

Environmental Sustainability Plan

Coláiste Éamonn Rís

Mission Statement

Coláiste Éamonn Rís: Environmental Sustainability

As a school we aim to develop an appreciation and concern for the diversity of the natural environment and the challenges that will shape our societies and environments at the local, national and global scale. We aim to foster an understanding of some of the relationships between people, environments and sustainable development and the implications of our actions and choices and become responsible contributors to society. Valuing and respecting the environment in which we exist is paramount to the success of our mission statement. Ultimately, we are committed to a sustainable future and to improving the social and environmental well-being of the community.

Introduction

In line with the **Government of Ireland Climate Action Plan 2024**, the **Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021**, and the **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD to 2030) Strategy**, Coláiste Éamonn Rís is committed to supporting Ireland's legally binding targets of:

- **51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030**
- **Net-zero emissions by 2050**
- **Improved climate resilience and biodiversity protection**

This policy ensures that students and staff are equipped with the knowledge and practices necessary to reduce environmental impact, promote sustainability, and develop climate literacy. We encourage conscious decision-making that benefits both our local environment and the planet.

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1. Climate Action Plan 2024

Public sector leading by example - climate action mandate.

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/249626/1c20a481-bb51-42d6-9bb9-08b9f728e4b5.pdf#page=null>

Our Targets

- Reduce school GHG emissions by **51% by 2030**
- Improve school energy efficiency by **50% by 2030**
- Develop and implement a **School Climate Action Roadmap (updated annually)**
- Embed environmental sustainability across teaching, learning and operations

Staff & Students: Climate Leadership

- Maintain a resourced **Green Team** reporting to senior leadership
- Appoint a **Board of Management Climate & Sustainability Champion**
- Ensure all staff complete climate literacy and sustainability training (annual CPD)
- Facilitate workshops for staff and students focusing on reducing the school's carbon footprint

Operations & Administration

- Publish an annual School Sustainability Report (GHG emissions, waste, progress on targets)
- Expand digital-first practices to reduce paper use
- Work towards environmental accreditation (ISO 14001 or equivalent)

Buildings & Transport

- Maintain secure, visible, accessible bicycle parking
- Display a current **Display Energy Certificate**

- Avoid installation of fossil-fuel heating systems
- Prioritise active travel (walking, cycling) and public transport

2. Climate Governance + Green Team

Composition and Selection

The Green Team (Green Schools Committee) should be as representative of the whole school as possible. It should primarily be made up of students (making up the majority of the committee members whenever possible) and could also incorporate a combination of teachers, Senior management or a member of the Board of Management, non-teaching staff (particularly the school caretaker), parents, and any other interested and applicable members of the local community.

Regarding size and operation, it should be remembered that there is no set formula or rules for a successful committee. Often the committee is made up of volunteers from the student body as well as teachers and other interested members of the community. It is important to ensure that the student members of the committee are as representative as possible of the different classes and age groups in the school. This will also ensure greater continuity in the programme over the years.

Structure

The Green Team (Green Schools Committee) is composed of:

- Majority student representation (all year groups)
- Teachers from a range of subject areas
- Senior management
- Caretaking and administrative staff
- Parent representatives
- Community stakeholders where appropriate

Responsibilities

- Oversee implementation of the Environmental Sustainability Plan
- Lead Green-Schools initiatives and environmental audits
- Run awareness campaigns and climate action events
- Monitor progress toward school sustainability targets
- Report directly to senior management

3. Green Flag School

Coláiste Éamonn Rís is actively engaged and dedicated to the Green-Schools programme. Green-Schools is Ireland's leading environmental management and education programme for schools promoting long-term, whole-school action for the environment which is a student-led programme with involvement from the wider community. The programme is operated and coordinated by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce (FEE member for Ireland) in partnership with local authorities and corporate sponsors.

This school was awarded its Green Flag on Litter and Waste reduction in 2017. Green Flags are earned and presented under the Green-Schools International environmental education award scheme. The Green-Schools programme (internationally known as "Eco-Schools") promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole school action for the environment.

The aim of Green-Schools is to increase students' awareness of environmental issues through classroom studies and to transfer this knowledge into positive environmental action in the school and in the wider community. A seven-step process sees schools tackling the issues of waste and litter, water, energy, transport and more. Student involvement is a priority, and the award must be re-applied for every two years.

The Green Schools 7 step programme is outlined below:

1. **Green-Schools Committee:** The Green-Schools Committee aims to direct and address all phases of the Green-Schools Programme. It is the driving force of the programme and should ensure that all of the Seven Steps are carried out
2. **Completing Environmental Reviews:** The aim of the review is to identify the initial situation within the school regarding the current environmental theme.
3. **Implementing Action Plans:** The Action Plan aims to identify goals and provide a structured timetable for the reduction of the environmental impacts identified in the review.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring your Green-Schools programme will ensure that progress towards targets is checked, amendments made where necessary and success celebrated.
5. **Curriculum Work:** The aim is to link the theme of Litter and Waste to the Curriculum Work going on in the school.
6. **Informing and Involving:** To spread the Green-Schools message throughout the whole school and the wider community through ongoing publicity and 'Days of Action'.

7. **Green Code:** To state the objectives that demonstrate the school's commitment to environmentally friendly actions.

Green-Schools Themes

- Litter & Waste
- Energy
- Water
- Travel
- Biodiversity
- Global Citizenship (Litter & Waste)
- Global Citizenship (Energy)
- Global Citizenship (Marine Environment)

7-Step Framework (as per Green-Schools guidelines)

<https://greenschoolsireland.org/>

4. Safe routes to Schools

Coláiste Éamonn Rís has been selected for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme which was initiated in 2021 and estimated to be completed in the term 2022/23. The SRTS Programme was developed in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Green-Schools in 2020 as a response to the need to support schools to increase walking and cycling to school.

Aims of the SRTS Programme:

- Improve safety at school entry/exit points
- Provide dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure
- Increase the number of students cycling to school
- Support the school's sustainable mobility targets

The school is dedicated to ensuring the successful implementation of this programme and the promotion of a sustainable mobility policy as outlined in the climate action plan 2021. Once this work is completed the green team will be responsible for the promotion of walking and cycling to school with a safer and more accessible infrastructure at school exit and entry points.

<https://www.nationaltransport.ie/news/safe-routes-to-school-srts-programme/>

Coláiste Éamonn Rís participates in the **Safe Routes to School Programme**, delivered by the NTA and Green-Schools.

Objectives

Once construction is complete, the Green Team will promote active travel through campaigns, events, and student engagement.

5. Sustainable Development Goals

Ireland's National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014-2020) aims to ensure that our education system contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future.

The Department of Education is committed to contributing to the national effort to implement the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals and sees Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as key to achieving these. Over the lifetime of this Statement of Strategy the department will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" through the SDG National Implementation Plan.

Coláiste Éamonn Rís is committed to embedding the SDGs into curriculum planning across all departments throughout the school with particular focus on the Junior Cycle framework principles with explicit ESD relevance. We aim to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding in biodiversity and sustainability, by embedding the topics within many areas of our curriculum. Individual department curriculums will outline how the topics are embedded into the school's curriculum and reviewed by subject coordinators and the greens school coordinator annually.

Aligned with the **ESD to 2030 Strategy**, the school:

- Embeds SDGs across subject department plans
- Emphasises climate literacy, citizenship, wellbeing, and global justice
- Reviews implementation annually through subject coordinators and the Green Team
- Promotes student agency to take action for sustainability

6. Building energy + Climate Resilience

Coláiste Éamonn Rís has completed the Energy in Education training course with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), which included a mentoring programme with an energy

advisor and underwent an energy assessment to develop and implement an energy saving plan for the School.

Energy efficiency measures undertaken on schools are unique, primarily due to the occupancy hours and nature of use. Typically, 60-70% of energy consumption in a school is expended on heating demand, with 30-40% on electrical demand (lighting and services).

The school is dedicated to improve energy rating of the school building based on the recommended energy efficiency measures below:

- Insulate the building - including cavity wall insulation, dry lining, external insulation, attic insulation, roof insulation, and air-tightness.
- Implement building fabric measures - including doors and windows.
- Upgrade mechanical systems - including boiler replacement, zoning of heating systems, heating controls within each classroom, pipe insulation, boiler controls and water conservation.
- Install a Building Management System (BMS).
- Upgrade the electrics - primarily lighting system upgrades (classrooms to T5 or LED, common areas to LED).
- Install Solar panels in school when and where possible.

Climate Resilience

- Flood risk assessment and drainage improvements
- Emergency supplies for climate-related disruptions
- Annual climate risk review

7. Circular Economy measures and Green Public Procurement

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is a process where public authorities seek to source goods, services or works with a reduced environmental impact. The Government of Ireland's annual public sector purchasing accounts for 10% to 12% of Ireland's GDP, a large part of economic activity and demand.

This provides Ireland's public sector with significant influence to stimulate the provision of more resource-efficient, less polluting goods, services and works within the marketplace.

The public sector has a responsibility to promote green procurement, in order to support Ireland's environmental and wider sustainable development objectives. GPP is recognised internationally as an effective means for public administrations to manage the balance between cost effectiveness and sustainable development. Citizens need to be sure that what is purchased on their behalf has minimal harmful effects on the environment and society. At the same time, these goods, services and works must represent both short-term and long-term value for money.

The Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy is Ireland's first national circular economy strategy. The Strategy is a key addition to the Government's drive to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to get on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as per commitments in the Programme for Government and the Climate Act 2024.

Meeting climate targets requires a transformation in the way we produce and use goods. The transition away from fossil fuels and energy efficiency measures can only address 55% of our emissions. The remaining 45% comes from making things.

Coláiste Éamonn Rís will adopt a circular economy strategy to promote positive environmental, economic and social impacts, through procurement measures and school planning. We will devote time to ensuring product procurement is done in the most sustainable way, and ensure that produce bought is cost efficient and sourced from within Ireland and locally sourced where possible.

8. Recycling & Waste Management/Plastic Plan

The school understands that, under the Litter Pollution Act, 1997 littering is a criminal offense. It also understands that fines may be incurred where individuals deliberately litter the premises.

Every member of the school community has a duty to dispose of waste properly. Specifically, individuals are responsible for:

- Putting litter in a bin.
- Using the appropriate recycling bins.
- Using resources thoughtfully.
- Reusing resources where possible.
- Assisting the caretakers, cleaners and green schools committee with the cleanliness of the premises.

Coláiste Éamonn Rís appoint a green schools committee consisting of staff members and pupils, who are responsible for:

- Promoting awareness of anti-littering throughout the school
- Monitoring the school's anti-littering procedures. Labelling bins correctly.

- Listening and responding to questions from the school committee.
- The school raises awareness of anti-littering amongst pupils and staff through dedicated class tutorials, curriculum planning, staff training days and additional resources, such as the school website, notice boards and social media channels.

Coláiste Éamonn Rís will reduce the amount of waste we produce by:

- Printing and photocopying, when necessary, should be done on both sides of paper whenever possible.
- Only print documents when it is essential and use digital versions anywhere possible such as Microsoft teams and shared drives.
- Communication is carried out through digital media platforms only; emails for staff; parents updates through the school website; text messaging; social media channels; Microsoft teams for teaching & Learning; and VShare for reporting.
- Composting all food waste in designated recycling stations throughout the school building - with a target of reducing food waste quantities by 51% before 2030.
- Making sure that all waste office equipment is correctly disposed of via re-use or recycling schemes.
- Where possible, laminating frequently used documents, protecting them from damage and prolonging their use.
- Pupils/staff are encouraged to bring reusable water bottles into school, and avail of the installed digital water dispensers
- Any disposable plastic bottles brought into school will be recycled or reused with a plan to eliminate single use plastics entirely from the school.
- There are clearly labelled recycling stations located throughout the school for recycling, food waste and general waste.
- The school will clearly display the correct procedure for recycling and waste management with a target of increasing recycling by 70% by 2030.
- Green school committee members will partake and organise daily/weekly litter picking around the school grounds as well as litter picking in the local community in collaboration with local towns and local authorities.

Waste Reduction Actions

- Digital-first communication
- Double-sided printing when necessary
- Composting of all food waste
- Integration of clear signage at all waste stations
- Elimination of single-use plastics
- Reuse programmes for books, uniforms, and equipment
- Remove Single Use Plastics

Targets

- **51% reduction in food waste by 2030**
- **70% recycling rate by 2030**
- Weekly litter picking on school grounds, with community collaboration

Plastic Strategy

The school has committed to tie in with the EU Commission ‘Plastic Strategy’ launched in 2018 which aims to transform the way plastic products are designed, produced, used, and recycled. With regards to plastic packaging, the EU strategy foresees that by 2030 all plastic packaging should be reusable or recyclable in a cost-effective manner, a goal that was expanded to all packaging materials with the adoption of the European Green Deal and the new Circular Economy Action Plan.

The goal of the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive is to prevent and reduce the impact on the environment of certain plastic products and to promote a transition to a circular economy. In particular, the Directive aims to tackle marine littering and plastic waste through a harmonised legislative framework across the EU. Our action was to install high-quality water fountains and promote the use of reusable bottles. The side effect was to discourage the use of single use plastics in school which will facilitate better waste management.

10. E-Books

Coláiste Éamonn Rís is dedicated to providing electronic versions of textbooks where possible in place of a physical hardcopy version. Some subject departments have opted to only use digital versions of textbooks starting in the academic year 2022/2023. This process will be monitored and reviewed for a further increase in uptake across all departments. The advantages of using eBooks are listed below:

- Learning Is Improved by Using Technology
- Differentiated Learning
- Easy Accessibility
- Storage Convenience
- Reduce school bag size and weight.
- Easy To Sync with Audiobooks
- Ease Of Searching
- Economical
- Environmentally Friendly

- Beneficial For Those Who Have Trouble Reading
- Accommodates Remote Learning
- Reduce physical textbook purchasing
- Teach digital citizenship and sustainable technology use

10. Biodiversity Action Plan (New)

To address climate and ecological challenges, the school will:

- Establish biodiversity areas (e.g., pollinator-friendly gardens, wildflower zones)
- Install a Polytunnel for use in TY modules and across different subjects
- Participate in the **All-Ireland Pollinator Plan**
- Install bird boxes, insect hotels, and native planting
- Integrate biodiversity into curriculum and extracurricular activities
- Conduct an annual biodiversity audit

11. Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

Annual reporting through:

- Green Team progress reports
- Energy use tracking
- Waste audits
- Yearly Sustainability Report
- Board of Management review

Action Plan Timeline

Actions	Achievement Milestone	Persons Responsible
51% Reduction in Green House Gas Emissions of School Building	2023-2033	Green Team Plant & Facilities Coordinator School Management
Improve building energy efficiency from 30%? target in 2020 to 50%?	2030	Green Team Plant & Facilities Coordinator School Management
Climate & Sustainability training workshops for staff	January – December 2023 (Ongoing thereafter)	Green Team School Management

Bicycle Friendly Parking with improved access	Achieved	An- Taisce Green Team Coordinator
School Building Energy Certificate on public display	September 2026	SEAI Accredited Engineer Plant & Facilities Coordinator Green Team
Establish a Green Team, Staff & Students	February 2026	Green Team Leader
Select a Board of management Representative as Climate & Sustainability Champion	March 2026	Board of Management
Achieve Litter & Waste Green flag	Achieved	Green Team
Achieve Water Conservation Green flag	2024	Green Team
Complete safe Routes to School Construction development & Works (Safe Cycle & Walking Access) ?	2025-2026	Green Team Leader An Taisce School Management
UN Sustainable Development Goals incorporated into school curriculum across all departments	September 2023 Onwards	Green Team School Management Subject coordinators
Recycling & Waste training workshops staff & Students	2024 – Partially Achieved	Student Green schools Committee Green Team
Reduce School Food waste by 51% ?	2030	Green Team Caretaking Staff All Staff
Increase recycling by 70% ?	2030	Green Team Caretaking Staff All Staff
Install a building Management System to manage building energy usage	2025-2026	Plant & Facilities coordinator Green Team School Management
Implement Pilot Scheme for introducing Ebooks	September 2023 1 st -3 rd Year devices	Graphics & Wood technology coordinators Green Team Book Loan Scheme coordinator
Online Climate Action Summit	October 2026	Green Team Staff
TY Sustainability Module	Ongoing	TY Coordinator

Expansion of eBook pilot	2024–2026	Departments
Achieve Water Green Flag	2024–25	Green Team
Bicycle parking & access improvements	Completed by 2024	NTA, School
Install Polytunnel for Biodiversity Action Plan	January 2026	Green Team
Plastic Plan (Water fountains)	May 2023	Green Team
Install Solar Panels	April 2025	Green Team

Ratification

The implementation of this Environmental Sustainability Plan will be monitored periodically by members of the Green Schools Committee and Senior Management. This plan will be reviewed periodically by representatives of the Board of Management, staff, students and parents of the College.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (School Principal)

Date: _____

Date of Next Review: _____

Recommended Additions Section for the Board

To reflect best practice, I recommend adding:

A “Student Climate Charter”

A short statement created by students outlining commitments to sustainability.

Annual Environmental Week / Climate Action Week

Including whole-school activities.

A staff role: Sustainability & Climate Literacy Lead

To standardise curriculum planning.

A Digital Carbon Footprint Monitoring Element

Track data storage, device replacement, and ICT energy use.