

AMBASSADOR SCHOOL CASE STUDY



St. Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor

53 Church Street, Rostrevor, Newry, Co-Down. BT34 3BB

Number of pupils	Age range	Joined Eco-Schools	Number of Green Flags	Date of last Green Flag
213	4-11	2012	6	2024

St. Bronagh's Primary School: A Community Rooted in Sustainability

St. Bronagh's Primary School is nestled in the heart of Rostrevor, overlooking the stunning Carlingford Lough. Our pupils are enthusiastic, proactive, and passionate about making a positive difference to their school and the environment.

Our Eco-Council takes great pride in getting everyone involved, whether it's birdwatching, energy-saving initiatives, or growing fruit and vegetables in our school grounds. We place a strong emphasis on teamwork, valuing every contribution and fostering a shared sense of responsibility for caring for our environment.

In 2018, our commitment to sustainability and innovation was recognised when St. Bronagh's was awarded the Sustainability Award and the Liam

McCormick Prize for Building of the Year at the RSUA Design Awards. Our architect, Mr. Paul McMahon, was also named Architect of the Year. From the beginning, pupils and staff worked closely with Mr. McMahon, contributing ideas around environmental sustainability. As a result, the school features a green roof to boost biodiversity, south-east-facing windows to maximise natural light, solar panels, and swift bird boxes built directly into the structure of the building.

Sustainability is deeply embedded in our school culture. For many years, we have taken part in initiatives such as Cash4Clobber, encouraging families and the wider community to donate unwanted clothing and shoes. The funds raised go towards eco-projects including bird feed, plants, and seedlings.

We have also created a wildlife corridor on our school grounds, where pupils take responsibility for feeding birds and encouraging biodiversity. Teachers regularly use the local environment as a learning resource, with classes visiting Kilbroney Park to explore native trees, shrubs, and animals.

Pupils take on leadership roles in spreading environmental awareness across the school. They visit classrooms to educate their peers on key issues such as pollution, recycling, and energy conservation, and encourage participation in initiatives like the Big Garden Birdwatch and our school-wide energy challenge. At weekly assemblies, our Eco-Council keeps everyone informed with updates and campaigns.

We maintain strong links with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, regularly welcoming visits from the Biodiversity Officer and Sustainability Officer. Each year, we participate in the council's Environmental Poster Competition and Youth Speak Competition. Last year, one of our pupils won a prize in the poster competition, and we are proud to have reached the final of the Youth Speak competition for three consecutive years.

At St. Bronagh's, we believe that every small action can lead to big change, and we are proud to nurture the next generation of environmental stewards.

Topic Actions

Biodiversity at St. Bronagh's: Nurturing Nature Together

Biodiversity actions play a big part of St. Bronagh's School life. As pupils move up into their new Classes they become responsible for a new bird station/feeders. St. Bronagh's pupils encourage birds to stop in our school grounds for tasty feasts at 'Bronagh's Bird Cafe' or 'Flier Tucks' or fly through for a quick bite at 'Mc Birdie's Fly



Big Schools Birdwatch 2025

Through'before they travel on their journey. P1-P7 pupils enjoy taking part in the 'Big Schools' Birdwatch' annually and Liz Farnon, Environmentalist, helps pupils identify the garden birds within our school grounds. Team Biodiversity visit classrooms to encourage pupils and their families to take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch'. We continuously aim to improve the Biodiversity of our school grounds and our most recent actions have included putting up bird boxes made by Rostrevor men shedders, planting hedging and fruit trees.

Waste Reduction and Recycling at St. Bronagh's



At St. Bronagh's, we are committed to reducing the amount of waste, particularly textiles, that ends up in landfill. Through a strong focus on recycling, we continue to make great strides in sustainability.

Our Cash4Clobber collections, held three times each school year, have become a well-established initiative involving the wider

community, and they continue to grow in impact and success.

Building on this, we began to explore how we could extend our efforts to include school uniform recycling. With guidance from the CYPS Uniform Initiative, our Team Recycling connected with Paula Cole from the Parents' Association to co-ordinate efforts. Together, they organised the sorting of donated uniforms and helped facilitate a collection system to ensure these items can be reused by other families in our school community.

This initiative not only supports sustainability but also promotes inclusivity and community spirit within our school.

Planting and Growing at St. Bronagh's

At St. Bronagh's, our '**Eco Sow and Grow**' initiative encourages pupils and staff to get outdoors, get involved, and get planting. Each participant plants a vegetable or fruit seedling, then takes responsibility for caring for it, nurturing it as it grows, and eventually harvesting the produce.

Once harvested, pupils take their homegrown fruit or vegetables home to share with their families. Same-day harvest and eating. You can't get any fresher than that!

This hands-on experience helps children understand where food comes from, promotes healthy eating, and nurtures a lasting connection with nature.

Energy Awareness at St. Bronagh's

At St. Bronagh's, we encourage our pupils to become *Energy Saving Heroes* by focusing on three simple but effective classroom actions that help reduce energy use. These include switching off lights when not needed, powering down devices, and keeping doors closed to retain heat.

Through these small, everyday actions, our pupils learn that even the smallest changes can make a big difference in caring for our planet.

Rostrevor Men's Shed: Supporting Biodiversity in Local Schools

It all began when our Eco-Council, in their mission to improve biodiversity in local schools, reached out to *Rostrevor Men's Shed* to ask if they could help by building bird boxes. The request was not just for St. Bronagh's, but also for St. Colman's Primary School in Saval, whom we were mentoring as part of our *Eco Ambassador School Programme*.

The Men's Shed kindly agreed and built ten beautifully crafted bird boxes, showcasing their impressive skills and community spirit. Pupils and staff at St. Bronagh's were delighted when the bird boxes were delivered, and we quickly arranged a special visit from St. Colman's to present them with



their share. During this visit, our pupils offered advice on where to place the boxes and took part in a joint eco meeting to share ideas and inspiration.

Encouraged by the success of this collaboration, our Eco teacher shared the project with Ballyholland Primary School, another school we were mentoring. Once again, Rostrevor Men's Shed generously agreed to support the initiative by creating bird boxes to enhance their biodiversity efforts too.

This wonderful example of community partnership was highlighted on our school websites and soon caught the attention of the *Biodiversity Officer* at *Newry, Mourne and Down District Council*. News quickly spread about how the Rostrevor Men's Shed were playing a key role in supporting local schools with their environmental efforts.

Following this, the group went on to build bird boxes for another local school—*Bessbrook Primary School*—extending the positive impact of their work even further.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At St. Bronagh's, we have been actively engaged in recycling initiatives for several years. Since 2018, we have taken part in the *Cash4Clobber* scheme, which has become an integral part of our school culture.

Collections are held three times per school year and continue to grow in both participation and impact.

Cash4Clobber Totals:

School Year 2023–2024

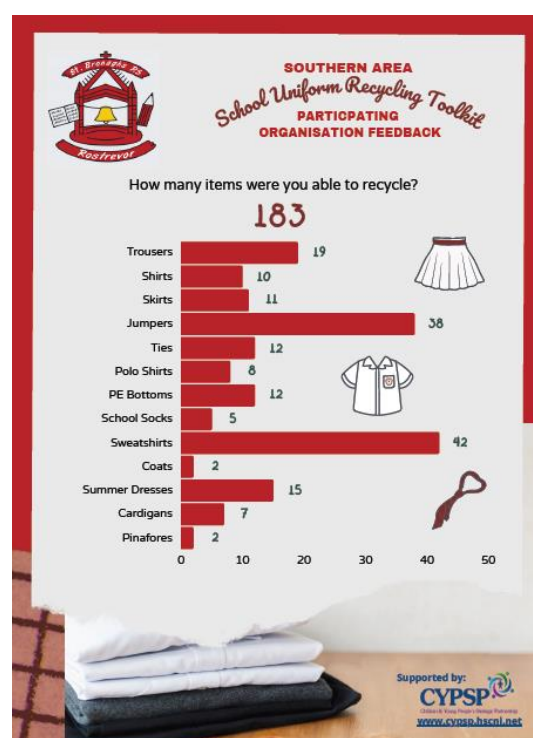
- 28/09/2023: 950kg – £380
- 07/02/2024: 920kg – £365
- 30/05/2024: 1,020kg – £408

School Year 2024–2025

- 08/10/2024: 1,250kg – £375
- 24/02/2025: 1,320kg – £264

In 2023, our *Eco-Team Recycling* group partnered with the *Parents' Association* to launch our first ever **St. Bronagh's School Uniform Recycling Initiative**, supported by CYPSP and HSCNI. This pilot scheme was a huge success, preventing a significant number of uniforms from going to landfill.

In our first year, we recycled **178 items** of school uniform, with jumpers being the most commonly reused item. Building on this success, we collected and redistributed **183 items** in June 2024.



This initiative is pupil-led, supported by staff and parents, and has become a valuable part of our school's wider environmental strategy. We are committed to continuing and growing this important recycling programme in the years ahead.

Mentoring School: Sharing Biodiversity Expertise

In 2024, St. Bronagh's Primary School was proud to share our experience in biodiversity as part of our role in the **Ambassador School Programme**. We partnered with St. Colman's Primary School, Saval, to support their development in this area.

As part of our mentoring work, we welcomed pupils and staff from St. Colman's to our school. During their visit, we presented them with five bird boxes, generously made and donated by *Rostrevor Men's Shed*.

Our pupils led a tour of the school grounds, showcasing where each class had chosen to place their bird boxes and explaining the reasoning behind these locations.

Following the tour, we held a joint Eco Council meeting where pupils from both schools shared their ideas, discussed current initiatives, and explored ways to further enhance biodiversity. One key idea that emerged was the planting of native hedging and trees to encourage more wildlife and natural growth in school environments.



St Bronagh's and St Colman's together

As a result of the collaboration, both schools applied for and were successfully awarded **Tree Council funding** for five fruit trees and hedgerow packs. A follow-up visit was arranged, this time with St. Bronagh's pupils visiting St. Colman's for a joint '*Orchards for Schools*' and hedge-planting day.

These shared planting projects have not only supported biodiversity within both school grounds but also strengthened the partnership between our Eco Councils. The trees and hedging will provide long-term benefits for wildlife and contribute to improving the overall biodiversity scores for both schools.

In 2023, we also had the opportunity to share our expertise with **Ballyholland Primary School, Newry**, supporting them on their journey towards achieving their first Green Flag award. As part of our Ambassador School role, we offered guidance on developing eco initiatives and shared practical ideas to help them strengthen their environmental work.



Latest Cash for Clobber collection raised £264 Eco Energy Elves/Detectives in action.



Cabbages grown in School Veg. Box. Pupils identifying species of birds spotted during rspb 'Big Schools' birdwatch.'



Uniform Recycling Teamsorting donated items of uniforms ahead of collection date. St. Colman's pupils share location of one of their bird boxes gifted by St. Bronagh's

pupils.

Contact

For more information on this Eco-Schools Ambassador School, see details below.

St. Bronagh's Primary School

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Years involved in the Eco-Schools Programme: 13 years

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