



Development

*Education for Sustainable Development, Education through Sustainable*

## **Sessions 2 and 3      Key findings OFSTED May 2008**

- In most of the schools visited during the survey, there was little emphasis on sustainable development and limited awareness of national and local government policies for this area.
- In the large majority of the schools, promoting sustainable development through National Curriculum subjects was inconsistent and uncoordinated.
- In many of the schools, sustainable development was a peripheral issue, often confined to extra-curricular activities and involving only a minority of pupils.
- A small number of the schools placed considerable emphasis on sustainable development. In these cases, teaching was good, lessons were stimulating and pupils took an active part in improving the sustainability of the school and the wider community.
- Primary schools were more successful than secondary schools in promoting sustainability, particularly in terms of using their grounds as a resource for learning about it.
- Schools were more successful in developing pupils' understanding of local rather than global issues of sustainability.

### **Recommendations**

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) should:

- give a higher priority to sustainable schools, supporting this through funding for central and local initiatives including staff training and development
- ensure that the curriculum reflects the importance of learning about sustainability and that schools are supported in making it an integral part of their improvement plans
- stress the importance of education for sustainability as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and disseminate good practice in this area.

Additionally, the DCSF should:

- link learning about sustainable development more closely to 'Building Schools for the Future' and other capital investment, refurbishment and maintenance programmes.

Local authorities and their partners should:

- develop a common vision for a sustainable community in which the contribution of schools is explicit and work together to implement it.

Schools should:

- integrate sustainable development into their development plans and ensure that resources and training are available to support it
- identify a key person to manage and coordinate sustainable development within and outside the classroom



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- give all pupils the opportunity to learn about and take an active part in promoting sustainability within the school and beyond, through membership of school councils, eco councils and other groups
- give all pupils the opportunity to put their understanding of local issues into a global context, so that they see how their decisions can have an impact on others now and in the future.

### **Key findings OFSTED December 2009 (schools with 3 years of ESD implementation)**

- Discussions with pupils showed that, over the three years of the survey, they developed a better understanding of the impact of their lifestyles on the sustainability of the environment.
- At the beginning of the survey, none of the schools was outstanding in its approach to sustainability. By the time of the third visit, all but one of the schools had improved by at least one inspection grade. One school had improved from satisfactory to outstanding and three that were originally inadequate were good.
- The primary schools visited made greater progress than the secondary schools in improving provision for education for sustainable development.
- In the most successful schools, education for sustainability was an integral element of the curriculum and all pupils and staff contributed to improving the sustainability of their institution.
- Most of the headteachers found that, over the course of the survey, education for sustainability had been an important factor in improving teaching and learning more generally. This was confirmed through lesson observations in a range of subjects across the sample of schools visited.
- Some school leaders identified links between particular pupils' involvement in sustainable activities and improvement in their attitudes and behaviour generally.
- Pupils responded particularly well to education for sustainability when it gave them the opportunity to take part in practical activities within and outside the classroom and enabled them to research, plan and implement projects that made a clear difference to the school and the local community.
- A common characteristic of the lessons observed, across the full range of National Curriculum subjects seen during the survey, was the high level of engagement of the pupils in work they perceived as relevant to their lives and future well-being.
- The schools demonstrated how greater awareness of the need for sustainability can lead to reduced financial costs and better management of resources and estate.
- The knowledge and understanding that the pupils gained at school contributed to their leading more sustainable lives at home which, in turn, led their families to re-examine their lifestyles and use of resources.

### **Recommendations**

Schools should:

- make sustainability a priority in their improvement plans to ensure they are meeting their commitment to become a sustainable school by 2020
- develop a whole-school approach to education for sustainability in the curriculum to enable it to become firmly embedded in teaching and learning



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- ensure that all pupils have access to out-of-classroom learning to support their understanding of the need to care for their environment and to promote their physical and mental well-being
- provide appropriate training and support to inform and engage teachers so that they understand what is required to make a school sustainable
- ensure that they manage the school estate carefully and become models of good practice for sustainable living and working.



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