

Sustainability Policy Statement

Star of the Sea National School, Riverchapel



Riverchapel NS

Réalt na Mara

All public service bodies are required under the Climate Action Plan to adhere to the Public Service Climate Action Mandate – and to develop Climate Action Roadmaps setting out how they will deliver on their energy efficiency and emission reduction targets.

Schools now have a separate Climate Action Mandate under which they are required to adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement. The School Sector Climate Action Mandate can be read in full here: [gov.ie - School Sector Climate Action Mandate \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

The second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030 also informs the content of the following Sustainability Policy Statement template.

ESD aims to ensure that “by 2030, all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

(Sustainable Development Goal 4.7)

The following has been prepared as part the School Sector Climate Action Mandate, and in keeping with the principles and themes of ESD to 2030, and has been accepted by the Board of Management of our school.

Purpose

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement is to outline how our school promotes sustainability and climate action, through our actions and activities. Sustainability can be defined as the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future.

Scope

Sustainability is a community issue and applies to all students, teachers and employees of our school. Parents and guardians should note, and where possible, promote, the Statement. The Board of Management of the school will ensure that decisions made in respect of the school align with the Statement.

Vision, mission and values

Our School's Vision

Star of the Sea NS, Riverchapel, is a school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns for the education of children from the parish of Riverchapel. The school is committed to the aims and principles of the revised Primary School Curriculum. It celebrates the uniqueness of each child as expressed in each child's personality, intelligence and potential for development. The school seeks to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life – spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative aesthetic, social and physical.

Our curriculum aims to enable each child:

- To live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual.
- To develop as a social being, through living and co-operating with others and so to contribute to the good of society.
- To prepare for further education and lifelong learning.

Our School's Mission

Star of the Sea National School seeks to cherish and challenge children in a safe, secure and attractive environment. We aim to provide quality learning experiences that are engaging, enriching and enjoyable through a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

The school sees itself as an integral part of the parish and in partnership with parents and the Church seeks to nurture the Catholic faith through religious education, preparing for the Sacraments and through the ethos of the school. This ethos is best exemplified through the quality of all relationships in the school, which are based on respect and dignity for each person – child, parent, teacher, SNA, principal, secretary,

caretaker, classroom assistant, cleaner and visitor to the school.

Star of the Sea National School seeks to be a warm and welcoming place respectful and accommodating of diversity in race, culture, religion, gender and ability. We strive to provide an inclusive environment responsive to the needs of all our students. We aim to promote equity in all areas and to provide extra support to students when needed.

Ní Neart go cur le Chéile

Our Schools Values

We value most highly our relationship with parents and the local community and seek to continue to work in partnership with parents to ensure the best for each child is provided for.

The school is a learning community. We promote and value lifelong learning for all, including staff.

Whole School Approach to Sustainability

- Our school has adopted this Sustainability Policy Statement. It clearly details the aims and objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in our school, its relationship to the vision and mission of the school.
- Our school recognises Education for Sustainable Development as a cross-curricular theme in our school.
- Opportunities are identified to introduce and address sustainability in the classroom, across all subjects.
- Our school is a member of the Irish Schools Sustainability Network (www.ISSN.ie)
- Our school keeps up to date with developments in ESD including by being registered for the quarterly ESD Newsletter <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a1d6e-education-for-sustainable-development-newsletter/>

Environmental sustainability

Green-Schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues from the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of their school.

- Our school is part of the Green Schools Programme.

We were first awarded our Green Flag in 2012. Since then, we have successfully achieved six Green Flags in the following themes: Litter and Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity, Global Citizenship – Litter and Waste

We are currently working towards achieving our next Green Flag under the theme Global Citizenship – Energy. Our school has a Green Team comprising staff and students whose role is to promote environmental awareness. They encourage energy conservation, recycling and sustainable practices to help protect our planet and build a more sustainable future.

- Our school engages with SEAI Education & Youth Programme's curriculum linked energy Resources, pupil Workshops.
[Schools | Community Energy | SEAI](https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/)<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/>
- Our school engages with the [SEAI Energy in Education](#) resources and energy management tools in order to monitor and report energy consumption.
- Our school has an Environmental Policy which outlines our operating procedures in respect of water conservation, waste, food waste, energy. This policy is currently under review.
- In June 2025, our school installed Solar PV panels. We can now monitor our renewable energy generation in real time via the display screen installed with the system. This provides valuable information while reducing our carbon footprint. The school is currently in the process of upgrading our heating system, moving from oil-fired central heating to an air-to-water heat pump system. This transition will further reduce our carbon footprint and improve the school's overall energy efficiency.
- Our school is beginning to develop a comprehensive and cohesive recycling policy /procedure, and uses recycled and recyclable materials whenever possible e.g. using recycled materials in arts and STEAM based lessons where children use imagination to repurpose materials.
- Our school resources are procured and utilised taking into consideration their impact on the environment. e.g. recycled paper for printing
- Our school will begin evaluating resources to support sustainability education.
- Our school environment clearly displays information on sustainability and sustainable practices in prominent and accessible places.
- Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment e.g. our pupils participate in the Clean Coasts Beach Clean and The National Spring Clean.
- Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning e.g. our school has a school garden, we are currently developing an outdoor learning area and are purchasing resources and seating to enhance this space. As this area continues to develop, we aim to increase pupil involvement in the cultivation, growing, and maintenance of the school garden, fostering greater awareness of sustainability and environmental responsibility.
- Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity e.g. bug hotel, planters
- Our school promotes sustainable transport including where possible, walking and cycling to school. e.g. our school partakes in the National Walk to School Week, we have a WOW campaign where we promote – Walk on Wednesday.

We have installed a bicycle rack as we also encourage pupils to cycle and scoot to school. These initiatives support healthier lifestyles while reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions. The school also participates in Bike Buddies which teaches pupils how to cycle and helps them to develop their cycling skills.

- **SDG 4 – Quality Education:** Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education on sustainability. Outdoor learning experiences foster environmental literacy and experiential learning.
- **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy:** Solar PV panels promotes renewable energy use and supports the transition to cleaner energy sources.
- **SDG 13 – Climate Action:** Promoting awareness and action on energy use and climate impact. Solar energy reduces our reliance on fossil fuels and helps lower our school’s carbon footprint. Reducing car use lowers carbon emissions associated with school travel.
- **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production:** Promotes waste reduction, recycling. SEAI – M&R monitoring of our energy consumption encourages responsible energy use and informed decision-making.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Participation in community clean-ups supports cleaner, more sustainable local environments.
- **SDG 14 – Life Below Water:** Beach clean initiatives help protect marine ecosystems from pollution.
- **SDG 15 – Life on Land:** Gardening and habitat care promote respect for terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Sustainable transport reduces traffic congestion and improves local air quality.
- **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being:** Encouraging active travel promotes physical health and overall wellbeing.

Social Sustainability

- Our school ethos recognises the importance of and is sensitive to issues surrounding gender equity.
- Our school ethos strives to prepare students for life as citizens of a global community.
- The needs of all students in recognition of differentiated physical or learning abilities, are taken into consideration and accommodated.
- Some school staff have been provided with the training in the area of conflict resolution, in order to support and affect positive student behaviour. Staff who have not yet completed this training have expressed interest in engaging with CPD in this area in the future. All staff recently completed training in Bí Cineálta, enhancing their skills and understanding in supporting students’ wellbeing needs.

- **SDG 4 – Quality Education:** We strive to provide inclusive and equitable quality education that supports diverse learning needs.
- **SDG 5 – Gender Equality:** We actively promote equal opportunities, challenge stereotypes, and foster an inclusive environment where all genders are respected and valued.
- **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities:** Our inclusive ethos works to eliminate discrimination and ensure equal participation for all students. Our differentiated approaches ensure that all students, regardless of ability, can participate fully in school life.
- **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:** By fostering respect, fairness and democratic values, we prepare students to contribute positively to peaceful and inclusive societies. Conflict resolution training and restorative practices promote peaceful relationships, respect and fairness within the school community.

Economic Sustainability

- A non-competitive ethos of co-operation and sharing of resources is modelled in our school's allocation of its resources.
- Students are involved in the decision-making process on resource allocation within our school. e.g. student council involvement.
- Our school's fund-raising activities reflect and actively demonstrate ethical and sustainable principles. Pupils are also involved with promoting and organising fund-raising activities.
- Our school buildings are maintained to a high standard, with best practise in the area of sustainability in mind. Our school recently fitted solar panels.
- Our school educates on, and promotes the principles of, a circular economy.
- **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production:** Shared use of resources reduces waste and promotes efficient, sustainable consumption.
- **SDG 4 – Quality Education:** Students develop leadership, responsibility and critical thinking skills through active participation in decision making.
- **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:** Encouraging student participation supports inclusive decision-making and democratic engagement.
- **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals:** Fundraising activities encourage collaboration within the school and wider community.
- **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy:** The installation of solar panels promotes renewable energy use and reduces reliance on fossil fuels.
- **SDG 13 – Climate Action:** Investing in renewable energy supports efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Cultural Sustainability

- Our school ethos aims to foster students' self-esteem, along with a mutual regard and respect for fellow students, and positive social interaction and relationships.
- Our school ethos, in tandem with the curriculum, strives to prepare students for life in an increasingly multicultural society.
- Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement, and encourages the community's involvement with the school e.g. Parents Council, parents are welcomed into the school to become involved in any initiatives that are taking place within the school. The school also welcomes and encourages visits from our local soccer and GAA clubs, it has invited the NWSPCA and students donated to the organisation, our school also encourages and welcomes visits from our community Garda.
- Our school has an active role in supporting cultural diversity both within the school itself, and in the wider school community.
- **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being:** Promoting self-esteem and positive relationships supports students' emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:** Encouraging respect, fairness and positive interaction contributes to a peaceful and inclusive school culture. Promoting cultural respect and inclusion supports peaceful and cohesive communities.
- **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities:** Promoting inclusion and respect helps reduce discrimination and ensures equal participation for all. We work to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunities for all students regardless of background.
- **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals:** Strong collaboration between school, families, community organisations and local services, fosters active citizenship and supports shared responsibility and sustainable development within the school and wider community.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Community engagement strengthens local networks and promotes active citizenship.

Teacher Competence

- Our Teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD. e.g. ESD CPD, GCE CPD. Staff are sent emails with information about upcoming courses, workshops and CPD opportunities at our local Education Centre.
- **SDG 4 – Quality Education**, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Student Competence

- Our students are encouraged and supported to participate in peer to peer learning activities e.g. paired reading, Play Ground Leaders, Maths Trials designed by pupils for pupils.
 - Our school has a Student Council, Green Team who are involved in decisions - they contribute to discussions and decisions regarding fundraising activities, resources requested by pupils, and strategies to promote environmental awareness across the school community. The school also has a Rising Stars Committee who promote the Principal's Award and encourage positive behaviour throughout the school
 - Our students are encouraged to volunteer for local community action on sustainability projects e.g. Clean Coasts, Beach Clean and The National Spring Clean.
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- **SDG 4 – Quality Education:** Peer-to-peer learning initiatives promote inclusive, student-centred learning and leadership skills.
 - **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Participation in community clean-ups supports cleaner, more sustainable local environments encourages students to contribute positively to their local area.
 - **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals:** Pupil involvement in local sustainability projects promotes shared responsibility, strengthens collaboration between the school and the wider community.

Goals

Our school will aim to have completed the development of an outdoor learning area by June 2026.

Our school will aim to achieve a Green Flag for Global Citizenship- Energy by June 2027.

Our school will aim to further develop our recycling procedure within the school by June 2028.

Our school aims to assess and began to acquire a sufficient bank of resources to assist in the teaching Sustainability by June 2028.

Implementation and review

This Statement was implemented on __ May 2026. To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed 2 years.