

St Bronagh's Primary School

Number of pupils: 197

Age range: 4-11

Location: 53, Church Street, Rostrevor

Joined Eco-Schools: 2013

Number of Green Flags: 3

The pupils at St Bronagh's PS are very enthusiastic and engaged in making a difference to their school and to their environment. The whole school is involved in Eco-measures. For example, each pupil and staff member planted a number of daffodil bulbs out the front of the school – in the new Bronagh's Bed; the school's architect and builders also planted some bulbs. St Bronagh's PS take part in Cash for Clobber once every term. The money collected is used for Eco-initiatives, such as to buy bird food, plants and pots. For example, in June 2018 the school collected a total of 900kg of old clothes, curtains and bed covers which helped to raise £360.

Recently a new build project, funded by DENI, has provided a seven-classroom school building, which caters for almost 200 pupils and a youth centre that hosts a range of programmes including sports, drama and arts for the local community. From the very beginning, there was a close engagement between the design team and the pupils and staff on environmental matters. Through consultation with the architect of the school's new build, St Bronagh's PS received solar panels as well as new taps with sensors which automatically turn off when you remove your hands and also toilets which have short and long flushes to save water. In addition, the school has Swift Boxes built into the fabric of the building and a Green Roof to enhance its Bio-diversity value. In May 2018, the school won the Sustainability Award and the Liam McCormick Prize for Building of the Year at the Royal Society of Ulster Architects Design Awards. Paul Mc Mahon was also declared Architect of the Year.

Topic actions:

After finding out that they had a low Biodiversity Score, Eco-Councillors asked all the other pupils in school to help give nature a home. P7 found an old bird table made by the previous school caretaker. This was fixed up and two bird feeders were added. The P7s noticed the birds swooping down, eating some meal worms and flying out the other side of their bird table so they named their bird table "Mc Birdies Flythrough."

P6 helped by buying a bird station and two bird feeders, naming their bird station "Flier Tucks." They also ordered native hedging from the Woodland Trust which parents and pupils planted along the front parts of the school. P5 ordered a bird station and two feeders and they named their bird station Bronagh's Bird Café.

P4s made a 5-star Bug Hotel by recycling wooden pallets and placing bricks, logs and stones within the spaces. Everyone got involved and had great fun

Sharing Good Practice actions:

St Bronagh's PS leads the way for other schools and has also learnt from other schools. For example, by attending the Teachers' Conference 2018, Eco-coordinator Una Downey heard about the "Last Straw Campaign" in which a school stopped using plastic straws because they were bad for wildlife in our environment. They also heard about a school who teamed up with four other schools to plant daffodils around their town.

Dromore Road is St Bronagh's shared education partner school and together they share practices. St Bronagh's pupils learned a lot from Dromore Road's pupils about how they recycled and were shown their range of vegetables and herbs that they grew. They passed on some valuable tips, such as that it is best to grow raspberries in pots as they can take over.

providing a home to many mini-beasts. P3s planted flowers in pots for our pollinators. P2s planted hyacinth flowers in tyres; P1s planted lettuce and created two stone piles to attract mini-beasts into the school grounds. In May, the eco-council carried out the Biodiversity Survey again and they were able to monitor the improvements through the increased Biodiversity Score. Results were shared in assembly and are displayed proudly on the notice board.

Recently Mr John Gallagher, our principal, introduced the school to the Daily Mile Initiative to help promote Healthy Living. Both teachers and pupils all have fun whilst improving their fitness. Mr Gallagher, as always, leads by example. His practical support, his encouragement and enthusiasm for the Eco-Schools programme and his desire to involve everyone in the school has embedded the Eco-Schools ethos into our curriculum and brought everyone on board.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Catherine O’Boyle from the RSPB led a Biodiversity Survey within the school grounds for the first time using the photographs on the Homes for Nature Scorecard. Overall, the results from their Biodiversity Survey were initially low and the Eco-Council recognised that they needed the help of all the pupils to improve their biodiversity score.

Before their new school build, the Eco-Committee met with the school’s architect and asked him questions about monitoring energy in the school. P6 asked if the electricity meter could be placed in a good location for pupils to read. This was successful, as currently the electricity meter is in a good position and is able to be read clearly. P5 asked if the water meter could be placed inside the school grounds and this was also successful as the water meter was placed inside a storeroom, close to the electricity meter and can be easily read by the pupils.

Mentoring School:

St Bronagh’s PS works closely with other local schools through Shared Education, Extended Schools and Transition Projects and looks forward to mentoring and supporting other Primary and Post-Primary Schools in their future Eco-activities.

In October 2018 St Bronagh’s PS held an Eco-Schools’ information event for local schools as part of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s on-going Environmental Education Programme. They were the first school to ever host this type of event. The Eco-Committee proudly showed their new Eco-building and their own Eco-office.



St Bronagh's PS stand at the Eco-conference in Greenmount College in April 2018.



Attendees at the Eco-Information Event in St Bronagh's Primary School in October 2018.



Swift Boxes built into the fabric of the school building.



Cash for Clobber collection raised £360.



St Bronagh's PS Eco-Committee with architect Paul Mc Mahon.



Pupils participating in the RSPB Big Bird Watch.