



St. Joseph's National School

Sustainability Policy Statement

Introduction

At St. Joseph's National School, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that promotes sustainability, environmental stewardship and the development of responsible global citizens. The second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030 has informed the content of the following Sustainability Policy Statement 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).

Purpose

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement is to outline how our school promotes sustainability through our actions and activities. Sustainability can be defined as the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future. The policy provides a framework for embedding sustainable practices in all aspects of school life including; the curriculum, daily operations and community outreach efforts.

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

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.

Objectives

- Promote environmental awareness and responsibility among students, staff and parents
- Embed sustainability across all areas of the curriculum
- Encourage critical thinking and active participation in sustainability initiatives including; Green Schools programme
- Reduce the school's environmental footprint by implementing energy, water and waste management strategies
- Collaborate with local community groups such as Tidy Towns and Woodford Parish Development to support sustainability in the wider community
- Align school activities with the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Develop a school garden as an outdoor learning area where students can immerse themselves in nature and actively participate in planting, biodiversity and conservation projects.

Implementation

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. To achieve these objectives, we will focus on the following areas:

1. Curriculum Integration

- ❖ We will integrate sustainability themes into teaching and learning activities across various subjects including; Geography, Science, Religion, etc.
- ❖ Teachers will include lessons on climate change, renewable energy, biodiversity and conservation, ensuring that sustainability becomes a key element in students' overall learning experience
- ❖ Our school has participated in the Green Schools Programme since 2004. 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 was recently awarded our ninth green school's flag based on the theme *Global Citizenship - Travel*. Our school has a Green Team comprising staff and students whose role is to inspire, educate, and empower the school community to become stewards of the environment. Our current focus is *Global Citizenship - Food and Biodiversity*.
- ❖ Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning through our great outdoor spaces, our garden and the local forest Derrycrag, located behind the school
- ❖ Our school has participated in the Forest Schools programme, which inspires inclusive playful learning for all in nature.
- ❖ Our school participates in Heritage in Schools workshops to learn about and appreciate our local natural environment
- ❖ Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity through bug hotels, tree planting and gardening activities
- ❖ Our school promotes sustainable transport including; where possible, walking and cycling to school, with WOW and cycle safety lessons
- ❖ Our school engages with SEAI Primary School resources

- ❖ Our school engages with programmes that support and promote environmental education including; Picker Pals and National Spring Clean

2. Sustainable Practices in School Operation

- ❖ Energy Management: Implement energy conservation measures such as using energy efficient lighting and reducing overall energy consumption
- ❖ Water Conservation: Promote water conservation initiatives including; rainwater harvesting and awareness campaigns to reduce water wastage
- ❖ Waste Management: Encourage recycling, composting and waste reduction strategies. Our school has a comprehensive recycling policy in place and uses recycled and recyclable materials whenever possible
- ❖ School Garden: Develop and maintain a school garden to promote biodiversity, teach students about growing food sustainably and integrate horticultural learning into the curriculum
- ❖ Our school resources are procured and utilised taking into consideration their impact on the environment
- ❖ Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement and encourages the community's involvement with the school through Tidy Towns, Woodford Parish Development and sporting bodies

3. Student Engagement and Leadership

- ❖ Students will have opportunities to lead sustainability projects through the Green Schools committee, Student Council and specific ESD related events
- ❖ These initiatives will foster leadership and advocacy skills, empowering students to take an active role in sustainability within their school and community
- ❖ Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment
- ❖ Our school ethos strives to prepare students for life as citizens of a global community
- ❖ Students are involved in the decision-making process on resource allocation within our school through Student Council
- ❖ Our students are provided with opportunities to develop and use their skills to participate in the solving of community problems at local level
- ❖ Our students are encouraged and supported to participate in peer-to-peer learning activities in climate action, climate justice, and global justice issues
- ❖ Our students learn about Fairtrade as an example of practice rooted in sustainability, justice and human rights.
- ❖ Our school has a Student Council and Green School Team who are involved in decisions about climate action and climate justice
- ❖ Our schools are involved in project-based learning around real-life problems in the local, national and global communities.
- ❖ Our students are encouraged to participate in local initiatives e.g. Tidy Towns, St Patrick's Day Festival.

4. Staff Training

- ❖ Our teachers are supported in building their own capacity in ESD through workshops and CPD both online and face-to-face courses.

- ❖ We have got local experts involved in creating cycling trails for us, we try to do these on a tree to 4 a year Cycle so we get to cover different areas in a local environment.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of the Sustainability policy will be reviewed annually by a dedicated Sustainability Committee. This committee will be led by a coordinator to monitor progress in achieving ESD goals.

Community Involvement

We recognise that sustainability is a shared responsibility. Therefore we will actively engage parents, local businesses and community groups in our ESD initiatives. Workshops, school events and outreach programmes will be organised to extend the impact of our sustainability efforts beyond the school gates, including fostering links with; Galway County Council, Galway Education Centre, Heritage in Schools, Forest Schools, An Taisce Green School, etc.

Implementation and Review

This Statement was implemented on 03/02/26 To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed every two years.

Conclusion

At St. Joseph's National School, we are committed to cultivating a sustainable future by preparing students to be informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Our Education for Sustainable Development policy reflects our dedication to building a more sustainable world through education, action and community collaboration.

Signatures

Principal:	Niall Kelly
ESD Coordinator:	Eimear Gaffey
Ratified by BOM on	March 2026
Chairperson.	Fr Kieran O Rourke