

Downpatrick Nursery School

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

Joined Eco-Schools: 1994
Number of Green Flags: 10

Downpatrick Nursery School were the first school in the world to be awarded a Green Flag in 1994 and have more recently become the first school in NI to be awarded its 10th Green Flag, making it a world leader in sustainable education. 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 children take turns to do one of three "Eco Jobs" each week. They wear a cape to denote their role as either "Captain Compost", "Recycle King/Queen", "Bird Boy/Girl". Their photo is displayed in school and shared on Facebook.

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](#). The website clearly broadcasts its Eco-Code for all who visits.

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:

Downpatrick Nursery are looking forward to collaborating more with other schools in the local area. A connection has been built with Down High and Knockevin Special School. We are preparing a major tree planting event in Downpatrick in March 2019.

Lorna Burns, the current Principal at the school commented that the school “aims to continue to find new ways of collaborating with other local schools of all ages in combined Eco-Schools projects”.



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



Above: Pupils learn all about the biodiversity topic.

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



Above: Downpatrick renew their Green Flag

