



partnerships for schools

This case study looks at one primary school's efforts to make use of its building's green credentials and feed them into the curriculum.

Key project information

Project: Southwark Primary School

Pupils: 720 aged 3-11

Local authority: Nottingham City Council

Local Education Partnership: inspiredspaces

Southwark primary school – incorporating sustainability into the curriculum

Southwark Primary School - introduction

Southwark Primary School opened in April 2010 as part of Nottingham City's Primary Capital Programme and was delivered by the Local Education Partnership. The school has capacity for 720 pupils aged 3-11.

The school was chosen as an exemplar project by the then Department for Children Schools and Families to encourage best practice in terms of education, building design and sustainability.

Making use of the old school

In preparation for the new build, the school filled two articulated lorries worth of surplus furniture which is being stored until a suitable charity takes possession of the stock. This scheme was run by registered charity 'Green-Works' and meant that 99 per cent of materials were diverted away from landfill. The furniture will either be sent overseas to deprived countries free of charge or schools in this country will be offered the stock at heavily discounted prices including delivery and installation.

Eco-friendly school

As an exemplar project, the school has a number of green features which are incorporated into the school's daily life to help educate pupils about the importance of sustainability.

These include a biomass boiler which burns wood pellets emitting a cleaner smoke into the air than more common non-renewable energy types; and for every tree used, five more are planted.

The school features a brown roof above the area used by pupils in Years 2 and 3 and a green roof above Years 4, 5 and 6. These roofs encourage plants to grow and birds to visit and, of course, use carbon dioxide and produce oxygen.

A rainwater harvesting system is used to flush the building's toilets and is able to hold 22,500 litres of water.

Natural ventilation in all teaching areas removes the need for energy-hungry air conditioning systems.

Southwark primary school – incorporating sustainability into the curriculum



The school's greenhouse and growing beds

A new term brings new features

From September 2010, a raft of new sustainable features will be in use at Southwark Primary School. These include composting bins and wind turbine educational devices which will enable pupils to learn about alternative methods of energy production.

Taking the lead

Southwark Primary School is fortunate to benefit from an inspirational headteacher and a self-proclaimed 'eco warrior', Michaela Saunders. She says that green issues are "very important to the children."

She added: "They are so aware of the impact of climate change and deforestation."

During construction Michaela wanted to ensure the minimum ecological impact on the local area and was pleased to see topsoil being shifted and brought back to be used again.

Energy monitor

To this end, Michaela and the school team were keen to make the school's green features notably visible for the children. As part of the new build, an energy monitor was installed and displays the school's power usage. The TV screen is prominently placed in circulation spaces so that pupils have an opportunity to see for themselves the impact that switching a light off can have.

Taking the classroom outside

One of the many impressive aspects of the school is the allotment and growing beds which allow pupils to grow a variety of flowers and vegetables which in turn provides learning opportunities for pupils including science and business and enterprise.

Future generations

By linking sustainability issues directly to the curriculum Southwark Primary School is ensuring future generations are informed about the direct consequences their actions can have on the environment. By instilling the right attitudes now, young people will grow up armed with the necessary knowledge to make better informed decisions in the future. What pupils learn at school is already being communicated to their peers and parents and is having a positive impact now in the local community.



The school's energy monitor

Southwark primary school – incorporating sustainability into the curriculum

Making the classroom green

As with any green school, it is imperative to make sure the ethos of the school reflects this. Southwark Primary School recently held its first ‘Green Day’ which was a great success and involved the whole school. Pupils were encouraged to wear something green and then undertook a number of activities aimed at raising awareness about sustainability.

Year 1 looked at recycling an item of clothing and then made a new one.

Year 2 focused on identifying what materials can be recycled and how they can be re-used, which included the pupils making a herb garden.

Year 3 learnt specific themes about sustainability including foods which are grown and those which are man-made.

Year 4 explored more complex themes such as problems caused by using non-renewable energy and investigated the alternatives.

Year 5 pupils looked at what was entailed in manufacturing a cheeseburger including where ingredients were sourced and the impact transporting foodstuffs has on the environment.

All groups then came together at the end of the day to present their work and findings.

Key contact

Michaela Saunders
Headteacher
Southwark Primary School
Email: headteacher@southwark.nottingham.sch.uk