

Encouraging mainstreaming ESD practice: evidence of impact of sustainable schools on outcomes for young people

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1. Background
2. Approach to the research review
3. Messages from the research review
4. Summary

Background

Can we encourage mainstreaming ESD practice through demonstrating improved outcomes for children?

1. What is the impact of sustainable schools and ESD on school improvement including on young people's learning and well-being?
2. Is there a body of evidence to demonstrate that sustainable schools and ESD practice result in improved outcomes for children? *and if so...*
3. Can this be used to convince more schools to prioritise the sustainable schools/ ESD agenda?
4. Can this be used to inform and spread good practice?

Approach to the research review

Evidence of Impact of Sustainable Schools

Stakeholder consultation

Literature search

policy reports

research reports

professional journals

academic journals

Identification of 'tips' / themes

User seminar

Criteria for including evidence

Refereed

Publically funded

Post 2000

Particularly concerned with England – focused on sustainable schools

Supporting evidence - UK and international

Multiple sources corroborate the evidence

Messages from the research review

What are the outcomes of learning in a sustainable school?

Five Themes

1. Improving schools: enhancing young people's learning and well-being
2. Bringing young people's learning experiences together
3. Developing young people's participation
4. Contributing to school, community and family life
5. Modeling sustainability practices, thinking and planning

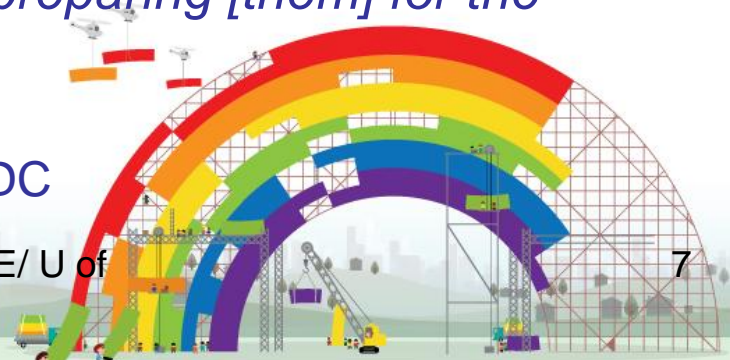
Theme 1

Improving schools: enhancing students' learning and well-being - what those involved say...



Some years ago I would not have highlighted [ESD] to OFSTED for fear they would consider it a distraction from core business. Now ... I am confident that our work in this area has made a direct difference to pupils' achievement, behaviour and health ... [and] helped our children to develop a greater sense of care towards each other, the natural environment and the wider community ... preparing [them] for the future.

Head teacher, quoted in research for the SDC



Theme 1

Improving schools: enhancing students' learning and well-being



Tip 1.1 Make sustainability a strong focus of your school development plan

Tip 1.2 Use sustainability to develop an inclusive school ethos

Tip 1.3 Improve the quality of school buildings and surroundings



Theme 1

Improving schools: enhancing students' learning and well-being



Tip 1.1 Make sustainability a strong focus of your school development plan ...

Because this improves teaching and learning by providing a meaningful, real-world focus which young people recognise as significant for their lives, thus enhancing school relevance, and supporting engagement and enjoyment.

Young people gain understandings and skills that enable the development of capabilities for living and working sustainably, now and in the future.



Theme 1

Improving schools: enhancing students' learning and well-being



Tip 1.2 Use sustainability to develop an inclusive school ethos ...

Because this provides a positive context for supporting teachers' work, and young people's learning and well-being, and for developing both the care agenda and community cohesion.



Theme 1

Improving schools: enhancing students' learning and wellbeing



Tip 1.3 Improve the quality of school buildings and surroundings ...

Because this helps you to focus on the environmental dimension to children's well-being and fully address the every child matters agenda.

Improving the quality of the school environment enhances young people's physical and mental health and safety, and their overall development, learning, enjoyment and behaviour.



The evidence suggests good ESD practice, for example,

Tip 3.2 Listen to youth voice and take account of young people's environmental and community perspectives.



Tip 4.2 Let young people work with community groups in and out of school.



Tip 5.1 Let young people see that the school takes sustainability seriously.



The evidence also suggests that ESD practice should avoid...

- prioritising social change or environmental improvement over learning.
- painting too gloomy a picture; the feelings of hopelessness that this can engender will not help young people play an active, positive role.
- using young people to try to change bad practice, as this can lead to their being caught between conflicting school and parental values.
- preaching. Young people say this is counter-productive, so be honest and open-minded when exploring issues.

Summary

1. What is the impact of sustainable schools and ESD on school improvement young people's learning and wellbeing?
2. Is there a body of evidence to demonstrate that sustainable schools and ESD practice result in improved outcomes for children?

Multiple sources of evidence (research, policy, and practitioner literature) seem to show that being a sustainable school

- helps young people to learn about sustainability issues
- raises standards and enhances wellbeing
- engages young people in their learning so improving motivation and behaviour
- promotes healthy school environments and lifestyles
- advances community cohesion by making valuable connections between the school and its parents and carers and the wider community.

Summary

3. Can this evidence be used to convince more schools to prioritise the sustainable schools/ ESD agenda?

Given that the evidence seems to show improved outcomes for young people this can be used in an attempt to convince more schools and practitioners to prioritise the sustainable schools/ ESD agenda

Summary

4. Can the evidence be used to inform and spread good practice?

The evidence also seems to show the types of ESD practices and approaches which will lead to improved outcomes for young people.