

Downpatrick Nursery School – Biodiversity

Number of pupils: 26
Age range: 3-4 years
Location: Downpatrick

Joined Eco-Schools: 1994
Number of Green Flags: 8

Downpatrick Nursery School were the first school in the world to be awarded a Green Flag in 1994. Since then they have received a further 7 Green Flags and the Eco-Schools ethos is fully engrained in the school. The immediate visual impact of the flowers and plants around the school grounds is wonderful.

Pupils, even though very young, show sound understanding of eco-issues and biodiversity. The Eco-Schools programme has helped raise the profile of the school and encourages parents and staff to learn about the environment too.

The school has developed its small outdoor space into an oasis of green areas where outdoor learning has become part of everyday life. Areas include a bug-hotels, bird feeding areas, compost heap, jungle area, mud kitchen, vegetable patch, and flower beds.

Biodiversity topic actions:

The pupils are encouraged to play outside every day and learn about their natural environment and the creatures which live in it. Each year parents are impressed with how much their children learn during the RSPB bird watch. The children are eager to identify and learn the names of common garden birds. Each child takes home a fat ball which often initiates regular bird feeding at home. They are able to teach their parents and siblings the names of the birds and key facts about them. They gain confidence in their abilities and are rewarded by their parents pride in their achievements. Learning and enthusiasm are shared and generated between home and school. The pupils also carry out bug hunts in school and record their findings in simple data collection systems using counters. The school is developing a wildflower area, bumblebee homes and redoing their vegetable patch.

Sharing Good Practice actions:

2015 Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Event – Display stand showcasing their topic work.

The Eco-Coordinators spoke at their local Council Cluster Group meeting to other schools about their work.

Eco-Schools National Operators Meeting (NOM) the school provided a display board showcasing their best practice actions Biodiversity.

More information on actions the school has been taking can be found on their [website](#).

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Pupils take part in the RSBP Big Bird Watch, go on bug hunts and search for signs of seasonal change i.e. first snowdrops.

Mentoring School:

St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford. They are looking forward to sharing ideas and helping St Joseph's Primary to their first Green Flag.



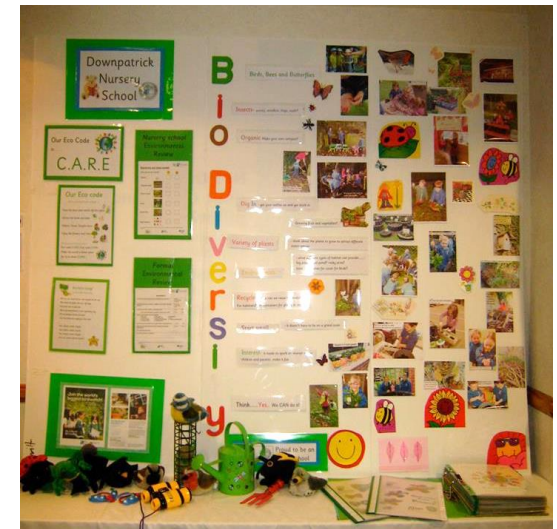
Above: Downpatrick Nursery School receiving their Ambassador Eco-School award during the Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Event.



Above and right: Pupils learn all about the biodiversity topic.



Above: Pupils go looking for snowdrops in the local park.



Left and above: Display stands sharing best practice have featured at the Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Event and the National Operators Meeting.