



# GREEN-SCHOOLS ANNUAL REPORT

Academic Year 2022-2023

Green-Schools Office  
Environmental Education Unit, An Taisce  
September 2023

# 25





**An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland,** is the foremost environmental organization in Ireland. Its range of interests extends from the natural heritage of land, air, water, flora and fauna to the heritage of buildings and gardens. Through its local, national and international networks, it seeks to educate, inform and lead public opinion on the environment and influence policy and development. Strategies to achieve these aims include awareness and education programmes.



**FEE (The Foundation for Environmental Education)** seeks to promote environmental education by coordinating programmes and improving awareness of the importance of environmental education. It is composed of a network of organizations which undertake individual programmes in their own countries and participate in international efforts. An Taisce as the Irish member of FEE co-ordinates FEE international programmes in Ireland as follows: Green-Schools, GreenCampus, Blue Flag, Young Reporters for the Environment, Learning about Forests (LEAF).

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# 1. INTRODUCTION to the GREEN-SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



Green-Schools is an international environmental education programme, environmental management system and award scheme for primary and secondary schools, it is operated in Ireland by An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit in partnership with Local Authorities nationwide. The Green-Schools programme is student centred and promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole school action for the environment based on the EU EMAS (Eco-Management and Auditing System) approach 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.

In 2023 Green-Schools celebrated 25 years of the programme in Ireland. Green-Schools relies on the dedication and commitment of student advocates and their teachers who give their time voluntarily to support the programme. Green-Schools received a letter of congratulations from President Michael D. Higgins on the 25th Anniversary year. The President commends the work of the Green-Schools programme for working "tirelessly" to promote sustainability and environmental awareness in young people over the past 25 years.

Reflecting on the past 25 years, President Higgins wrote: "As we reflect on the past 25 years, it is clear that there remains so much to be done, new commitments, made and honoured – globally, nationally and locally – to tackle the serious issues that remain pressing for our ecological system. However we can take great encouragement from the knowledge that our schools have become laboratories for environmental innovation."

As part of the celebrations Green-Schools sent a time capsule around the country to 25 of the longest running participating schools and asked them to create a poster with their hopes and dreams for the next 25 years. The time capsule was buried in Scoil Molaise, Co Carlow in June 2023. It also broke ground for a new Choill Bheag or little woodland ensuring the time capsule remains protected. An Choill Bheag is an initiative of LEAF Ireland, another FEE and An Taisce education programme.

An Taisce also marks its 75th anniversary in 2023, it is Ireland's longest running environmental organisation and plays a critical role as a guardian of Ireland's heritage and environment.

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*'We can take great encouragement from the knowledge that our schools have become laboratories for environmental innovation.'*

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*- President Michael D Higgins*

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## 1.1 International

Green-Schools – known internationally as Eco-Schools – is coordinated by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). FEE is an international umbrella organisation with one national member organisation per country representing FEE at a national level and charged with implementing FEE programmes such as Eco-Schools nationally. FEE currently has 98 member organisations in 77 countries worldwide. Eco-Schools is currently being run by member organisations in 73 countries throughout the world. 'Eco-Schools' began in 1994 as a pilot project in the UK, Denmark, Germany, France, and Portugal and was introduced to Ireland by An Taisce in 1997.





1.2 Programme Stages

1

**Registration:**

If a school wishes to take part in the programme, they must register online. A Green- Schools coordinator must be appointed, and the registration form should be signed by the school's Principal to show support for the programme.

2

**Implementation:**

Successful implementation of the programme is based around a seven-step methodology which is similar to EMAS and ISO 14001 environmental management systems.

3

**Application:**

If a school wishes to apply for a Green Flag (the award for the successful implementation of the programme) they must submit an online application via the Green-Schools website, outlining how they have applied the seven-steps of the programme successfully within their school.

4

**Assessment:**

Schools applying for the award also undergo an assessment visit from Green-Schools or the relevant local authority which offers the school an opportunity to showcase what they have done and a chance for the assessor to certify their achievements.

5

**Award:**

Feedback from the assessment visit is subsequently submitted to Green-Schools, where a final decision is made on whether to award the Green Flag to the school. If successful, the school is invited to attend a Green-Schools award ceremony where they will be presented with the Green Flag

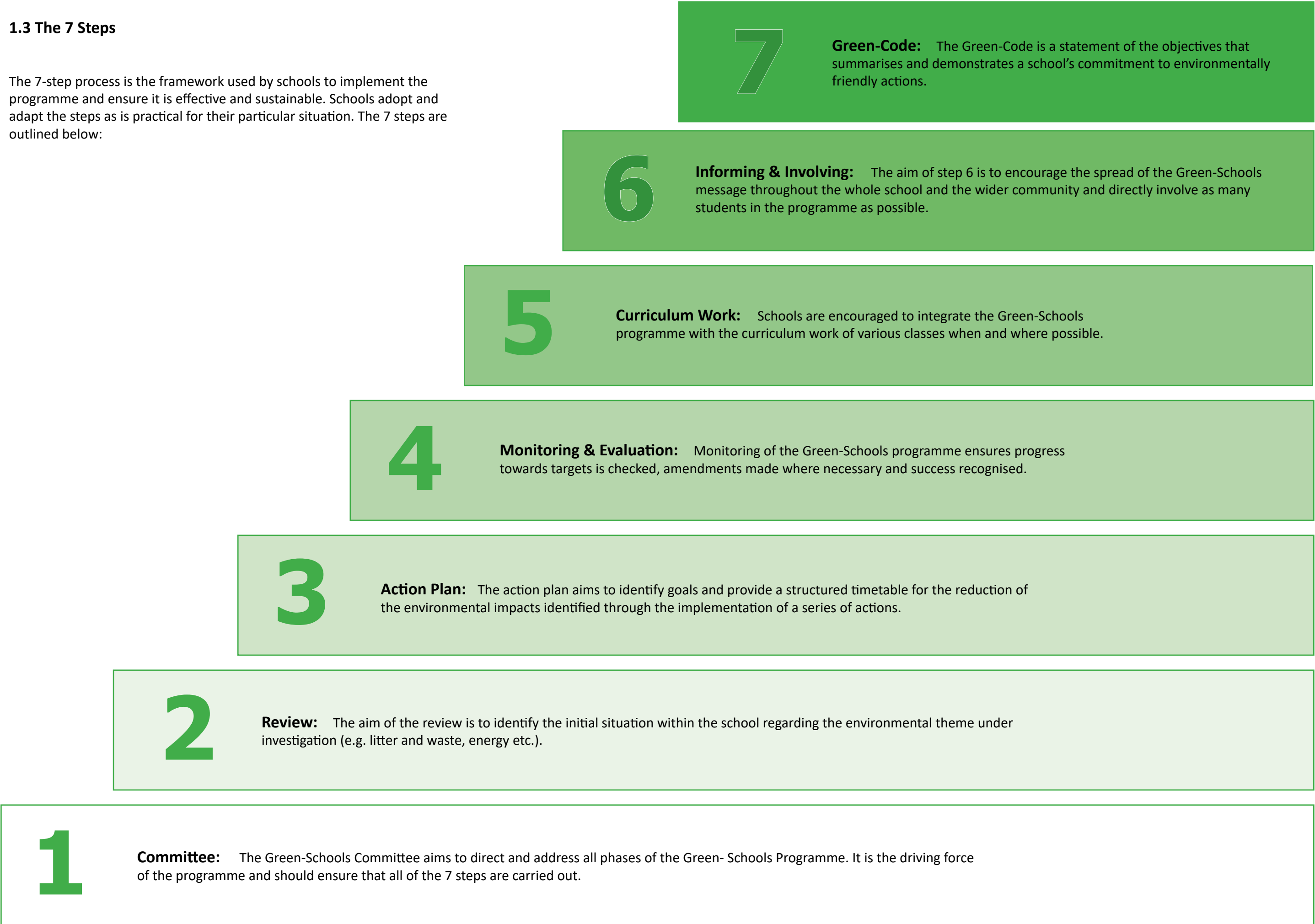
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**Renewal:**

The award of a Green Flag is valid for a period of two academic years - by which time a school will need to have added a new theme to its programme and submitted a renewal application to continue to fly the flag. A new Green Flag is presented to the school on successful completion of the renewal process and the two-year cycle starts again.

1.3 The 7 Steps

The 7-step process is the framework used by schools to implement the programme and ensure it is effective and sustainable. Schools adopt and adapt the steps as is practical for their particular situation. The 7 steps are outlined below:



1.4 Support and Sponsorship

The Green-Schools programme is supported and sponsored by a variety of public and private organisations, many of which are linked to a specific theme or aspect of the programme.

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

The Green-Schools programme is supported by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.



An Roinn Comhshaoil,  
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide  
Department of the Environment,  
Climate and Communications



An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta  
agus Fiadhúlra  
National Parks and Wildlife Service

National Parks and Wildlife Service

The Biodiversity theme of the Green-Schools Programme is supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Local Authorities

The Green-Schools programme operates in Ireland in partnership with local authorities who have been involved with the programme from the very beginning. An Taisce principally works with Environmental Awareness Officers in each administrative area to ensure schools receive the best support available. In addition to practical support, each local authority contributes financially to the programme on an annual basis.



Údaráis Áitiúla Éireann  
Local Authorities Ireland



Irish Aid  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Irish Aid

The Global Citizenship themes of Litter and Waste and Energy are supported by funding from Irish Aid.



Uisce Éireann

The Water theme of the Green-Schools programme is sponsored by Uisce Éireann.

Department of Transport

The Travel theme of the Green-Schools programme is funded by the Department of Transport.



An Roinn Iompair  
Department of Transport



The Wrigley Company

The Wrigley Company is a subsidiary of Mars and a long-term sponsor of the Green-Schools programme, investing in education and awareness around litter and waste issues.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

The Global Citizenship-Marine Environment theme is supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



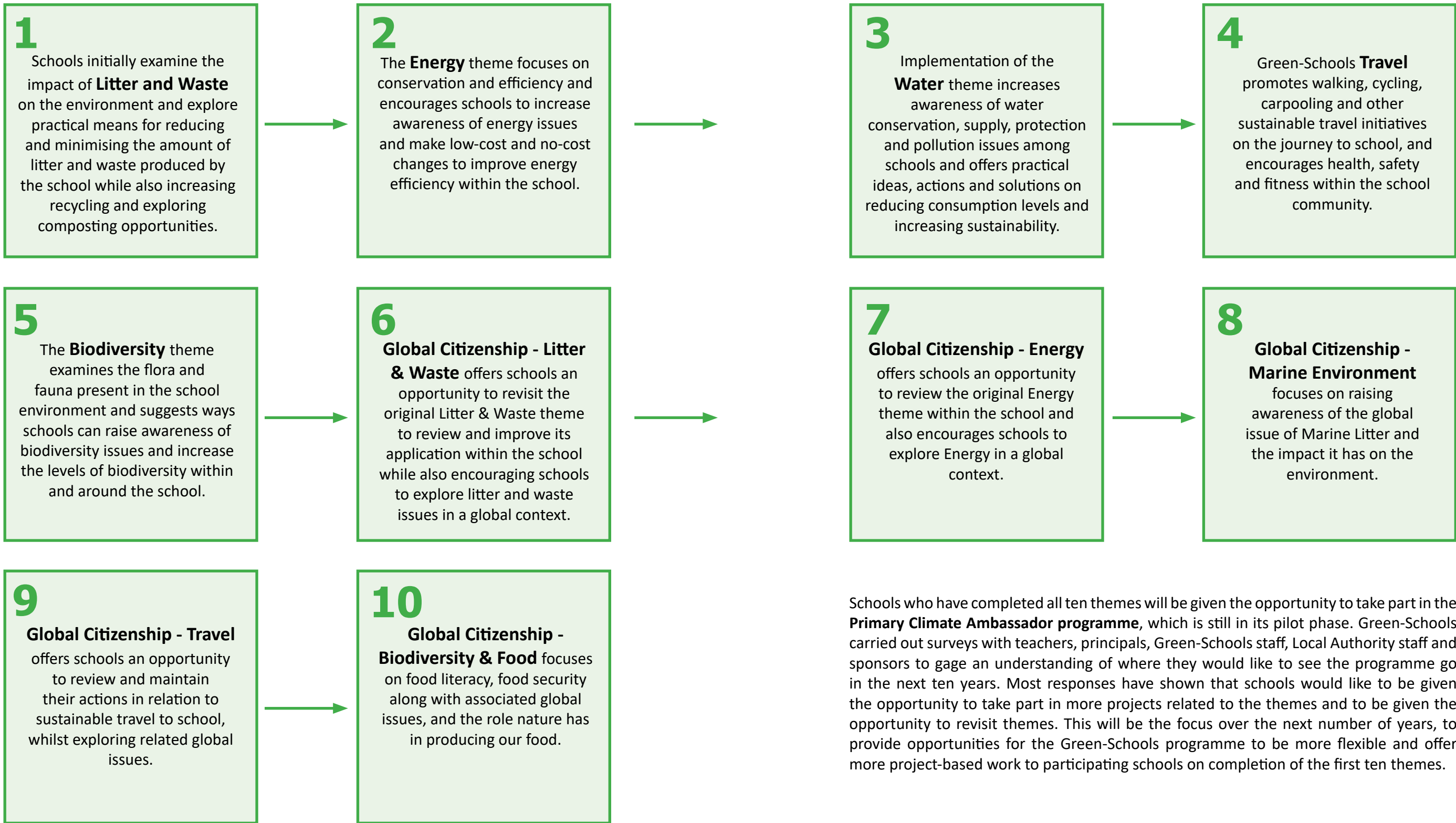
Clothes Pod

Green-Schools has partnered with Clothes Pod to educate schools on topics including reuse of clothing and the effects of clothing and textile production and disposal on the environment.



1.5 Themes

The Green-Schools programme operates on a thematic basis as schools add a new theme to their programme following award and renewal of the Green Flag every two academic years. Litter & Waste is the first theme that schools focus on, and the most recent theme to be added to the programme is Global Citizenship Food and Biodiversity which was rolled out in September 2020.



Schools who have completed all ten themes will be given the opportunity to take part in the **Primary Climate Ambassador programme**, which is still in its pilot phase. Green-Schools carried out surveys with teachers, principals, Green-Schools staff, Local Authority staff and sponsors to gauge an understanding of where they would like to see the programme go in the next ten years. Most responses have shown that schools would like to be given the opportunity to take part in more projects related to the themes and to be given the opportunity to revisit themes. This will be the focus over the next number of years, to provide opportunities for the Green-Schools programme to be more flexible and offer more project-based work to participating schools on completion of the first ten themes.

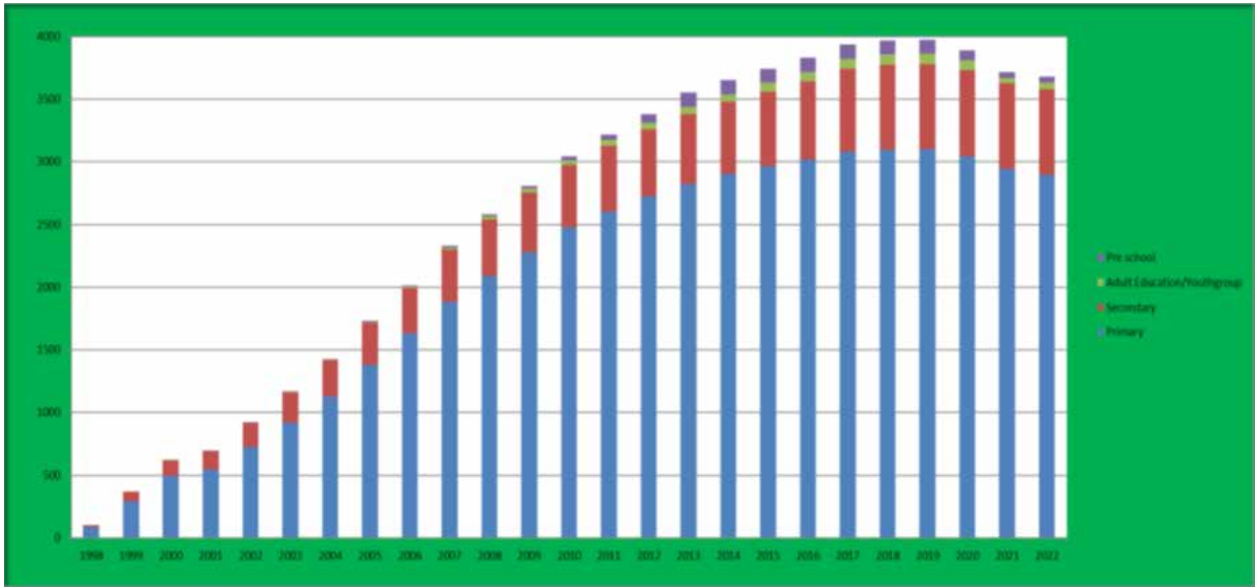
# 2. GROWTH

## 2.1 Registration and Flags

There are currently **3,677 schools and centres registered** for the programme, and 3,401 of these have been awarded at least one green flag\*. 89% of schools in Ireland are now registered with Green-Schools. An impressive 92% of secondary schools are now registered with the programme, 88% of primary schools are registered and the remainder consists of a small number of pre-schools and adult education centres. 134 long term deferred schools re-engaged with the programme in 2022-23 and a total of 41 new schools signed up for this year.

*\*It should be noted that during the 2022-23 academic year, the archiving of long-term deferred schools, who had been inactive on the programme for several years, was carried out. These schools were removed from the Green-Schools database. As such, the figures below may be lower than reported in previous years, but more accurately reflect the number of schools and centres actively engaged with the programme.*

Figure 1 Total Growth in Registrations by School Type



Numbers schools/centres awarded the Green Flag	Total
Overall	3398
Primary Schools	2697
Secondary Schools	567
Special Schools	69
Adult Education Centres	21
Pre-Schools	44

Table 1: Numbers of schools/centres awarded the green flag

During the academic year 2022-2023, a total of 747 schools were awarded the Green Flag and 74 schools were awarded their first Green Flag.

Green Flag awarded per theme	Total
Overall	673
Litter & Waste	74
Energy	6
Water	80
Travel	123
Biodiversity	123
Global Citizenship- Litter & Waste	83
Global Citizenship- Energy	90
Global Citizenship- Marine Environment	82
Global Citizenship-Travel	61
Global Citizenship-Biodiversity	25

Table 2. Flags awarded per theme

# 3. ACTIVITY

## 3.1 Engagement

There was an overall increase in engagement this year due to many face to face events resuming in 2022/2023. Some popular online events remained e.g. the delivery of Teacher Training Seminars, Marine Week and Biodiversity Week. These online events in addition to in-person events have increased engagement overall and allowed Green-Schools to reach an even wider audience of students and teachers. In-person awards resumed this year and it was greatly appreciated by the schools. The awards are an important opportunity to recognise and reward the ongoing efforts of the schools and their commitment to the Green-Schools programme.

## 3.2 Assessment Visits

To receive the first Green Flag, or renew the Green Flag award, each school must undergo an assessment visit. If a school is applying for their first flag, the assessment will be arranged following their initial application. If the school is renewing the award, the assessment can take place at any stage during the second year of the renewal period. This visit is an opportunity for the school to showcase all the work they have done on the relevant themes and for the assessor to verify that the school has completed an appropriate level of work, and also to offer them guidance and feedback.

This year, schools and assessors returned to a fully in-person renewal visit where possible, this was very much welcomed by everyone involved. In-person renewal visits give the schools an opportunity to really showcase their work to the assessor in a more personable way. The assessor can get a real sense of how embedded the programme is in the school.

## 3.3 Applications

Schools are also required to fill-out and submit an online application for the first Green Flag and subsequent flag renewal every two years. Applications are reviewed in detail by Green-Schools staff with recommendations for further actions, and positive feedback sent to each school. Standardised thematic online application forms and guidance notes are available for all themes.

The online application platform allows Green-Schools Coordinators to apply digitally and save their information as they progress through their current theme on an ongoing basis.

## 3.4 Awards

The 2022/23 annual Green-Schools award ceremonies took place throughout the month of May in 15 locations across the country and were held in person for the first time in 3 years. 74 schools received the first Green Flag for their work on the Litter and Waste theme. 6 schools renewed their Green Flag on the theme of Energy. 80 schools renewed on the Water theme. 123 schools received the Green Flag for their work on the Travel theme. 123 schools received the Green Flag for Biodiversity and a further 83 schools received Green Flags for the Global Citizenship Litter and Waste, 90 for Global Citizenship Energy, 82 for Global Citizenship Marine, 61 for Global Citizenship Travel and 25 for Global Citizenship Food and Biodiversity. Overall 673 schools were awarded with a Green Flag this year.

The award ceremonies were held in Dublin, Meath, Donegal, Cork, Kilkenny, Athlone, Mayo and Galway. The awards were attended by approximately 3,000 students, staff and parents around the country who were presented with their green flag and certificate on the day.





3.5 Teacher Training Seminars

In conjunction with our Local Authority partners, a series of seminars for teachers coordinating the programme are held annually. The seminars are theme specific and provide teachers with an introduction to the relevant theme and tips for how to apply it successfully to their programmes. Teachers are also notified of any new initiatives within Green-Schools or relevant to their local area. This is also an opportunity for teachers to talk to their peers and share experiences. Seminars are run on a Local Authority basis and arranged with the support of the relevant Environmental Awareness Officer where possible. 78 seminars were delivered online this year by Green-Schools staff and 128 new schools signed up to the Litter & Waste seminar. A total of 942 teachers attended online.

The seminars were delivered by Green-Schools Officers and consisted of a 45-minute PowerPoint presentation covering an introduction to Green-Schools, and the structure and initiatives of the theme. Videos, activities and resources were highlighted, as well as information on workshops and events throughout the year. Online teacher training seminars allowed greater flexibility and allowed for additional support sessions split into primary and secondary for new schools starting out. In addition, a one-off online “applications clinic” seminar was held on 8th March 2023, to provide additional guidance for teachers preparing to apply for the Green Flag award.

Theme	Number of schools
First Litter & Waste	128
Energy	8
Water	130
Travel	100
Biodiversity	165
Global Citizenship- Litter & Waste	141
Global Citizenship- Energy	125
Global Citizenship- Marine Environment	72
Global Citizenship-Travel	37
Global Citizenship-Biodiversity	33

Table 3: Teacher training seminar attendance numbers per theme

Global Goals Summer Course

Green-Schools offered an in-person teacher training course from July 3rd-7th 2023 to assist teachers with delivering the content of the programme and to give them the skills and tools to make changes within the school and local community. The course was approved by Drumcondra Education Centre and teachers receive 3 EPV days on successful completion of the course. A minimum of 10 teachers were required to run the course so Green-Schools merged with Globe Ireland this year where a total of 16 teachers linked outdoor environmental education with Globe to Green-Schools and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**The schedule was as follows:**  
Day 1: Intro to GLOBE, Learning Methods, and Atmosphere Observation (Weather Observation)  
Day 2: Trees and Biosphere Day  
Day 3: Climate Resilience Day  
Day 4: River ecosystems exploration and water quality (hydrosphere)  
Day 5: Observation to Projects and Action

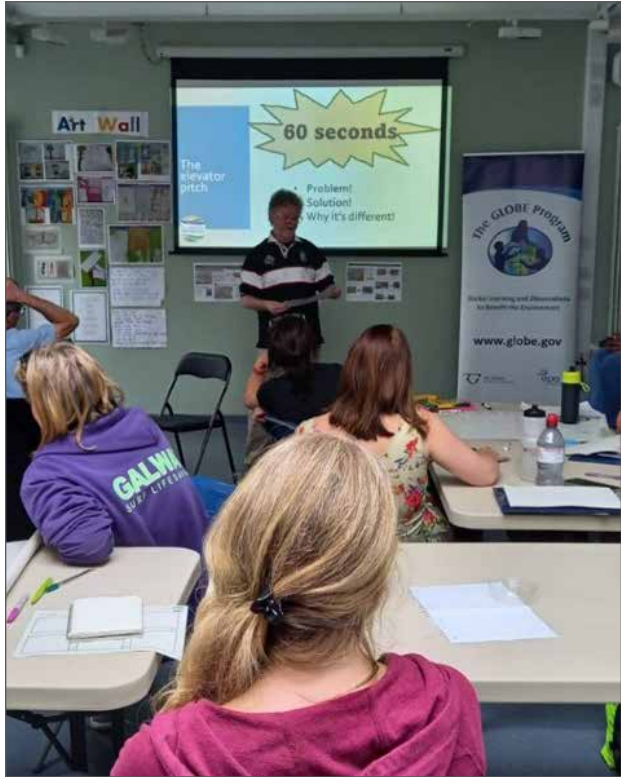


Image from Global Goals summer course

Climate Change, Science and Action summer course

The ‘Climate Change, Science and Action’ teacher summer course ran from the 3rd July to the 18th August 2023 and teachers who registered for the course completed 20 hours of work in their own time between the aforementioned dates. This EPV approved course, developed for primary teachers was fully accredited by Drumcondra Education Centre on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. The course aimed to empower primary teachers to confidently explore climate change as part of the curriculum and encourage climate action in school communities. The major benefit of this online course was the potential to reach teachers in remote locations, connect meaningful experiences that would otherwise never be in the same ‘room’, and enrich the overall engagement.

**The course consisted of 5 modules:**  
1. Introduction to Climate Change  
2. Climate Science  
3. Climate Solutions & Communications  
4. Green-Schools  
5. Climate Action

Teachers completed learning logs for each of the 5 modules and a final assignment and evaluation was submitted on completion of the course. Over 100 teachers completed the course.



Image from Global Goals summer course



### 3.6 Green-Schools Water Workshops

#### Virtual Water Workshops

At the beginning of the 2022 – 2023 academic year, all Year 1 Water schools were posted a USB key containing the virtual water workshop content developed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The virtual workshops allow teachers (both primary and secondary) to facilitate a water workshops themselves in class, at a time convenient to them. The content includes narrated PowerPoint presentations, recorded by Green-Schools Water Officers, and informative videos and information about water treatment, and campaigns such as Think Before You Flush and Think Before You Pour. It also contains instructions for a range of water conservation activities and games, such as how to carry out a litter clean-up, how to test the water quality in a local river or lake, or how to raise awareness through a Walk for Water event. A custom-made quiz is included for the students to test their knowledge at the end of the workshop. We were happy this year to provide an Irish language version of the primary school workshop content as well, to facilitate the participation of Gaelscoileanna. Based on an average of twenty-three students per class (Department of Education Statistical Bulletin, July 2022) and two teaching staff, we can very conservatively estimate a reach of 1,450. However, this does not take into account the high likelihood of teachers sharing this resource with other classes within their school, and a small number of additional teachers who specifically requested a USB key on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year. In reality, an audience in excess of 2,000 is probable.

#### Single school in-person mini workshops

Green-Schools staff facilitated ten mini in-person workshops (five primary school, five secondary school) at selected schools around the country in Autumn 2022, and Spring 2023. These mini single-school workshops were originally intended to be carried out during the 2021 – 2022 academic year but were carried forward due to capacity issues. Each workshop was delivered to a class group at the school, and included an introduction to water

conservation, top tips for water saving, a quiz, experiments, action planning and a guest speaker from Uisce Éireann (where available). The mini workshops were approximately 1 hour 40 minutes in duration for primary schools, or two hours for secondary schools. Approximately two-hundred and fifty students and teachers participated in the single school workshops.

#### Regional in-person Water Workshops

This year we returned to our regional Water Workshops format, which we had been unable to carry out since before the Covid-19 pandemic. The workshops were advertised to schools through targeted emails, start-of-term letters and information on our dedicated webpage for schools working on the Water theme.

Four regional workshops took place at venues around the country (Tralee, Co. Kerry, Navan, Co. Meath, Bundoran, Co. Donegal and Dublin City) during February and March 2023. Water schools in the locality were invited to apply for spaces at these workshops (typically five attendees per school), and each workshop hosted approximately thirty attendees. The workshops were aimed at primary schools students, or 1st years from secondary schools.

The feedback regarding the Water Workshops was extremely positive, with teachers praising the interactive, hands-on nature of the workshops, with plenty of practical ideas provided for activities that could be carried out back in school.

Samples of the feedback received is included below:

Ardscoil Mhuire workshop

“It [the workshop] was very interactive and the students also enjoyed it while learning a lot of interesting information.”

Logboy N.S. workshop

“Hands on activities. Excellent videos. Lots of experiments. Suitable for all levels from 1st – 6th [class].”



*Students take part in a water experiment at a workshop at Bridgetown College, Co. Wexford.*

*Attendees at a Water Workshop at Wood Quay venue, Dublin City on 10 February, 2023*



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***‘The workshop was very interactive and the students also enjoyed it while learning a lot of interesting information.’***

***- Workshop participant***

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### 3.7 Green-Schools Water Ambassador Programme

The 8th year of the water ambassador programme (November 2022 – April 2023) saw the programme move back to in-person events with optional extras such as wellbeing sessions being held online. The programme is open to secondary schools nationwide that are on or have achieved the Green-Schools water flag. It seeks to engage teachers and students from 1st – 6th year, through the provision of training, support and resources in water conservation issues. The aim is to empower students and teachers to spread awareness on water related issues throughout their school and into their wider community. Thus, increasing understanding, changing habits, and improving use and conservation of our rivers, lakes, seas and treated water coming to our homes and communities.

Green-Schools put the call out for participants to the water ambassador programme in September 2022 and interested students had until Friday 21st of October to apply to the programme, either as an individual applicant or as part of a team. All applicants were required to have a support teacher in place to attend events and assist them with their work.

This year we accepted the highest number of water ambassadors ever, with **168** students participating from **56** different secondary schools from all over Ireland, which is an **4%** increase in the number of water ambassadors from the previous year and approximately a **16%** increase in the number of schools. We also had **75** teachers sign up to support their water ambassadors in their endeavours to raise awareness around water topics in their school and surrounding community, which is consistent with the previous year's high participation rate. The chosen participants were divided into four regions for the duration of the programme: Southern, Dublin, Eastern/Midlands, Western/Northern.

The water ambassadors and accompanying teachers received in-person training in each of the regions in water related issues, such as water quality, water pollution, water treatment, water scarcity and water saving techniques, among others. A large part of the training sessions is

dedicated to imparting skills that will help water ambassadors and teachers spread awareness for example, they learned how to develop a campaign, put together an action plan and spread awareness using various communication techniques. They also heard from Green-Schools, Clean Coasts, GLOBE and Uisce Éireann staff, who are experts in the field of environmental education, activism, water treatment and conservation.

For the second year running we ran two Wellbeing Workshops as optional online events at the end of January 2023. This workshop developed as a result of student feedback, was designed to help alleviate stress caused by learning about environmental problems and to then enable participants to focus and take action on environmental issues.

#### The workshop involved:

- a climate wellbeing talk given by Gary Tyrrell, Senior Climate Action Officer with the climate ambassador programme, who talked about self-care and tips to prevent eco-anxiety;
- an art therapy activity to help alleviate stress;
- a positive share session where we talked about what we are grateful for, and;
- a video share that looked at the mental health benefits of being in nature and when that is not possible, looking at videos of nature.

The workshops were very successful, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback.



Water ambassador clean up in Naas

An essential part of the water ambassador programme is to submit progress reports so that Green-Schools can assess the students' progress, identify their interests and where they need help. Regional "support sessions" are then designed based on the information from these reports and organised before the February midterm.

Based on the information supplied in their progress reports it is evident that water ambassadors wasted no time getting stuck into their water campaigns and carried out some fantastic work. For example, they carried out beach, river and street clean ups, water experiments, organisation and purchase of water fountains and reusable water bottles, water-themed poster and slogan competitions, meetings with board of managements, water quality testing, the setup of water related Twitter and Instagram accounts, and investigations of virtual water such as the virtual water content of their school uniforms.

Following the support sessions, four clean-up and kick-testing events were held throughout Ireland, at Fermoy on the River Blackwater, Athlone on the River Shannon, Naas on the Lakelands and Sandymount Beach in Dublin City. These events were run in coordination with Clean Coasts staff and Uisce Éireann were invited to each event.

To complete the programme final reports are required and the deadline this year was the end of April. These reports detail all the work carried out by ambassadors and allow runner-up and regional water ambassadors to be chosen from each region and awarded at a special water awards ceremony. All water ambassadors who complete the programme receive a certificate and are informed they may be invited to attend future Green-Schools events in their capacity as water ambassadors. This year, 11 runner-up water ambassadors and 15 regional water ambassadors were chosen, with runner-up ambassadors receiving a €100 One4All voucher and a certificate and regional ambassadors receiving a trophy, €200 One4All voucher and a certificate. See an example of regional winner's work:

#### Southern Region

**Chloe Lehane, Emily Mehigan, Daimhín McKenna, Rachel Twomey & Ellen Murray**

**St. Mary's Secondary School, Macroom, Cork**

Chloe, Emily, Daimhín, Rachel and Ellen carried out amazing work in their school, for example:

- They held a Swop Shop for all years in the school - emphasizing the importance of sustainable fashion;
- Water conservation Video and poem entered in the Green Schools Competition, and they are winners in both categories;
- Powerpoints to the whole school on water conservation;
- Walk for Water to raise money for Aidlink;
- Fashion Show for 1st and 2nd Years to shine a light on sustainable fashion;
- Shower Song Competition;
- Water wise Garden and Water Butt for the school;
- Four new taps in the school to replace leaking taps;
- Blue Day to raise awareness of water conservation in the school held in school canteen during the lunchtime;
- Made posters about water consumption;
- Created a mascot for their flag called Danny the Droplet;
- One of the water ambassadors is setting up a junior tidy towns to assist the ageing tidy towns committee in their clean ups.



The feedback we received from teacher and student reports this year was overwhelming positive (see examples below) and out of all the events and resources offered as part of the programme, the training day, water ambassador pack (teacher and student), shared drive and wellbeing workshops were listed as most valued by participants. The wellbeing workshops were appreciated and left participants feeling Green-Schools had their best interests in mind.

#### Example of Student Feedback

St. Finian's College, Westmeath

*As I am a current sixth year student, I hope to further explore the passion for water issues and water usage (which I discovered through this programme) through joining my future university's environmental society (or societies). I hope to be able to spread awareness over the dire facts and statistics relating to water issues that I learned from my experience as a Water Ambassador with others, and to share the myriad of solutions available which we could utilise to resolve them.*

*I plan to use the newfound confidence within myself and my developed leadership and teamwork skills (courtesy of my participation in this programme) to do so.*

#### Example of Teacher Feedback

St. Finians College, Westmeath

*I found that there were a number of benefits for the students involved:*

*Confidence: As the year progressed the students embraced the process and enjoyed promoting and learning about the Water Ambassador Programme. They enjoyed representing the school and raising awareness through the school's social media pages as well as on the daily announcements.*

*Leadership and Communication skills: Completing the reports, going to the workshops, emailing me as the Green Schools Coordinator. They have shown more and more initiative over the course of the year also.*

*For me as the teacher, it has been a great help in terms of gaining information and practical ideas that we can use to help raise water awareness*

*and help us on our journey to getting our second Green Flag.*

It is apparent from the feedback that they not only received useful information that helped them develop and run successful water campaigns in their school but that the programme provided a space where they felt heard, respected, and supported to carry out their work. On a personal level they enjoyed meeting like-minded people, developed friendships, and learned skills in resilience, social cues, public speaking, teamwork, and leadership which will help them in every aspect of life.

The many creative and diverse water actions and overwhelming positive feedback coupled, with eighteen repeat water ambassador schools and 55% of students and 54% of teachers submitting final reports, which is on par with last year's figures, indicates a very successful water ambassador year. Also, the benefit to schools carrying out their work on their Green-Schools water flag is undeniable as every secondary school that received the Water School of the Year Award in 2023 was a very active water ambassador school. Water ambassador teacher and student feedback also revealed that participation in the water ambassador programme increases interest and uptake in the Green-Schools programme among students and teachers in their schools. The success of the programme also goes beyond the boundaries of participating schools with students going on to take part in local community environmental initiatives, encouraged to join environmental societies in college and to seek a career in the environmental sector.

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***'I hope to be able to spread awareness over the dire facts and statistics relating to water issues that I learned from my experience as a Water Ambassador with others.'***

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### 3.8 Life Below Water Workshops

We were delighted to reinstate our in-person Marine Workshops this year, for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic. Six regional primary-school workshops were carried out around the country during the month of November. The locations of the workshops were decided upon based on the geographic spread of schools working on the Marine Environment theme, the workshops were held in Galway city, Ballina, Co. Mayo, Tralee, Co. Kerry, Kilkenny city, and Lucan and Stillorgan, in Co. Dublin. Each workshop had capacity for thirty attendees (five attendees each from six schools).

#### The workshop content consisted of:

- A general introduction to the marine environment and the importance of protecting our marine ecosystems;
- an energiser activity;
- an introduction to marine litter and a litter sorting activity where students must identify different types of litter, sources of marine litter and the impact of litter on animals;
- tips on reducing single-use plastics;
- an upcycling art activity;
- marine good-news stories;
- an overview of the Seven Steps of the Green-Schools programme for achieving the Marine Environment flag and a video clip with advice from a Marine "model" school;
- an action planning activity to inspire the students for when they return to school.

Each student received a gift of a Green-Schools branded aluminium reusable water bottle, a Green-Schools badge and a bamboo toothbrush, and a mid-morning snack and lunch was provided.

#### Life Below Water Workshop USBs

At the beginning of the academic year, USB keys containing the "Life Below Water" virtual marine workshop content were posted to all schools beginning the Global Citizenship: Marine Environment theme, along with their theme handbook and welcome letter. The virtual workshop content, which was developed during the Covid-19 lockdown, allows teachers to deliver a marine workshop in their own time at their school. The content contains narrated PowerPoint presentations on the topics of marine environment, marine litter, climate change, global citizenship and the Green Flag, guidance on linking activities and experiments to carry out in class and an interactive marine "test your knowledge" quiz.



*Students attend a Marine Workshop at the Lucan Spa Hotel, Co. Dublin*



### 3.9 SeaKeepers Project

The 2022-2023 academic year marks the fifth year of the SeaKeepers Project (SeaKeepers). This optional module of the Global Citizenship Marine Environment theme focuses on increasing awareness and understanding of Ireland's marine biodiversity by providing a suite of lesson plans and resources on the ecology of six native marine species (basking shark, mackerel, common limpet, bladder wrack, oystercatcher and grey seal). A sample of students from participating classes take part in a "species identification survey" both before and after using the resources to test baseline knowledge and gauge the effectiveness of SeaKeepers in increasing students' species identification skills. The aim of SeaKeepers is to provide an important education in Ireland's marine biodiversity, to encourage a personal connection and appreciation for our marine life which in turn will prompt young people to care about and take action for biodiversity as they grow up. The lessons fall under the Living Things and Environmental Awareness and Care strands of the SESE curriculum.

SeaKeepers consists of two versions of the resource package, one aimed at Senior Infants to 2nd class (SeaKeepers Junior) and one aimed at 3rd and 4th class. Both sets of resources cover the same six species with the aim that students might cover these same species twice, several years apart, during the course of their primary school education, thus reinforcing and cementing their knowledge. The SeaKeepers Junior lessons were developed using "Prezi" presentation software package which is more visually interactive than PowerPoint; the lessons include simplified information, videos and hands-on linking activities. The resources are also available in the Irish language to facilitate the participation of Gaelscoileanna.

This year, participating classes each received a gift copy of the book 'Atlas of Ocean Adventures' by Emily Hawkins and Lucy Letherland, to encourage participation in the Project and curiosity in class about marine biology. At the end of the Project, one class was selected at random to receive a free beach exploration workshop.



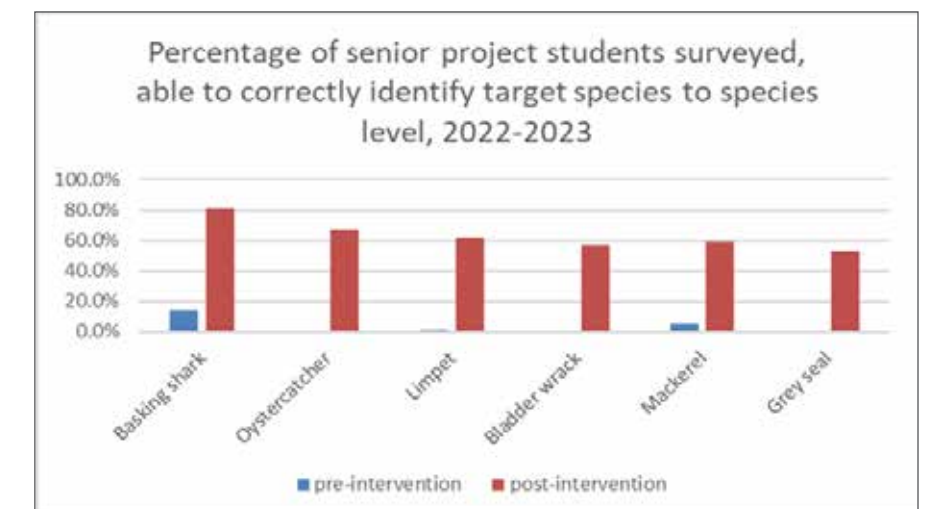
SeaKeepers explore the rocky shore at Portmarnock beach, Dublin, on the SeaKeepers beach exploration day in June 2023

SeaKeepers was advertised through the Green-Schools website, targeted emails and welcome letters at the beginning of the school year. Interested teachers could register to take part by completing the initial survey with a sample of ten students from the participating class and submitting their results to Green-Schools Marine Officers. Teachers were then given access to a shared online folder where they could access the full suite of resources; teachers were

***'We as teachers have the ability to make a difference with regards to fostering respect and the right attitude towards nature.'***

encouraged to deliver the lessons over the winter and spring terms before re-surveying their students.

The deadline for submission of repeat surveys was Friday 12th May. For the 2022 - 2023 academic year, 110 classes from 61 schools nationwide registered for the SeaKeepers Project and completed the baseline survey, with 66% of participants continuing on to submit the repeat survey. It should be noted that failure to return the repeat survey does not necessarily mean that the content was not delivered in class.



#### Sample feedback from participating teachers, 2022 – 2023:

*"We thoroughly enjoyed the project and I feel there is a greater awareness in my children especially with regards to improving the quality of our waters for our sea life. I retire this year and it's one area of my teaching that I will truly miss because we as teachers have the ability to make a difference with regards to fostering respect and the right attitude towards nature."* – Ms Quinn, St Mary's Primary School

*"I want to take this opportunity to thank you for such wonderful resources provided. I learned so much myself. I thought the Prezi presentations were just fabulous and it was clear how much preparation went into them. They were perfectly pitched for this age group and had just enough information."* – Ms Quigley, Burgess N.S.

*"I just want to take this opportunity to thank you also for the opportunity to take part in this project. The students and staff involved really enjoyed working on it and would love to do more like this in the future."* – Mr Kilbride, St Thomas' Senior N.S.



### 3.10 Marine Ambassador School

At the start of the academic year, secondary schools working on the Global Citizenship: Marine Environment theme were invited to apply for the role of “Marine Ambassador” school – to act as leaders on the theme and take part in training and awareness raising opportunities throughout the year. Interested Green-Schools Committees could apply through an online form by Tuesday, 4th October, outlining why they wanted the title and why they felt they should be chosen. Seven schools applied, and Coláiste Iascaigh, from Easkey, Co. Sligo, was selected as the Marine Ambassador school for 2022 – 2023. The school is a mixed inter-denominational schools with approximately one-hundred and forty students, they were working on their second year of the Marine Environment theme.

To introduce them to their new role, Green-Schools Officers visited Coláiste Iascaigh on 28th November 2022, and met with the Green-Schools Coordinator and Committee. We delivered a presentation covering an introduction to the marine environment, marine litter issues, and a Design Thinking activity to come up with ideas for engaging the whole school community in protecting the marine environment. The students also received reusable Green-Schools water bottles, bamboo toothbrushes and Green-Schools Marine Ambassador hoodies.



Coláiste Iascaigh Marine Ambassadors 2022 - 2023

On 25th January, the Marine Ambassadors took part in a Green-Schools field-trip to visit Galway Atlantaquaria and learned more about Ireland’s marine biodiversity. They were given a guided tour by the aquarists, and introduced to new species which they would subsequently research for their presentation at the Marine Environment Conference. Twenty-two students took part in the field-trip. Following their visit to the aquarium, the Marine Ambassador students collaborated on a short article for the Green-Schools e-Newsletter, about their experience. The group also carried out a litter clean-up at their local beach. Six students were selected to give a presentation at the National Marine Environment Conference in Athlone on 27th April, where they presented to an audience of approximately two-hundred attendees, about some of the unusual sea creatures they had learned about. At the end of their term as Marine Ambassadors, the school was sent a Certificate of Achievement.

The Marine Ambassador programme provides an opportunity for us to work closely with a particular Green-Schools Committee. This year, the Ambassador Committee was predominantly made up of young 1st and 2nd year students, and it was clear that their knowledge and interest in the marine environment grew substantially through their participation as Marine Ambassadors.



Coláiste Iascaigh Marine Ambassadors at the National Marine Environment Conference, Athlone, April 2023

### 3.11 The Marine Film Club

This year we were delighted to host two of our Marine Film Club events in-person in cinemas, as opposed to online.

Our first event took place at Mayo MovieWorld in Castlebar on Tuesday 11th October 2022, and was part of Climate Action Week – a week-long schedule of events to engage the general public with taking action against climate change. Climate Action Week is coordinated by An Taisce’s Climate Action Programme and takes place during the second week of October each year. At the Film Club event, we screened two episodes of the Netflix documentary “Our Planet”, narrated by David Attenborough - “Coastal Seas” and “The High Seas” - and sixty-nine students and teachers from three secondary schools in the region attended.

We had a special guest speaker, Dee Newell, a member of the Irish Defence Forces and a long-distance open water swimmer. Dee spoke to the students about how her love of the ocean has prompted her to take action for the environment and her experience on endurance swims, such as taking part in an ice swim in Antarctica. The students had the opportunity to ask Dee questions and were very inspired by her talk.



Ceara Carney, Climate Ambassador, presents at “I am Greta” Marine Film Club event at the Lighthouse Cinema.

Our final Marine Film Club event of the year, was an online event held on Friday 28th April, during Marine Week. For this event, we screened the short documentary “Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef” live through Zoom. The fifteen-minute documentary introduces a citizen science project underway in Australia, to encourage recreational scuba divers to collect data on the health of the coral reef. The documentary has an optimistic tone and highlights the value of citizen science. Following the screening we hosted a presentation from Dave Wall, an ecologist at the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Dave spoke about the various marine citizen science projects that students could get involved with, and answered questions from the audience about Ireland’s marine biodiversity.





### 3.12 Lets Fix Fashion

The Green-Schools Let's Fix Fashion Campaign launched its second year in October 2022. The campaign was open to students in secondary schools that were actively working on Litter and Waste, and Global Citizenship themes. A total of 30 schools participated across the country.

The campaign consisted of four online events with tasks based on themes including the circular economy, sustainable materials, clothes sharing and upcycling workshops. The launch event ran as part of Climate Action Week on October 12th where 520 students and teachers across the country joined for a film screening of 'A Textile Mountain'-The Hidden Burden of our Fashion Waste. This 20-minute documentary exposes the social and environmental cost of the second-hand clothing trade, tracing the path of our unwanted garments from recycling bins in Europe to landfills and waterways in the Global South. Shot in Kenya, Ireland and Belgium, it calls on us to re-imagine the way we design, wear and reuse our clothes - so that our fashion waste no longer becomes another country's burden. Following the screening, Green-Schools hosted a conversation about the issues raised in the documentary with Fionnuala Moran, RTE pulse, Liv Simpliciano, Fashion Revolution and Lillian Gleave, from Kinsale Community College. Schools were given a Fact Sheet and resources outlining the issues raised and hosted their own film screening of 'A True Cost' in their school. This groundbreaking documentary gives a broad overview of all the human, social and environmental issues around fast fashion and kickstarted their awareness campaigns in their school communities.

In December, participating schools took part in an online upcycling workshop with Recreate. Students received a 'creative kit' of basic sewing tools, embellishments, fabrics and buttons focusing on mend and repair including stitch techniques to create your own stitch drawn denim design, patch mending, embellishment play with beads, buttons and zips and unloved T's, learning to lace and experiment with upcycling, skills which were brought to life during the final catwalk event.

To start the New Year students were introduced

to principles of the Circular Economy and Design Thinking methodology with an online presentation and task where they ideated and sketched out solutions to their problem statement "How can we transition to a Circular Economy in the fashion industry". Students looked at circular business models emerging in Ireland, slowing resource loops through re-use and repair, buying second-hand, charity shops, swap events, researching fabrics that can easily be repurposed and researched innovative ways to design out waste from the supply chain. In March, schools attended their final webinar where they were inspired by Change Clothes Crumlin who lead community swaps across Dublin. Students from Gort Community School shared their experiences of running Clothes Swap events and resources were sent to help all schools arrange their own in school event. Schools who successfully took part in all events were selected to take part in our live, end of year catwalk event.



The project culminated in an end of year, live Catwalk event that five participating schools were selected to attend. The schools selected to attend were Gort Community School, St David's Holy Faith, Greystones Community College, Seamount College and Midleton CBS. The schools were set a task of sourcing two sustainable fashion looks from second-hand clothes shops (under the two categories: "casual" and "formal") and were gifted €60 for their purchases. Students from each school displayed these outfits, along with an upcycled outfit, and an outfit from their swap shop and an upcycled accessory at the catwalk event. On the day Lillian Gleave, Kinsale Community College,

inspired the students on the importance of dressing sustainably followed by a presentation of work from Gort Community Schools on their circular designs where they upcycled old t-shirts into baby hats for the premature baby units and St. Davids Holy Faith, Greystones who donated 100s of old uniforms to Nairobi in Mukuru and the Chifundo Foundation and upcycled their old school uniforms into love hearts for the Team Hope shoebox appeal which went to Burkina Faso. The event was a great success, the students turned models were inspiring! They really lit up the catwalk with their enthusiasm and passion for sustainable fashion.





# 4. COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICITY

## 4.1 Green-Schools Website

The Green-Schools website, [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org), features dedicated theme pages, a searchable resource database, an online application system and a shop, along with a prominent news and events section. During the last academic year, the website received 292,468 page views and 113,970 sessions from 67,887 users. Sponsor and supporter logos, including references to Local Authorities, feature at the foot of the website homepage and most other pages.



News section of Green-Schools website

### Website page rankings

The resources section of the website ranks highly in page view listings, second only to the website homepage. The top ten ranked pages include pages with general information such as the Resources page (15,795 pageviews); Projects page (7,028 page views) and the About page (5,834 page views). Throughout the year news items and event notices are updated regularly on the News and Events pages.

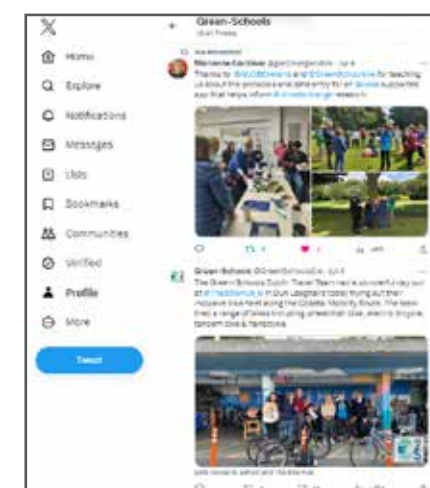
## 4.2 Green-Schools and Social Media

Green-Schools has a robust social media presence and utilizes a variety of social media channels to share news and events – among these, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Tiktok and LinkedIn were added to the selection in December 2022 to further increase the scope of audiences. The wide range of social media platforms used helps to ensure that the programme's resources and information are available and accessible to a wider audience.

The Green-Schools brand identity has been fully integrated into social media posts through carefully crafted graphics to further enhance brand recognition online.



Brand identity on Green-Schools Instagram grid



Green-Schools Twitter page

### Twitter

Twitter is a fundamental element of the Green-Schools' social media presence. Schools, classrooms, teachers and older students are vocal and engaged through Twitter and it remains Green-Schools busiest channel. At the end of the academic year the Twitter account had 11.7k followers, with a year-round average of 1.5k impressions per day.

### Facebook/Instagram (Meta)

As of 30 June, the Green-Schools Facebook page following remains strong, with 5,778 page likes, an increase of 19% from the previous year. The Instagram account has 4,039 followers, up 717 from the year before. Both accounts have 82% or more followers from Ireland, which is our main target audience. The Facebook Green-Schools Coordinators Group remains active, and has grown to 870 members this academic year.

### LinkedIn

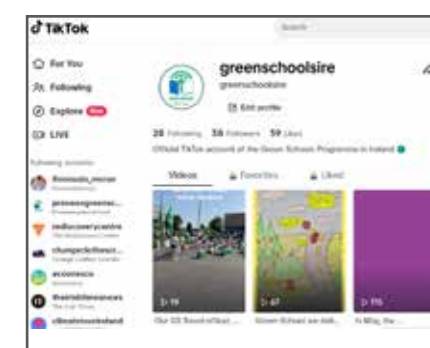
A LinkedIn showcase page was created as a subpage of the EEU LinkedIn page in December 2022. The purpose of the page is to highlight the many professional connections we have within An Taisce, as well as with GS stakeholders, in addition to advertising job opportunities within Green-Schools. The page has 126 followers as of 30 June, 2022.

### TikTok

A TikTok account was created in December 2022 to establish an additional platform for connection with a wider audience. The account is still in its infancy, with 16 videos posted and 38 followers. The content has been well-received, however, with more than 1500 views in its first 6 months.

### YouTube

The Green-Schools YouTube account received 30,248 views in the past academic year, with a watch time of 1,000 hours and 60 new subscribers, a 10% growth on the total number of 604 subscribers.



Green-Schools TikTok profile page



### 4.3 Green-Schools Newsletter

The Green-Schools Newsletter is issued monthly to 7,260 contacts including schools; Local Authorities; Sponsors; Partners; Environmental Organisations; the International FEE Network; and members of the public.

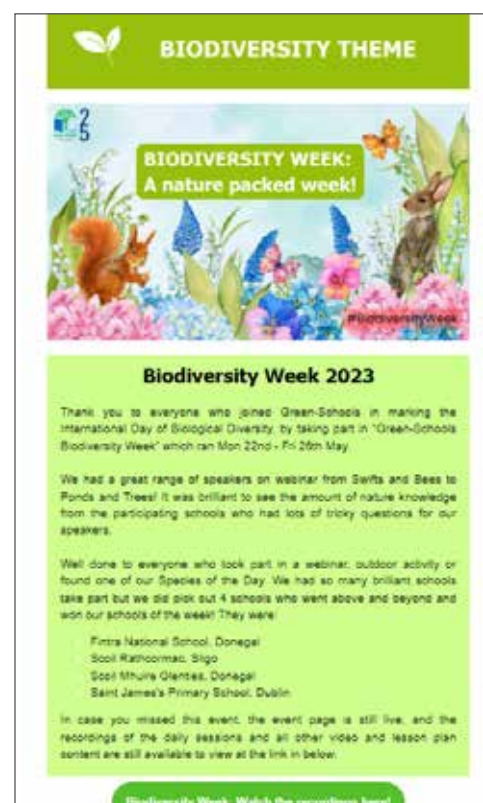
The newsletter provides information about upcoming events, achievements, news, deadlines and competitions, and is also a chance to report on the work going on in schools around the country. The newsletter has a significant engagement rate of 50%, making it a valuable source of information to its subscribers.

### 4.4 Green-Schools 25th Anniversary

To mark Green-Schools' 25th anniversary, a #25for25 campaign was launched to showcase the journey of the milestone time capsule around the country. The webpage received 378 views during the period of 1 April – 30 June, with the top 3 #25for25 Twitter posts receiving 2,550 impressions, and more than 12, 200 impressions in total for all time capsule posts.



Green-Schools 25th anniversary logo



### 4.5 Press Media Coverage

The Green-Schools programme received an abundance of positive coverage across all media throughout the 2022/2023 academic year. This included national television, radio, online news and media as well as regional news coverage, including newspapers and radio. While the exact extent of coverage is difficult to ascertain, an estimate would be more than 200 articles, covering all themes and aspects of Green-Schools.



Dublin press coverage of Helix awards

Travel and Biodiversity sections of the Green-Schools newsletter



# 5. EVENTS

## 5.1 World Water Day and Walk for Water 2023

In the lead up to UN World Water Day 2023 (March 22nd), Green-Schools raised awareness about the 2023 theme “Accelerating Change” via our E-Zine, emails and our Water Poster and Video Competition. The title for the competition was edited for schools from the UN World Water Day theme title “Accelerating change” to “Local Water Actions for Global Change” and we accepted entries until 10th March.

On the same week as World Water Day falls, Green-Schools ran a Walk for Water campaign. Walk for Water is an annual event held around World Water Day, where students are encouraged to walk a 6km route carrying up to six litres of water. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the journey that women and girls, in water-stressed regions, must undertake every day, to collect drinking water for their families. An event guide was shared with all schools to encourage them to carry out their own walk for waters, along with a link to the official World Water Day page for further information on SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation and actions schools can take to help combat the water and sanitation crisis!

As part of the Walk for Water campaign three regional events were held around the country in Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, Hazelwood Forest Trail, Co. Sligo and Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of March, respectively. There were 175 students (primary and secondary), 33 teachers and 10 Uisce Éireann representatives that jointly attended the walk for water events which were led by Green-Schools staff officers. The walks also had speakers from National Parks and Wildlife Service, nature discussions along the way and tippy tappy activities where students learned to build their own outdoor makeshift taps. The walk for waters not only raise awareness about the journey women and girls take around the world to access drinking water but provide an opportunity for students and teachers from Green-Schools in each region to meet, share ideas and enjoy an active day-out, learning about and appreciating nature and reflecting on the privilege of being able to access clean drinking water straight from the home-tap.

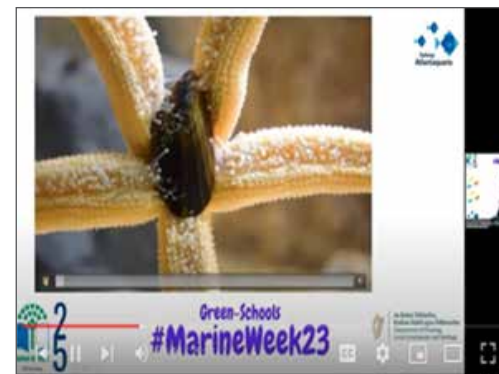
The walk for water event in Sligo received great media coverage in the Leitrim Observer reaching over 6,400 people. The article focused on celebrating the value of fresh water and raising awareness about the 2.2 billion people around the world who live without access to drinking water.



*Students taking part in the Walk for Water in Glendalough, Co. Wicklow*



*Twitter posts highlighting school activities around World Water Day 2023*



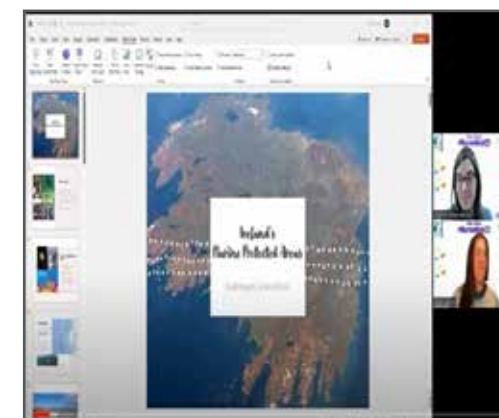
## 5.2 Marine Week

Green-Schools offered schools the opportunity to participate in ‘Marine Week’. This was the third time Green-Schools organised this week-long virtual educational event celebrating the marine environment. Marine Week took place from the 24th - 28th April 2023. The event was run from a Marine Week webpage on the Green-Schools website. Schools could visit the webpage and access a suite of daily activities and presentations, at their convenience. Although the webpage was open for anyone to visit, registration was required to receive the link to access the live talks on Zoom each day.

265 teachers from primary, post primary and special schools registered to take part. Based on the numbers that teachers provided for who they would be sharing the Marine Week resources with, we estimate a reach of approximately 10,000 individuals, similar to last year.

At 11.30am on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, there was a live talk for registered schools to attend, followed by a question and answers session. The live talks were on a variety of marine related topics and our speakers included Dr. Noirin Burke from Atlantaquaria, Flossie Donnelly from Flossie and the Beach Cleaners, and Sarah Hegarty, a Green-Schools Travel Officer who is also Marine Biologist, facilitated a workshop on Marine Protected Areas. On the Friday of Marine Week, there was a live screening of a documentary and webinar facilitated by Dave Wall from the National Biodiversity Centre, this event was for Secondary Schools only. Each live talk had dedicated question time to allow students to engage with the speaker, each session had a large volume of questions and engagement from participants. Approximately 90 classes attended our most popular webinar, which was Monday April 24th- Exploring Ocean Connections and Ireland’s Marine Biodiversity by Dr. Nóirín Burke from Atlantaquaria.

During Marine Week, Green-Schools released daily ‘Ocean Wonders’ videos, a series of educational videos detailing five marine species. There were also ‘draw-along’ videos linked to each species describing step-by-step how to draw the animals. New resources were launched during the week including a new resource about Ireland’s ocean mythology.



*Sample Slides from Marine Week Live Webinars*

## 5.3 Climate Action Week

Ireland's sixth Climate Action Week took place online from October 10th – 16th 2022 and Green-Schools encouraged all schools to get involved by holding a wide variety of online events.

### #ClimateActionWeek Launch

A Cycle4Climate event ran from the Quadrangle to Galway Atlantaquaria. It was joined by forty transition year students from Coláiste Iognáid along with their Green School's Co-ordinator Alan O'Loinsigh. Bike hire was supplied by West Ireland Cycling. Great support was provided from members from the Galway Cycling campaign, staff from the Climate Ambassador programme, Safe Routes to School, Green-Schools, Clean Coasts, Green Campus, as well as Galway City Council and Senator Pauline O' Reilly.

Senator O'Reilly hosted a climate conversation at Galway Atlantaquaria and spoke about her career path into politics. This was followed by an introduction to the Climate Ambassador programme by Gráinne Ryan, Climate Action Officer.

Following lunch, the Stories of Change exhibition opened, curated by Climate Ambassador LK Howells. It showcases photos and stories featuring local community changemakers from Galway and Clare. This was followed by a talk on Oceans and Climate Science by Monica Mullins, Climate Action Officer.

Over one hundred local students from St. Patrick's Primary School and Claddagh National School availed of free class tours in the morning to celebrate the start of Climate Action Week.

### Junior Primary Storytime

112 classrooms and an estimated 3,000 students tuned in live to what is fast becoming a #ClimateActionWeek tradition. Author and illustrator Oisín McGann read 'We Want Our Park Back' to thousands of primary students, followed by a draw-along lesson and a session on 'Ask the Author'. To complete the resource pack, we screened the new animation for the first time. The recording can be viewed [here](#).

### Senior Primary Climate Ambassadors

21 Green-Schools around Ireland were invited to take part in a Primary Climate Ambassadors. These schools have been awarded all 10 Green Flags. The launch can be viewed [here](#). 2nd to 6th classes nationwide were also encouraged to watch this [Short Hopeful Talk about Climate Change](#).

### Secondary School and Third Level Young Reporters for the Environment

Aspiring young environmental journalists investigated how to become an intrepid reporter by taking a look at the anatomy of an article with Irish Times environmental and science journalist, Sylvia Thompson. The webinar was attended by 18 classrooms and an estimated 360 students, and the recording can be viewed [here](#).

### Climate Education

Climate Action Officer Gráinne Ryan held a panel discussion with Dr. Anne Dolan (MIT UL) and Dr. Cliona Murphy (St. Pat's DCU) on how to teach climate change in primary school. 16 teachers participated in the webinar and the recording can be viewed [here](#).

### #ClimatePledge Competition

Schools, colleges and Climate Ambassadors were encouraged to take a climate pledge with the chance of winning sustainable vouchers. We received hundreds of entries on Instagram.

### Climate Smart

Two Secondary Schools were invited to Trinity College Dublin to take part in a day of workshops with researchers from Climate Smart, an adaptation game based on the city we live in. The GLOBE Team took 65 students through citizen science observations on clouds and probed local surface temperature, exploring the urban heat island. Finishing with a sustainability tour of the campus.

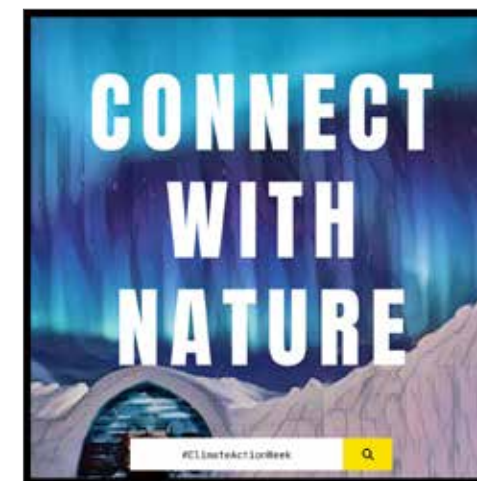
### #ClimateActionWeek Collaborations

**Let's Fix Fashion School Challenge** – Schools were encouraged to watch the textile mountain film and organise a swap shop in school, shop pre-loved on Thriftify, depop or take a trip to your local charity shop and say no to fast fashion. 520 students watched the film.

**Global Goals Book Club** - The Global Citizenship Team chose five books for primary students that highlight Climate Action accompanied by fun, engaging activities!

**Climate Resilient School Challenge** - The GLOBE Team developed a resource with 3 short activities to enable schools to explore climate change adaptation measures and climate resilience.

**Marine Film Club** – The Marine Team invited schools to watch an environmental documentary on the big screen in Castlebar, Mayo. 73 students also heard from Climate Ambassador Dee Newell, who told her story on swimming in Antarctica.



Right: Social media tiles for Climate Action Week



5.4 Global Classrooms Project

This year saw the continuation of this collaborative project offering peer-to-peer learning opportunities to students in Ireland, Kenya, South Africa and UAE. The project incorporated four linked events. Starting with the Global Classroom launch whereby 3 schools from South Africa, 7 schools from Kenya, one school from UAE and the 11 classrooms (representing 9 schools) from Ireland joined together to celebrate our connections, learn about the project, and were officially invited to participate this year by the students from JSS Private school in Dubai who participated last year. We had representatives from Irish Aid and the Irish embassy in South Africa to support the launch. Additional support was provided by the first International Junk Kouture winners from UAE who showed off their project and spoke about the re-use of materials in the creation of their outfit. A Global Goals Week was organised to support the students’ learning on the SDGs in late February 2023. Each day of the week one, of the countries took one of the Global Goals and presented information on it for one hour each day.

Monday- Introduction to Global Goals (Ireland)

- The dynamic duo of Jessica Gill and David Giles, the United National Youth delegates from Ireland, shared their perspectives on the Global Goals, as well as their journey as delegates at the United Nations.

Tuesday- Life Below Water (South Africa)

- Sarah Ferguson, a retired national swimmer who holds a Guinness World Record for becoming the first person to circumnavigate Easter Island, used her passion and talent for pioneering extreme swims around the world to create a platform to educate and inspire people to change their behaviour. She shared her experiences and spoke about her foundation Breathe which was founded to help educate and inspire people to take action.

Wednesday- Climate Action (Kenya)

- Our partner Danson in Kenya shared insights into how Climate Change is impacting Kenya and shared ideas on Climate Actions ongoing in Kenya.

Thursday- Life on Land (Kenya)

- Our Kenyan partners spoke about Life on Land and explained the great Kenyan phenomena; the Wildebeest migration and how climate change has affected these animals in particular.

Friday- Partnership for the Goals (Ireland)

- As uniting across borders is key to achieving the Global Goals the last day of the week was an interactive conversation where students had the chance to get to know students from different countries who participated in Global Goals Week.

After the very successful Global Goals week which engaged over 15,000 primary school students here in Ireland alone, the school engagement commenced. Each individual country engaged their students in learning about the SDGs and supporting them in action to reduce world hunger and poverty, reduce climate change and reduce inequality.

**Classroom workshops:** In Ireland we engaged 11 classes, representing 242 students, through in-person workshops. We engaged the students

in designathon workshops on 7 SDGs, Goal 6, 12, 13 , 14, 15, 11 and 5. Students were given two classroom visits, the first visit comprising of delivering an interactive workshop on the class’s chosen SDG. The students were engaged in discovering the problems associated with the topic, were shown some ideas of possible innovative solutions from around the world and were then encouraged to devise their own innovative solutions.





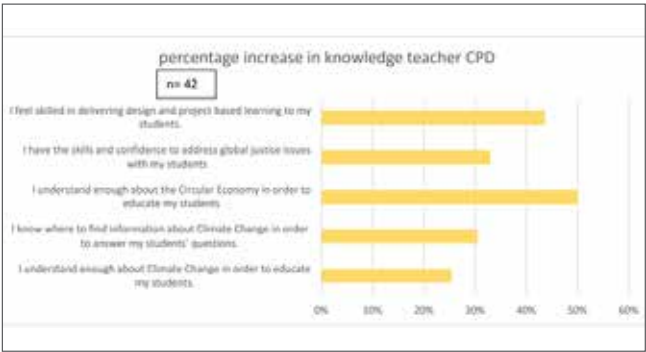
Global Goals Book Club and Advent Calendar

During the academic year of 2022-2023, the Global Citizenship team successfully launched seven Global Goal Book Club resources, which emphasized Global Goal 4: quality education, 8: decent work and economic growth, and 13: climate action. Additionally, Arran Towers contributed stories pertaining to Global Goal 5: gender equality, 7: affordable and clean energy, 16: peace justice and strong institutions, and 17: partnership for the goals. These resources were meticulously organized by class level, ensuring accessibility across all primary school grades. A notable advantage of these resources is their direct curriculum alignment. They cater to various educational needs, whether teachers seek activities focused on arts education or social environmental and scientific education. This adaptability simplifies the process of introducing the Global Goals to junior and senior primary students, enabling tangible understanding. Moreover, the inclusion of storytelling from around the world nurtures a global citizenship mindset among the students. The impact of the Global Goals Book Club has been highly positive, as expressed by a Coordinator from St Leonard’s National School who remarked, “We really loved the Global Goals book club - the amount and variety of books were amazing, and it was such a wonderful resource for both teachers and pupils to access.” Between September 2022 and June 2023, the Global Goals Book Club content collectively garnered 2769 page views, underscoring its popularity and utilization. Efforts to promote the Global Goals Book Club encompass extensive utilization of social media channels and integration within teacher training and seminars. These initiatives aim to amplify the use of these diverse and inspiring resources among educators and students alike. Follow this link to explore the Global Goals Book Club: <https://greenschoolsireland.org/global-goals-book-club/>

In December of 2022, the Global Citizenship team launched the Global Goals Advent Calendar. Between November 28th and December 20th, a total of 17 days, leading up to winter break a different resource focusing on one of the Global Goals was featured. These resources were specially curated to meet the needs of teachers because of their accessibility and the minimal time and preparation each lesson requires. The resources were very diverse including educational videos, discussion question prompts, quizzes, engaging worksheets, and art exploration. In addition to the activities, there was an overarching craft for students to complete daily where they wrote down personal pledges to help achieve each Global Goal. At the end, students created a paper chain that they could take home and use as a decoration. Schools were encouraged to share their progress on the activities by sharing pictures using #GSAdventGoals. This was the second year of running the Global Goals Advent Calendar, and resources were all updated. The Global Goals Advent calendar was advertised on all of the Green-Schools social media channels with great success. On Facebook, the Advent Calendar post reached 4,576 people. On Twitter, during the month of December while promoting #GSAdventGoals the Green-Schools page achieved 5,023 impressions. On Instagram, through daily posts and stories, they reached 10,139 people. Furthermore, the main page of the Green-Schools website promoted the advent calendar activities, this page received 1,490 views.

With the high levels of engagement, it was no surprise to see that the Global Goals Advent Calendar was a highlight for many schools and was noted in their applications. For example, the positive comments from Sacred Hearts National School and Scoil Mhuire, “The resources are fantastic. We loved the Global Goal book-club and Advent Calendar.”; “The Global Goals Advent Calendar was excellent for informing the school population on The Global Goals plus suggestions for activities. Links to relevant resources were also useful and cut down on searches.”

To learn more about each of Global Goals Advent Calendar activities follow this link: <https://greenschoolsireland.org/global-goals-advent-calendar/>



Climate Classrooms

In conjunction with Designathon Works in the Netherlands, the Global Citizenship team designed a Climate Classrooms training session for primary school teachers using design thinking methodologies and addressing Climate Change and Global/Climate Justice issues. The training was developed in order to support teachers in delivering climate education in their classrooms, while at the same time being aware that they are supporting the development of 21st century skills amongst their students and understanding the importance of the same. Six primary school teachers and 15 student teachers from the Froebel Department in Maynooth University were trained under this project (with an additional cohort of 15 Irish primary school teachers and 6 Dutch primary school teachers under a separate Erasmus+ fund in partnership with Designathon Works). Teachers reported increase in knowledge and understanding on all the topics featured in the training, such as project-based learning, global justice topics, circular economy solutions and climate change education. Additional, qualitative feedback was collected where teachers were asked to identify skills that would likely be learnt and developed through working with the designathon workshop and DT methodology with their students. The building aspect of the methodology (maker education), critical thinking skill development, development of team working/collaboration skills and real-life problem- solving skills were featured most strongly in the feedback. Irish teachers were additionally asked to identify which areas of the curriculum they felt they would use the methodology, SPHE, English, Maths, Science Geography and Art were the subjects that were called out the most, but all areas of the primary school curriculum were mentioned at least once.

5.5 National Biodiversity Week

To celebrate National Biodiversity Week 2023, Green-Schools Ireland ran a week-long programme of events throughout the school week of May 22nd to May 26th. The Biodiversity Week event reached schools in every corner of Ireland and, in its third year, again proved to be extremely popular.

Each day focused on a different animal or plant species with the final day showing how they all connected together in an ecosystem. Our event page for the week- (Biodiversity Week 2023 - Green-Schools [greenschoolsireland.org](https://greenschoolsireland.org)) provided schools with everything they needed for the week.

Our daily live webinars featured guest speakers from a range of organisations and backgrounds presenting their work and knowledge on key areas of biodiversity and conservation. These included individuals and presentations from Green-Schools Ireland, GLOBE Ireland, LEAF Ireland, The Pollinator Plan, the Climate Ambassador Programme and a Biodiversity Officer with Offaly County Council.

In addition to the webinars, we had daily fact sheets on the “Species of the Day”, suggested outdoor activities, spotter sheets, interactive quizzes and craft activities. There were 361 visits to the event page during the week which provided access to the fact files and resources. A total of 122 classes joined during the live webinars; a further 165 individuals/classes watched back the recordings after the live event on the Green Schools YouTube channel.

Assuming that on average each webinar viewing or event page visit was indicative of an audience of approximately 20 students (although most classes would in fact be likely to contain > 25 students) it is roughly estimated that >13,000 individuals engaged with our online Biodiversity Week offering.



Images from schools participating in Biodiversity Week and screenshots from our webinars.



Images of schools participating in Tree Week from Social Media

5.6 National Tree Week 2023

We celebrated National Tree Week from March 20th to 24th 2023. The Green-Schools Biodiversity team collaborated with LEAF Ireland ([www.leafireland.org](http://www.leafireland.org)) and GLOBE Ireland ((1) GLOBE Ireland (@GLOBEireland) / Twitter) to support schools with live webinars, online lesson plans, activities, fact sheets and quizzes. We held three live webinars which focused on Phenology, Irish Tree Mythology and Tree Communication. We had 113 classes attend these webinars with 157 individuals/ classes watching the recordings of these sessions of these live webinars after the event on the Green Schools YouTube channel. An additional 102 individuals/classes watched a pre-recorded short video on Native Irish Woodlands.

In addition to these webinars, participants were supported with daily activities and resources to allow students to get outside and take part in natural art as well as learning about measuring, identifying, planting native trees. Our event page was a hub for all of the information needed for teachers and students Tree Week 2023 - Green-Schools ([greenschoolsireland.org](https://greenschoolsireland.org)). Schools all over Ireland got involved, raising awareness about the importance of native trees in our landscape and helped to physically increase local biodiversity levels all around the country.



# 6. COMPETITIONS

## 6.1 Green-Schools Water School of the Year Awards

Every year, schools' applications for the Green Flag for the Water theme are reviewed, and the most outstanding applications are shortlisted for the Water School of the Year Award. The shortlisted schools will have embraced the Green-Schools seven-step process, focused on reducing their school's water waste and actively raised awareness about water conservation within their school and wider community.

The list of short-listed schools, along with a summary of their actions, was sent to Uisce Éireann in April 2023.

From this, four regional primary school winners and four regional secondary school winners were selected (regions are divided into: Greater Dublin Region, East and Midlands Region, North and West Region and Southern Region). In addition, a national primary school winner and national secondary school winner were each selected from the respective regional winners. All eight schools were invited to attend an awards ceremony at the Castleknock Hotel in Dublin on Wednesday 17th May, 2023 where they received their awards and the national category winners were announced. All winners received their Green Flag, award certificate, a trophy, and a prize of €750 for their school. The two national winners received a €2000 prize in total, an additional "national winner" trophy and water school of the year banner to hang outside their school.



Secondary National Water School of the Year winners, Kinsale Community School - Cork

## 6.2 Irish Water Poster Competition and Video Competition

The annual Green-Schools Irish Water Poster Competition was launched in January 2023. Primary and secondary school students around the country were invited to enter a poster on the theme of "Local Water Actions for Global Change", which was chosen to link with the UN World Water Day theme "Accelerating change". The competition was advertised to 2,560 primary and 472 secondary schools who were either currently working on the Water theme or who had already been awarded the Green-Flag for Water.

Eligible schools were invited to submit up to a maximum of ten A3-size posters per category, with many schools running internal competitions to select their best entries. The categories for entry were: Junior Primary (entries from Junior Infants to 2nd Class), Senior Primary (3rd Class – 6th Class) and Secondary School (all year groups).

2,955 entries were received for the 2023 Water Poster Competition – a 74% increase on the previous year. Each regional winner received a prize of a professionally printed and framed copy of their poster, as well as a €250 "Art and Hobby Shop" voucher. National category winners were also awarded €500 for their school and a certificate of achievement.

Thirty entries were received in the video competition, twice the number received in 2022. The winning entry was by a student from Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon, Co. Longford and she was awarded €750 for her school and presented with a certificate of achievement. This was the second year running that this school was awarded the first prize for the Water Video Competition. The winning video can be viewed [here](#). Two runner-up winning groups from Gort Community School, Co. Galway, and St Mary's Secondary School, Macroom, Co. Cork, were each awarded a prize of €300 for their school.



Winners of the Water Poster Competition in the Junior Primary, Senior Primary and Secondary categories

### 6.3 Water Conservation Photo Competition

The aim of the Water Conservation Photo Competition is to raise awareness about water conservation actions during the drier summer months. This year, the Green-Schools Water Conservation Photo Competition ran from Tuesday 30th May – Wednesday 21st June. The competition was open to all primary and secondary school students, but entries had to be submitted by an adult parent/guardian. In this way, the competition aims to engage the wider community with the Green-Schools Water programme.

To enter the competition, adults were invited to take a photograph of their child(ren) carrying out water-conservation actions and share the image on Instagram or Twitter using #ConserveWater and #GSCCompetition23 during the entry-period. Five winners were selected, with each winner receiving a GoPro Hero 11 waterproof action camera, and an Instax Mini 11 instant camera. The competition post on the Green-Schools website received 458 pageviews overall. The Green Schools Twitter got 5,850 impressions and Facebook and Instagram had a total post reach of 2,494, with the winners' announcement Twitter post getting 499 impressions.

### Examples of winning entries in this year's Water Conservation Photo Competition.



### 6.4 Green-Schools Global Citizenship School of the Year Awards

Green-Schools Global Citizenship School of the Year Awards are sponsored by Irish Aid and acknowledge schools that have worked to an exceptional standard when achieving the Green Flag for the Global Citizenship Litter and Waste and Global Citizenship Energy themes. This is the third year of the Global Citizenship School of the Year Awards and it aims to reward schools who have a strong Green-Schools presence, have learned about global topics relating to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, development education topics and what it means to be a global citizen. Every schools that applies for the flags are entered into the competition to become a regional Global Citizenship School of the Year or the overall National Global Citizenship School of the Year. The four regions are: North West, Southern, Eastern Midlands and Dublin City and County.

This year an extra dimension was added to the Global Citizenship Litter and Waste and Global Citizenship Energy themes of the Green-Schools programme. Sixteen Green-Schools working on these themes were celebrated at a special award ceremony that took place in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone. Eight primary schools were selected as regional winners for outstanding Green-Schools work that took place in their schools over the past two years.

The winners received a theme pennant and a special trophy to state that they were chosen as regional winner for the 2021/2022 academic year.

#### This year the National Global Citizenship School of the Year were awarded to:

- Muinefliuch NS (Southern regional winner)
- SN Mhuire Letterfrack (Northern/Western regional winner)

#### The Regional Global Citizenship Litter and Waste winners were:

- St. Christopher's Primary School (Dublin regional winner)
- Scoil Niocláis Naofa (Eastern/Midlands regional winner)
- Brackloon National School (Northern/Western regional winner)
- Muinefliuch NS (Southern regional winner)

#### The Regional Global Citizenship Energy winners were:

- St. Ronan's N.S. (Dublin regional winner)
- St. Mary's JNS (Eastern/Midlands regional winner)



# 7. PERFORMANCE

Here are some of the savings and statistics from the Green-Schools programme in 2022/2023.

## Litter and Waste:

73% of schools reduced the amount of general waste sent to landfill.

74% of schools noticed an increase in awareness of litter and waste issues and improved waste management practices.

66% of schools carried out a community clean up, 58% held an educational action day around reduce, re-use and recycling and an additional 30% took part in textile recycling with Clothespod.

89% of schools took part in additional programmes such as Neat Streets, litterless, National Spring Clean, Picker Pals, Bin it Roadshows, and other campaigns.

## Water:

78 water schools received virtual water workshops.

17 schools came to 4 regional water workshops and had great fun while learning a lot.

168 water ambassadors from 56 schools, took part in 8 training days, 4 clean up events in partnership with Clean Coasts and 2 well-being workshops.

We hosted 3 walk for water events around the country ( 14 schools, 159 students and 30 teachers).

We received almost 3000 entries into the water Poster competition.

## Global Citizenship Litter and Waste and Energy:

Waste reductions per year for all schools working on the Global Citizenship L&W theme is 55,000 kilograms.

These schools increased their knowledge about where our food originates and about Fairtrade.

Over 30,000 Students learned about the SDGs, social justice issues, energy consumption, climate change and what it means to be a global citizen.

## Global Citizenship Travel:

The schools working on Global Citizenship Travel revisited all of their previous efforts walking, cycling, scooting, parking 'n' striding, getting the bus and carpooling to school but they ALSO focused on the three Sustainable Development Goals most relevant to sustainable travel.

In the past two years the Green-Schools and Safe Routes to School Programmes have installed 10,500 cycle parking spaces and 1638 cycle parking spaces were installed across the country.

## Travel:

88% of the schools engaging in the travel theme recorded a decrease in car usage. A further 66% recorded an increase in walking since starting the theme.

Overall, schools participating in this theme experienced a 20% increase in walking and an 8.5% increase in cycling compared to Year 1.

## Biodiversity:

6737 trees were planted this school year. As these trees grow, they will have lots of amazing benefits, including offering homes and food to many different species of animals, storing tons of carbon and providing opportunities for education and enjoyment for the school's students.

Schools also created other spaces and food sources for wildlife including 301 wildflower gardens, 216 leaf or log piles and 626 bird feeders.

## Global Citizenship Marine Environment:

Every school on the marine environment theme was involved in a litter clean-up on their school grounds. The litter picks in some schools extended into the local community areas such as roads, villages, towns.

Schools working on the theme of Marine Environment saw a massive 42% increase in knowledge about Marine Litter and also, most importantly- what we can do to prevent it.

## Global Citizenship Food and Biodiversity:

Schools working on the GC Food and Biodiversity theme did an amazing amount of work growing and cooking their own food. On average, schools working on the theme grow 10 food crops with an incredible 36 different crops in total being grown. Despite the lovely variety it was the dependable potato that was the most popular with 96% of schools choosing to plant it.

Schools also made a big impact on reducing food miles, waste and packaging by cooking with their produce. Schools tried out over 40 different recipes with the top 3 being Strawberry Salad, Carrot Sticks with Herb Dip and Vegetable Soup!

**Here is a sample of feedback from our participating teachers:**

*"This wonderful programme created a lot of excitement amongst the children, school staff and School Community. The programme raised awareness about saving water, reducing litter and waste and saving energy both in school and at home. It creates a united and positive school community and a great feeling of good will and teamwork. It provided a sense of fun and enjoyment e.g., checking for leaks, calling out water saving tips on the school intercom system, Art competitions, Spring Community Clean up."*

*"The children on our GS Committee proudly wore their Green School Committee badges as they carried out Green Schools initiatives and walked about the place 10 feet tall. They really drove the agenda, always pestering me about when our next initiative or activity would be. I also found that the programme is very practical. Picking litter, recycling, reducing waste, buying fair trade items are all practices that children can learn in school but bring home with them while they go about their daily lives. Once they complete any of these actions outside the school setting, it really reinforces the learning and makes it a concrete life skill."*

*"We found the whole programme to be so positive. We had a fantastic committee of people who were all so enthusiastic about what we were doing. The pupils showed such fantastic leadership in coming up with so many ideas and solutions throughout the school. Pupils gained fantastic confidence in delivering messages to classes and in giving announcements at assembly. It was just amazing to see the pride they took in the measures they were implementing and in the achievements they gained. The programme had extremely positive impacts on the behaviour and attitudes of a number of children who can find school difficult at times but who really enjoyed being involved with aspects of the Green Schools program for example working in the polytunnel or getting involved with battery collections or litter picking. Overall we could not recommend the Green Schools program highly enough."*

*"We absolutely loved the programme this term of Biodiversity. The theme was fantastic and it was so easy to integrate into other subject areas. The children and the staff members really enjoyed it especially all the practical tasks like creating bug hotels, working on the vegetable patch, going on our really enjoyable day of action and going on forest walks of discovery in the forest next to the school."*

*"This program has been an eye-opener for us, providing inspiring ideas and practical ways to encourage others to become environmentally friendly. The Neat Streets programme has been instrumental in providing us with new ideas and approaches to tackle environmental challenges and inspire others to join in the cause. While we have worked on the programme, we have been delighted to see our school get greener by the day. Being able to educate our fellow students on the importance of reducing our litter and waste is such a positive in itself. Seeing our school progress from when we started to now is an achievement that we are so proud of."*

*"The programme is of huge benefit to the students involved and to the school in general. The students become very involved with the tasks and are eager to do their best. There is scope for the quieter students, in that they can make posters or draw up bar charts to demonstrate the survey results, while the more outgoing students will carry out the surveys, make the TikTok, link in with staff and outside contacts to organize workshops or other community activities. The programme teaches responsibility, organizational skills, showing initiative and how to delegate tasks. The promotion of the theme - Global citizenship, litter and waste - creates great awareness among staff and students of issues, they might otherwise have ignored."*

*"The children really found it interesting to find out where their food was coming from. They did think it was important to look for locally made food. They also were very impressed with themselves that they could almost halve the amount of waste in our waste bins by doing some simple things. These little things made a huge difference. There is a much better awareness that they are part of a global community when it comes to waste management and being environmentally friendly."*

*"There were many plus sides to working on the Global Citizenship Travel flag. The main one was the sense of community-spirit it generated. We worked hard to challenge current travel to and from our school and make it more sustainable and through the commitment of our pupils and their families, we managed to make a difference. More people in our school community are now aware of Park'n'Stride and of engine idling. The enthusiasm of our Green School Committee was another positive. They worked together as a dedicated group to achieve their goals and even made new friendships along the way. The programme resulted in building students' confidence and a sense of citizenship through participation. The supplied curriculum materials and resources were another great addition for teachers. Each lesson plan had the right mix of engaging lesson ideas and resources. Also, the support received from our Green School Travel Officer was excellent."*



# 8. GOING FORWARD

The Green-Schools team were delighted to return to an increasing number of face-to-face events during the school year. We find ourselves busier than ever and it is amazing to see the continued enthusiasm of students and teachers and their commitment to the programme.

As mentioned by President Higgins at the start of this report in his letter celebrating 25 years of the programme, “there remains so much to be done” regarding the current Climate and Biodiversity crises which must be our overarching focus as we progress into a new phase of the Green-Schools programme. Offering flexibility to schools is key and we look forward to planning the future of the programme over the next number of years. The President sums it up well when he writes “As we celebrate this important milestone, let us renew our commitment to this vital cause, taking inspiration from the past 25 years , and looking forward with hope and determination, with efforts to empower our young people with the knowledge, skills and values they need to protect the planet”.

Green-Schools allows students to develop many of the 21st century skills needed to empower young people to take action and protect their future, skills such as communication, critical thinking, empathy, active citizenship and creativity, vital skills that are needed now more than ever.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications for all their support to date.

