

Worcestershire County Council case study

Preparing the next generation for climate change

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) sees educating the next generation on sustainability as crucial and has run an internationally respected Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) service for many years.

The authority seeks to empower children to take action on climate change. They aim to do this in different ways - the most high profile of which is the EcoSchools Programme. WCC operates a network of 206 EcoSchools (28 of which have achieved the top green flag award) and more than 100 schools have run eco days of action within their own communities.

To support teachers, Eco Meetings are held in districts every term. About 70 to 80 teachers look at issues such as energy waste transport under the heading of climate change.

Working with Peace Child international, a climate change advocacy scheme has been set up to train high school students to become climate change advocates within their own communities. Through this programme children have run evening events on climate change for their local communities. They have engaged with other schools within their cluster groups and with parents, primary head teachers and other year groups.

ESD staff, teachers and pupils have worked with Birmingham based Teachers in Development Education (TiDE) on a number of climate change programmes. This includes the development of a 'Creative responses to climate change'. Using the Design and Technology curriculum pupils developed solutions to challenges that Climate Change poses. Run in seven high schools in the county it is to be used as a programme for the rest of the region. Worcestershire teachers and pupils have also contributed to TiDE education tools on climate change. They have also made international links with the Gambia who have focused on climate change impact.

As part of its involvement in the West Midland Broadband project on climate change, which has received DFES and DEFRA climate challenge funding, the council hosted a regional young people's 'messages about climate change' conference. Worcestershire schools worked with media and marketing experts to develop campaigns to raise awareness among their peers. The project also developed the Worcestershire Climate Change Pledge into a regional schools pledge.

Staff from the ESD service contributed to the DfES Sustainable Schools agenda and led the dissemination of it across the region arranging a regional event with GOWM to disseminate it to local authorities.

Staff also ran a sustainable schools conference for head teachers from the county. Worcestershire High school pupils helped to develop and trial the New Economics foundation Democs Climate change card game

Worcestershire County Council case study

Officers involved with the service have presented to national EcoSchools, WWF and Geographical Association conferences, contributed to the DfES Sustainable Schools agenda and been trained by Al Gore to deliver his presentation.

The service's strong links with the council's architecture service has influenced the design of schools in the county. A wonderful example is RedHill first school in Worcester, designed by WCC as a climate change ready school. It was one of the first in the UK to use the UKCIP adaptation wizard as part of the design process. This led to a low profile, wide guttering, overhangs, SUDs scheme and solar powered ventilation stacks. It was opened by Ian Pearson, Minister for Climate Change, and acts as a test bed for technologies.

The building has a variety of features which aim to make it as 'carbon-neutral' as possible. It is the first school in the county with ground source heating and hot water systems. The school also uses rainwater harvesting for flushing toilets and has mechanical extract ventilation using small photovoltaic panels. Classroom ventilation uses an assisted stack ventilation system, which uses air tempered in the winter using the groundsource system. The ICT suite is cooled in summer using a groundsource heat pump in reverse mode. A sustainable drainage system provides habitat enhancements on the site using swales and ponds.

The building makes extensive use of timber framed external and internal walls. A target of 26 per cent by value of materials has been set. Insulation, hardcore and blockwork are all examples of materials with high recycled content used on the project.