

## **ECO-SCHOOLS PROGRAMME FACTSHEET**

### **Introduction**

The Eco-Schools Programme is an international environmental education and certification programme that emphasises on student leadership and community outreach. Schools that successfully implement the programme, guided by the systematic seven-step framework, are awarded with the prestigious and internationally-recognised Green Flag.

### **History of the Eco-Schools Programme**

2 The Eco-Schools Programme was developed by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) (then known as the Foundation for Environmental Education Europe) as a response to needs identified at the UN Conference on Environment and Development of 1992. Its vision is to empower students to be the change our sustainable world needs by engaging them in fun, action-orientated learning.

3 The programme was first introduced in four countries in 1994: Denmark, Germany, Greece, and United Kingdom. In 2003, it was recognised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a model initiative for Education for Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the programme has grown tremendously, now involving more than 40,000 schools in over 50 countries.<sup>2</sup>

### **About the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)**

4 FEE is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation aiming to promote sustainable development through environmental education. Based in Denmark, it operates as an international umbrella organisation with one national member organisation per country representing FEE and designated to implement FEE programmes nationally. FEE has 76 member organisations in 65 countries around the world, including WWF-Singapore.<sup>3</sup>

5 FEE provides support for its national-level member organisations implementing the Eco-Schools Programme by amongst others, appointing an experienced mentor to guide a new member organisation in setting up and running the programme, facilitating the exchange of ideas and information between member organisations in different countries and organising an annual meeting for member organisations to discuss implementation issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Eco-Schools, History, <http://www.eco-schools.org/page.php?id=52>

<sup>2</sup> Eco-Schools, Countries, [http://www.eco-schools.org/countries\\_contacts.php](http://www.eco-schools.org/countries_contacts.php)

<sup>3</sup> FEE Newsletter, February 2013

## Eco-Schools Programme Framework and Award

6 At the heart of the Eco-Schools programme is a seven-step process designed to structure and guide schools' efforts as they go about implementing the programme. The framework allows for standardisation across all schools involved in the international programme. At the same time, there is room for flexibility and adaptation according to individual schools' contexts.

7 The seven-step process can be seen as a cycle, as shown in Figure 1 below. Steps involve establishing an Eco-Schools Committee to encourage and manage the programme; providing environmental curriculum to students which includes hands-on opportunities for students to improve and empower the school and community; and developing an eco-code which outlines the school's values and objectives alongside student goals. The process involves a wide range of stakeholders, but it is the students who play the most important role. The Eco-Committee, mainly consisting of students but with adult members as advisors, is at the centre of the whole process. The committee is tasked to reach out to and involve the whole school and the local community in Eco-Schools activities.

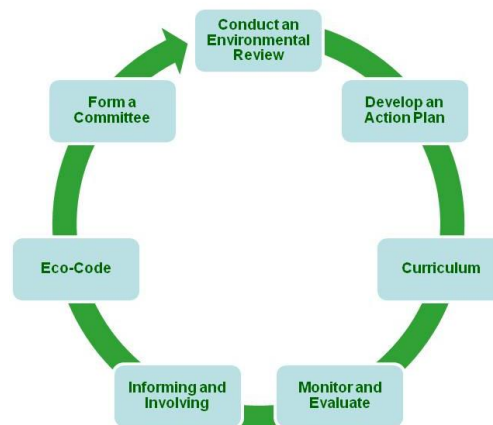


Fig. 1: 7-Step Process of the Eco-Schools Programme

8 Another key feature of the programme is that schools are given a choice from amongst a range of environmental themes to focus on, depending on what the most crucial issues facing the school and community are. The exact menu of themes provided vary from country to country. In Singapore, the following six themes will be offered: Water, Waste & Litter, Energy, Nature & Biodiversity, School Grounds, and Climate Change. Of these, there are two compulsory themes that schools must work on to qualify for the Green Flag Award. These are Climate Change and Nature & Biodiversity.

9 It is expected that schools will take between one and a half to two years to achieve Green Flag status. In the interim, they can apply for Bronze and Silver awards to affirm that they have achieved certain milestones in their journey towards the Green Flag. Once awarded, the Green Flag status is valid for two years. Schools need to maintain high standards in eco-practices to keep their Green Flag status.

## Eco-Schools Programme Benefits

10 Eco-Schools is a democratic and participatory programme, providing an excellent opportunity for students to experience active citizenship in their school. It benefits both the schools and the wider community in the following ways:

- i. An Improved School Environment: Students and staff can work together on issues such as reducing litter and waste and run the school in an environmentally-conscious way.
- ii. Involvement of the Local Community: The programme encourages schools to reach out to parents, local authorities, organisations and businesses in order to address environmental concerns in a collaborative manner.
- iii. Holistic Learning: The programme requires knowledge and skills needed to address environmental issues to be integrated into the curriculum. Students (as well as teachers and other school staff) are then encouraged to use their new environmental knowledge in the everyday life of the school. This helps students to see the relevance of what they learn in the classroom.
- iv. Student Empowerment: Through the democratic process involved in Eco-Schools, students can take control of their own environment, learning and making decisions about how to improve both their home and their school environment.
- v. Financial Savings: Actions undertaken throughout the programme may lead to savings in the school's energy bills and water consumption, for example. Reducing waste and collecting materials for recycling, for example, can help raise money for the school.
- vi. International Contacts: Schools can create links with other Eco-Schools in their own country and in any other country involved in the programme. These links not only give a chance to share environmental information between schools but can also be used as a means for cultural exchange.

## Support and Services offered to schools

11 Schools enrolled in the programme can expect to receive the following support and services from WWF-Singapore and programme partners:

- i. Resource kit: These will be provided to all schools to provide guidance on choosing appropriate themes and implementing the seven-step methodology effectively.
- ii. Website with collaborative learning platform: All schools will have access to a website providing the latest updates about the programme. The website is also equipped with a collaborative learning platform for eco-committee members to share ideas on their respective projects.
- iii. Workshops: Workshops will be organised to train the leaders in the eco-committee to carry out the 7-step methodology effectively.
- iv. Financial Grants: These will be offered to each school to fund approved projects in their action plan.
- v. Linking-up with schools in other countries: Schools will be assisted to get in touch with eco-schools in other countries to share best-practices.