

Ballycraigy Primary School

Number of pupils: 140
Age range: 4 – 11 years
Location: Antrim

Joined Eco-Schools: 2005
Number of Green Flags: 6

Ballycraigy Primary School have excellent school grounds, providing an outdoors vegetable garden, wildlife area and an outdoor play area which promotes outdoor learning. The school is are currently fundraising for a new coop and have some interested parties who would like to donate hens to the school.

There is great community involvement, with community groups and parents helping and taking part in many projects. These include Adopt a Spot in the school grounds; Big Spring Clean in the local community with the school Power Walking Group and Live Here Love Here with Muckamore Pre School. As a result of their projects, Ballycraigy Primary have helped to create a much greater sense of community involvement in the school and helped eradicate anti-social problems in the area. There is obvious pupil ownership of the Eco-Schools programme and within the school, pupils are very knowledgeable and proud of their achievements.

Through application funding and competition prize money the school has raised a staggering £60,000 pounds since 2007 for their eco work and to use for improvements to the grounds. Funding has come from sources such as the Lottery, the Challenge Funds, Live Here Love Here, Wrigley's Litter Less and the Local Council. Prize money has come from Cash for Clobber, Best Kept Schools, RHS and Sam Gardiner among many more.

They have also won awards for their Eco work including winning the 'Best of the Best' in the Best Kept Schools competition 2015 and they were Royal Horticultural Society finalists for 2015 School Gardening Team of the Year- watch the [video](#).

Topic actions:

Over the years, pupils and parents have worked together to develop a heritage garden, a vegetable garden, a poly-tunnel, pond, an outdoor fitness trail, a wildlife trail and wildflower areas. There is also a greenhouse, play fitness equipment and there are further plans for alpine planted terraced areas. A hedgehog house in wild woodland, swift boxes, a bug hotel and lots of bird feeding stations have improved biodiversity.

The school has an emphasis on encouraging the pupils to learn through outdoor play and the topic is built into all year groups' curriculum. Every

Sharing Good Practice actions:

Ballycraigy PS is now an Official Forest School as Eco Coordinator Miss Gourley achieved her Forest School Leader Level 3 in June 2018. Forest School lessons are taught throughout the year by her.

The school won Best Kept Garden through Antrim/ Newtownabbey Borough Council August 2018.

Participated in the Teachers Conference workshop 2018.

Members from the Eco Committee were invited to attend the Eco Schools Conference 2017 to display their work and speak to attendees.

pupil has access to outdoor learning and a greater understanding of the biodiversity and history of their area. The school website provides more information on their curriculum links.

The school hosted an open day to their School Grounds for 12 schools and community groups to visit the school grounds and gain inspiration and swap ideas.

In 2015 HRH the Duke of Gloucester visited their developments at their School Grounds.

An Open afternoon was held with CCEA which had a view to help with their 'Growing for the Future' resources.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Over the years, the Eco-Committee have kept a record of all the developments to the school grounds including Energy, Water, Litter and Outdoor Learning. More recently records have been kept on Transport, Biodiversity and Waste (clothing and food). Records are also kept on the crops they grow; learning from successes and mistakes as they go and evaluating their standards. They also take biodiversity surveys and participate in the RSPB Big Schools Bird Watch.

Mentoring School:

Victoria Primary School, Carrickfergus.

Ballycraigy helped provide advice and guidance to Victoria to help them towards achieving their first Green Flag in March 2017.

Ballycraigy have also assisted a local Nursery develop their own outdoor areas.

Upon entering Garden Show Ireland 2016, the School displayed their Eco-Schools flag and were able to speak to schools/teachers about their Eco-Schools experiences.

They attended the Eco-Schools conference in March 2017 and helped with networking there.

Ballycraigy connected with a school in Slovenia by sending photos of their school grounds and gardening activities.

They have 'open afternoons' for schools to come and visit.

The school is delighted to help any other school with advice on Schools Ground development.



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



Above: Ballycraigy Primary School receiving their Best Kept Award.

Below: Ballycraigy pupils work to repot seedlings in their school polytunnel



Above: pupils chat to HRH the Duke of Gloucester about their school grounds work and growing their own vegetables.



Above: Ballycraigy School's garden display.