

## Eco Groups: School Feedback

All schools across Aberdeen City were asked to share the achievements and aspirations of their pupil committees in October 2021 to better understand the influence of pupil voice at school level. 40 schools took the opportunity to respond.

### What structures are in place to enable pupils to influence their school community?

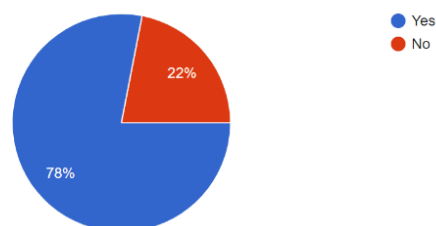
All schools have an Eco Group or similar and these have operated for many years. Focus has often been on local projects that impact the environment of the school, both inside and outside the building. Recycling programmes have been developed in almost all schools as well as awareness raising of energy saving options and behaviours. Improving sustainable travel options also featured in many responses with groups working to improve bike storage areas.

Throughout the past 18-19 months it has been more challenging for school pupil groups to meet due to COVID-19 mitigations. However just over 34% have still met in the past 18 months with plans in place to reconvene the groups.

### What impact have these pupil led structures had on school communities?

Just over 78% of groups have clear evidence of improvement they have driven.

It is possible to theme the many initiatives driven by young people into those concerning the natural environment, those leading to improvements in the school approach to waste and recycling and those designed to enhance the school environment.



### How have the groups made positive changes to the natural environment?

A range of improvements have been made to the natural environment both in school grounds and in the local community. Initiatives include:

- Tree and bulb planting
- Planting of a hedgerow to link a wildlife corridor
- Planting and selling of flowers from the school and wildflower planting
- Extending biodiversity in school grounds and bird feeders being installed
- Bug hotels and improvements/establishment of school wildlife gardens to encourage pollinators.
- Gardening/horticulture group established
- Planting vegetables and creation of a market garden
- Creation of sensory gardens
- Visits to a school allotment



This work has been extended in many cases to include the development of school gardens, planting of orchards and redevelopment of outdoor courtyards as positive spaces for learning. As these spaces have developed and as the outdoor environment has been used more extensively as a context for learning, groups have designed and displayed planters and invested in outdoor picnic tables as well as purchasing resources to support learning outside.

#### **How have the groups driven improvements in waste management and recycling?**

A range of actions have been taken including litter picks in the community and making adaptations to account for challenges in the community such as the installation of seagull proof bins.

A key focus in many schools has been on recycling with a wide range of initiatives driven forward including:

- Creation of compost bins
- Wastepaper collections in class
- Recycling batteries and plastics
- Reuse of old school uniforms
- Paperless issues of newsletters
- Install a rag bag clothing bank to promote recycling
- 'Wrapper Free Wednesday' for snacks


As these initiatives have become established children have extended their recycling to include toy recycling and book swaps and the development of a sustainable eating cooking club.

#### **How have the groups helped enhance the school environment?**

Groups are increasingly focussing on how they can make a difference in their communities and extending their reach across the school campus and beyond. Schools such as Airyhall Primary School have developed Climate Actions which they are using to focus their work. Combined with this Airyhall Primary School are encouraging pupils to become "Eco Achievers" where any environmental actions from pupils are positively recognised:

Airyhall pledges to help stop climate change with these 10

## Climate Actions

-  Take a five minute shower, instead of a bath.
-  Eat a plant based meal at least once a week.
-  When shopping, always use a reusable bag.
-  Turn off the lights when leaving the room.
-  Ask an adult to unplug chargers or appliances when not in use.
-  Reuse or recycle plastic waste.
-  Walk, cycle or scoot to school, instead of taking the car.
-  Turn off the tap when you are brushing your teeth.
-  Try to make sure that your lunch box is free of single use plastic.
-  Donate old clothes and books so they can be reused. You can do this at school.

Taking care of our planet today and planning for the future!



**AIRYHALL ACHIEVER** **ECO**

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a responsible citizen because

\_\_\_\_\_

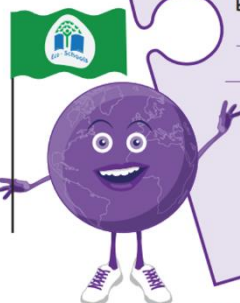


\_\_\_\_\_

Awarded By: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sustainability** (sus-tain-a-bil-i-tee) noun  
Definition: the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time.

**A S P I R E S**

**Airyhall School's Vision**  
To enable children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors who will make a positive contribution to the world.

Pupils are taking their work forward in a range of different ways with some setting up a taskforce to help with the collection of recycling around the school and others holding events like bike to school weeks, park and stride or 'switch off technology and lights' campaigns. There are many examples of young people developing their own action plans and budgets to support implementation. Hazlehead Primary have updated their pupil created Eco Code, which is central to the environmental values of the school:

**Hazlehead Primary School's ECO CODE**

Everyone is **responsible** for looking after our planet  
**Cycle or walk when you have the opportunity**  
**Only use or eat as much as you need – always recycle**

**Care for and respect our plants, trees and wildlife**  
**Only use water and energy when you need it**  
**Do be fair to the environment and put your litter in the bin**  
**Everyone should have the courage to follow our Eco Code**

Many schools have invested in water fountains and the promotion of reusable water bottles whilst others continue to work to reduce the amount of paper used in school by asking families to support the writing of one Christmas card to the class for example.

Schools continue to use a range of means of heightening the awareness of children and young people through pupil led environmental campaigns and by making use of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## COP26: School Feedback & Events

The COP26 event took place in Glasgow from 31<sup>st</sup> October to the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. A lot of schools used this event to promote greater environmental awareness in their pupils through school assemblies, lessons, and mock COP events.

### COP 26 as a stimulus for learning

All schools used COP 26 as a stimulus for students to participate in debate and discussion on environmental issues. Some students participated in a mock COP Aberdeen University event with others participating in an online Nature Climate Festival. Some schools held their own virtual summits and invited guest speakers to participate.

There are numerous examples of children across all sectors (ELC, primary, secondary and special) engaging with the themes emerging from the conference and being given the time and space to consider their personal response to the issues in order for them to develop as global citizens.

Bucksburn Academy undertook "Stop for COP" at the very start of the day during COP26 where pupils were shown a 5-minute presentation on the previous day's conference and were then given a challenge/competition.

Many schools used the opportunity to refocus and revive Eco Committees and share current aims and actions plans with the school community. This led to some children making small changes to everyday routines, including:

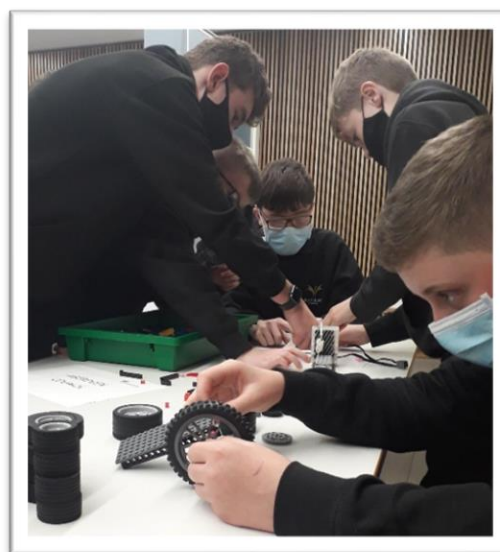
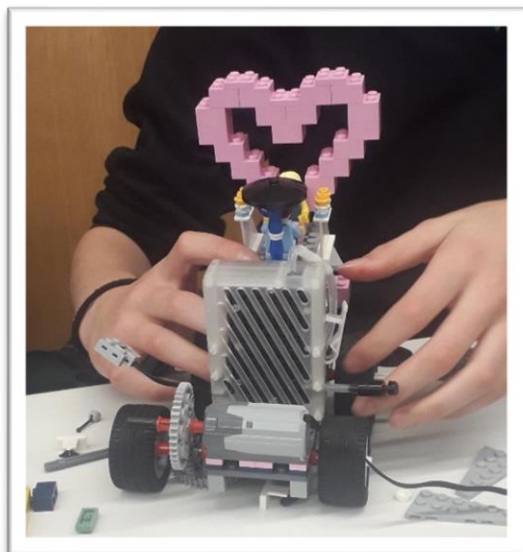
- promoting Wrapper Free Wednesday
- promoting recycling crisp packets (to reuse in another everyday item, such a blankets)
- setting up environmental/community fundraising events

Some young people developed a Climate pledge for their school community whilst other created class or individual pledges which will be reviewed for impact later in the year.



Some classes have a continued focus on the environment by studying 'Our Fragile Planet', 'We Care' or 'Our Sustainable Planet' as a context for learning over the term and many continue to engage in homework challenges involving discussion around energy use and climate change with parents and carers.

Schools also took part in several competitions including the NESCAN/Aberdeen Climate Action competition and Hydrogen challenge undertaken by all secondary schools across the city with some pupils attending COP26 in the final.



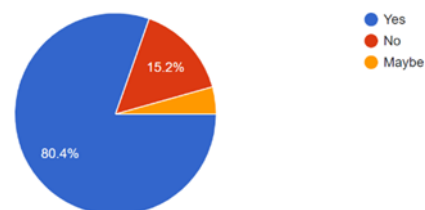
There were a wide variety of innovative approaches taken including a mountain climb at Harlaw Academy (using stairs) to highlight the plight of the planet and raise money for charity.

### What difference will this make to children and young people?

1635 children responded to a survey used to determine the impact of COP26 on our children and young people. The survey ran from 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021 until 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

Over 80% of pupils who responded had heard of COP26. 53% had gained their awareness from activities in school. A further 49% had gained an awareness from Television news. Family and friends were a source of information on COP26 for 32% of pupil respondents.

1,635 responses



Social media were a source of information on COP26 for 32% of the pupil respondents. The last major source of information for pupils on COP26 was from school Assemblies. It is thought that the event being held in Scotland really helped increase levels of awareness in children and young people.

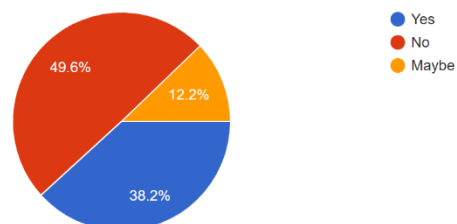
As a result of the focus on COP 26 more children and young people are aware of how their voice can be heard and actioned and how it is now up to them to play their part in the future. Young people have welcomed the opportunity to make their own pledges to tackle climate change.

### Net Zero: Pupil Feedback

The same survey of children and young people was used to help determine the awareness of our young people of the term Net Zero.

Have you heard of NET ZERO?

1,635 responses



Pupils do not have as strong awareness of Net Zero when compared to their awareness of COP26. This highlights Net Zero as an area of focus in the coming months and years as [Aberdeen shifts](#) from an Oil Capital to an Energy Capital and promoting the [vision](#) that exists for the future of Aberdeen.

Only 38% of pupils had heard of Net Zero, but how much depth of knowledge they would have could be questioned. Almost 50% had not even heard of Net Zero highlighting that this needs to be communicated more effectively to our children and young people. Those pupils who had heard of Net Zero received their knowledge from Television news: 28%. Classroom activities was a source of knowledge for 24% of pupils who had heard of Net Zero. Social media accounted for 19% of pupils as a knowledge base for Net Zero, with family and friends a source for 17% of pupils.

### How do children and young people believe we should work towards Net Zero?

Children and young people were asked for their views on how we could work to improve both their local and wider environment.

As you would anticipate a range of views were expressed with a significant number of responses suggesting improvements to the environment such as the planting of more trees and the development of more green space. The protection of the sea and our beaches was raised by 95 young people with 49 young people asking for us all to consider our consumption of water and for the installation of more fresh water drinking fountains around the city.

There was widespread agreement of the need for more litter picking and more recycling with a plea for more bins to enable recycling in schools and across the city. 518 young people referred to there being a need for more bins in the city and 368 felt there should be a greater focus on recycling. Children and young people were also keen to see if local businesses could be encouraged to produce less waste and were keen to see if pressure could be put on some of the big brands to use recyclable packaging for products (particularly the fast-food outlets).

There was broad agreement from young people that the city should invest in energy production and storage and the identification of a need to encourage the public and business to invest in energy storage both electrical (batteries) and thermal (hot water/PCM) and solar. The need to encourage better insulation of buildings was also noted. The promotion of renewable energy was a recurring theme with reference made to the need to invest in green energy and to promote heat air/ground pumps in place of gas/oil boilers.

Single use plastics also features heavily in responses with a desire to move away from their use and desire to see more shops selling refills of things like cereals. There was also an interest in the greater promotion of buying local produce to limit food miles.

The need to reduce the consumption of animal products was also noted.

### How do children think we should develop our transport policies?

Children and young people have strong views on sustainable transport and would welcome the use of more electric vehicles and investment in charging locations. 110 pupils supported the promotion of more electric cars and the inclusion of no car zones to reduce emission.

The need to make safe provision for cyclists was noted with 51 pupils feeling that making a safe place for cyclists to travel would encourage more people to cycle around the city and make it safer for people who already cycle on the road.

Bike sharing schemes such as those available in London were noted as an opportunity.

Children and young people supported the promotion of public transport and walking and would be keen to see an increase in the number of hydrogen buses. Our students would be keen to see delivery companies replace their fleets with electric or hydrogen vehicles. Greater use of hydrogen to fuel our cars was mentioned by 25 pupils with 157 pupils believing that there should be a greater promotion of electric and hydrogen vehicles.