

Sustainability Policy Statement

St.Thomas' S.N.S

At St. Thomas' Senior National School, we are committed to fostering a culture of sustainability where every child is valued and empowered to care for our environment. Through responsible use of resources, respect for nature, biodiversity initiatives, and active participation in sustainable practices, we strive to create a greener future for our school, our community, and generations to come. We encourage all members of our school community to work together to make environmentally responsible choices every day.

Purpose

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement is to outline how our 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 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, mission and values

Our Vision: Every child is valued and empowered to thrive.

Our Mission: To provide a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where all pupils are encouraged to achieve their full potential and become active, responsible members of their community.

Our Values: Respect, Inclusion, Care, Achievement, Community and Responsibility.

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 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.

We have achieved:

- **Litter & Waste:** Focuses on waste reduction, recycling, and encouraging responsibility.
- **Energy:** Promotes energy conservation and renewable awareness.
- **Water:** Focuses on water conservation and reducing usage.
- **Travel:** Encourages eco-friendly transport like walking, cycling, or carpooling (e.g., "Walk on Wednesday" initiatives).
- **Biodiversity:** Focuses on protecting and enhancing plant and animal life on school grounds (e.g., planting pollinator-friendly gardens)

Global Citizenship Flags

- **Litter & Waste:** Connects local waste management to global impacts and fair trade.
 - **Energy:** Explores the global impacts of energy consumption and climate change.
 - **Marine Environment:** Teaches students about ocean conservation and how to prevent marine litter. (ongoing)
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- Our school engages with SEAI Education & Youth Programme's curriculum linked energy Resources and pupil Workshops
[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.
 - Our school engages with Heritage Ireland, Grow Your Own and Biodiversity Ireland in the area of sustainable development in gardening
 - 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 including paper, hot lunch packaging and snack packaging
 - Our school environment clearly displays information on sustainability and sustainable practices in prominent and accessible places and has annual poster competitions to promote these messages.
 - Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment.
 - Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning extensively in our 2 outdoor classrooms, school garden and food produce polytunnel
 - Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity via our engagement with Biodiversity Ireland, bug hotels, butterfly and bird feeders, pond, foxes den and wild flowers for bees.
 - Our school promotes sustainable transport including where possible, walking and cycling to school.

Social Sustainability

- Our school ethos recognises the importance of and is sensitive to issues surrounding gender equity and celebrates inclusion in our school culture and schools logos.
- Our school ethos strives to prepare students for life as citizens of a global community.
- Our school engages with Global Citizenship Education programmes as we progress through the GC flags of the Green School's Programme.
- 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 'Restorative Practise', 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 via the Student Council, Green School Committee, Creative Committee and online Google Classroom surveys.
- Students are provided with opportunities to learn small business skills by engaging with 'Bi gnothach!'
- 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; with emphasis on correct waste disposal, reducing energy/preserving energy initiatives such as 'click teams' and teachers on corridors assigned to ensuring exits are closed, employing the use of timers for charging devices etc.
- Our school educates on, and promotes the principles of, a circular economy for example; our clothes, uniform and toy exchanges and use of social media to acquire resources from circulation.

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 by embracing Restorative Practices, enabling training, having resources and visual reminders.
- Our school ethos, in tandem with the curriculum, strives to prepare students for life in an increasingly multicultural society. We do this across the curriculum and celebrate multiculturalism.
- Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement, and encourages the community's involvement with the school as outlined in our DEIS plan. We have satisfactory relationships with our parents, community initiatives, community centre, SDCC, our church and Partnership.

Teacher Competence

- Our Teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD through engagement with Green Schools, our resident Gardening Committee and Leader, Esther and summer CPD.

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 such as our sustainable and 'Grow Your Own' project where we grow and harvest our own fruits, vegetables and herbs and cook them in meals.
- Our school has a Student Council and Green Team who are involved in decisions about ensuring our school continues to grow in the area of environmental awareness and care. They have an active role in evaluating, creating and ensuring our plans come to fruition.
- Our schools are involved in project based learning around real-life problems in the local community such as correct waste disposal and littering

Goals

Our School aims to;

- Achieve the 'Marine G.C Flag' by 2028
- Grow our own produce annually in the garden and poly-tunnel with the establishment of an annual Gardening Team
- Provide opportunities for 50% or more of our pupils to work in the garden and grow their own produce
- Introduce composting to 5 classrooms for the year 2026/27 as a pilot scheme to increase composting

Implementation and review

This Statement was implemented on June 24th 2026. To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed every 2-3 years by the Green School co-ordinator, GS Committee and the Gardening Sustainability Committee.