



BUILDINGS: Sustainable Schools

The Government's Department for Education (previously the Department for Children, Schools and Families, responsible for education, children's services and families) wants all schools to be sustainable by 2020. A sustainable school is one that prepares its students for living sustainably, today and in the future. This is done through teaching and practical changes to the way schools are run, ensuring they are operating in a sustainable way. Activities both in and outside the classroom are centered around eight key themes:

- food and drink
- energy and water
- travel and traffic
- purchasing and waste
- buildings and grounds
- inclusion and participation
- local well-being
- global citizenship

There are a number of steps schools can take towards becoming sustainable. These include promoting the principle of caring for yourself and those around you, as well as the environment and the planet.

Schools are also encouraged to think about operational things, such as waste management and energy usage in their building. Given the number of people within a school - from pupils/students to teachers and administrative staff - they have a big impact on society, and should be setting good examples of living sustainably.

School buildings

As part of becoming a sustainable school, the Government wants all schools - whether old or new - to teach students about sustainable living and also to think about how their design can be as sustainable as possible. For example, green spaces, environmentally friendly construction methods and conservation plans all help to make a school sustainable.

The design of a school can also be created in such a way as to make the school a good place to learn. Many older schools were built with individual classrooms for each year group, long corridors and one large assembly hall. In the Victorian era, students sat at individual desks all facing toward the front, where the teacher would sit. Today, students tend to sit in small groups so that they can discuss the subject being taught. Displays, whiteboards and computers all help to improve learning.

Building ratings

Since October 2008, all public buildings, including schools, have had to show a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) highlighting their energy rating. This rating goes from A to G with A being the most energy efficient and G being the least. These ratings encourage those in charge of the design and running of the building to think about that building's energy usage. Do you know what your school's rating is?

Cont'd

 **BUILDINGS: Sustainable Schools** cont'd**Eco-Schools**

Eco-Schools is an international programme that guides schools on their path towards sustainability, and encourages pupils/students to implement the Eco-Schools programme in their school. Some example activities include establishing a recycling policy, setting up a compost heap or rainwater collection system, and using energy saving appliances.

Normanton Common Primary School in Yorkshire put in place a number of practices, such as a school allotment, a paper and card recycle scheme, and using low energy light bulbs. The school has also introduced an eco-code and eco-school council, run by pupils, whose job it is to promote sustainable practices amongst the students. All of these practices have helped the school achieve a Silver Award from the Eco-Schools programme and they are currently working towards the Green Flag status, which is the highest level of Eco-Schools award.

**Did you know?**

- 45% of the UK's carbon emissions come from buildings.
- The Government plans to spend over £100 million on ensuring all schools are sustainable by 2020.