Use recycled paper for printer/photocopier where possible
- Promote the reuse of paper in classrooms, staffroom and office.

Biodiversity

- Consult with local community members (our tidy towns committee) on ways to improve our garden (e.g. Where to plant, what to plant).
- Involve community members and parents in planting and maintaining our garden and wildlife areas.
- Engage students and staff in the maintenance of our gardens
- Improve our outdoor natural environment, by planting native trees
- Plant native plants and wildflowers that encourage and support the insect population, such as bees and butterflies
- Use natural materials that reduce the impact on the environment
- Provide varied living conditions in the school garden (insect hotels, hedges, walls, grassy areas and trees) to offer potential food and shelter to our natural biodiversity
- Support our native birds (particularly during the winter months) by providing bird feeders and trees in the school garden.

Water

- Remind students and staff regularly of the importance of turning off the tap when water is flowing.
- Students to engage in units of work relating to water conservation in SESE.
- Principal to regularly monitor water usage and report wastage.

Other Initiatives

Awards/Competitions

Activities and information campaigns such as the following are currently running within the school:

We are currently working as a whole school towards obtaining the Green Flag for Global Citizenship Litter and Waste .

Our Green Schools Committee will involve all our pupils in various competitions and class activities as we progress with working to achieve our flag.

Recycling

Recycling Paper Recycling Bins

A recycling bin for paper is placed in the staffroom, office and in each classroom to ensure that any wastepaper will be recycled.

Litter Bins -General Rubbish

A general litter bin is also placed in each classroom to cater for the disposal of normal classroom waste i.e. floor dirt, old crayons etc. and this is emptied on a daily basis.

Lunchboxes

It is encouraged that whatever comes in the child's lunchbox goes home in the lunchbox - i.e. a yoghurt pot, a wrapper as it dramatically cuts down on the schools waste. Pupils are encouraged to use a reusable drinks container daily.

Re-Use

Children are encouraged to take their waste home with them to cut down on the volume that the school actually produces.

Parents are encouraged to send in recyclable materials for junk art in Aistear.

School Notices through Aladdin Schools

Parents will be notified about school events on Aladdin instead of sending out individual letters with each child. This cuts down greatly on the amount of paper being used by the school.

Clothing Drive – Cash for Clobber

We have two recyclable clothing banks outside our school and parents and wider community use this to dispose of unwanted clothing. These clothing banks are emptied every week, this programme is an international initiative designed to encourage action for the environment and raise much-needed funds for our school.

Scoot to School / Cycle to School

The school community is working on improving mobility. Children are encouraged to walk, cycle or scoot to school, where it is safe to do so. This is done in collaboration with the Active School's Committee.

Green Flag

The school has been awarded many Green Flags and is currently working on the Global Citizenship Litter and Waste theme.

It is the aim of the school to continue working on renewing the previous themes while simultaneously working on efforts for the new flag.

Curriculum

The school views environmental issues as being fundamental to the curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to nurture a respect for the environment in their students.

Environmental / Green issues are key elements of both S.E.S.E. and S.P.H.E.

The school community will work together to develop the knowledge, skills, values and world-views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living by teaching sustainability.

A cross curricular approach will be taken to the teaching of sustainability.

Teacher Planning

As a school, all teachers plan electronically and store their planning documents on their laptops. Cuntais Míósúil are submitted to the principal in soft copy (by email) and are then stored on a hard drive remotely.

Success Criteria

The school wide implementation of this policy will ensure:

- Continuous participation in the Green Schools programme and the aspiration to be rewarded further Green Schools' flags.
- Continuous improvement, development and use of the school grounds and school garden.
- Children will participate in lessons throughout the year on areas of sustainability in the SESE curriculum.

Roles and Responsibility

The following people have responsibilities for aspects of this policy:

- Teaching staff and pupils in our school
- Parents/guardians
- Principal and Board of Management

Implementation Date

This policy was implemented in December 2025.

Timetable for Review

The operation of the new policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended every three years.

Ratification & Communication

The policy was circulated to the members of the Board of Management prior to the meeting in at which it was formally ratified.

Notification that the policy is available for viewing on the school website.

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: 
Principal