

Press Release - Over 2300 Irish Schools Now Flying the Green Flag!

24/5/2011

Now in its 14th year, the Green-Schools Programme in Ireland shows no sign of slowing down as 627 schools from across the country were awarded the coveted Green Flag at a number of awards ceremony held around the country this week. 156 schools were awarded Green Flags for the first time for their efforts in tackling litter and waste and a further 471 school successfully renewed their flags for the themes of energy conservation, water conservation, sustainable travel, biodiversity, global citizenship and climate change.

There are currently over 3,500 primary and secondary schools taking part in the programme across Ireland, and over 2300 schools have now been awarded the Green Flag. Each of these schools is working hard to improve their environmental performance and is undoubtedly having a positive impact on their local communities.

Congratulating schools at the awards ceremony, Cathy Baxter, Green-Schools Manager with An Taisce said, *"An Taisce recognise and praise the continued commitment of the schools in driving the programme forward and pay tribute to the extensive efforts of the local authorities in working with schools on the ground. As students and teachers take action in their schools and wider communities, they are leading the way when it comes to tackling the environmental challenges facing Ireland today."*

The Green-Schools programme is coordinated in Ireland by An Taisce, operated in partnership with Local Authorities and is supported by the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government, Department of Transport and the National Transport Authority. The programme is sponsored by Repak, ESB Electric Ireland and the Wrigley Company Limited.

Repak are the lead sponsor of Green-Schools in Ireland and Dr Andrew Hetherington, CEO, Repak commented "Through our members funding of the An Taisce Green-Schools Programme we are investing in Ireland's environmental future through our young recyclers and the very positive results to date have supported that decision. What is being achieved at the moment is hugely inspiring and we are even more excited about the future as today's students mature into tomorrow's adults and workers. We are now seeing environmental concerns becoming engrained in young people's psyche and these students are helping to motivate others around them including adults. Rather than recycling and other environmental activities being a chore they are now heartfelt positively inspired automatic actions."

EDITORS NOTES

There are currently approximately 3,556 primary and secondary schools taking part in the programme across Ireland and over 2,307 schools have been awarded the Green Flag. As a result students, teachers and school communities are having a very positive impact on the environment and dramatically reducing their carbon footprints.

This is the 14th year of Green Schools in Ireland and recent research on the economic value of the programme to schools in Ireland has revealed that the programme has saved schools in Ireland a minimum 2 million euro in waste, electricity, water and fuel costs over the school year 2008-2009. The results reveal a minimum of 12 tonnes of waste diverted from landfills in Ireland every

school day by schools undertaking the programme, 3.7 million units of electricity saved, 200 million litres of drinking water saved, and around 500,000 litres of transport fuel saved over the school year. These are conservative estimates and considering the programme also involves the wider community, the overall savings could be several times the 2 million euro saved by the schools. As the number of schools participating is growing every year, this year's savings are expected to be even higher.

Green-Schools, (known internationally as Eco-Schools), is an international environmental management education programme, environmental management system and award scheme that promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole-school action for the environment. Green-Schools is an initiative of FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education). Green-Schools began as a pilot project in the UK, Denmark, Germany, France and Portugal in 1994. Currently over 50 countries from Europe, Africa, South America, Asia and Oceania are participating in the Eco-Schools Programme. There are now more than 35,000 schools participating in the programme worldwide and over 10,000 have been awarded the Green Flag.

The Green-Schools programme is based on a seven step environmental management system and continual improvement process which is very much student led and also involves the wider community. The programme also promotes good citizenship among participants. Green-Schools is a themed programme with schools initially working on the theme of Litter and Waste and then moving onto themes such as Energy, Water and School Travel. Schools that successfully implemented the programme are awarded the Green Flag. The award must be renewed every 2 years.

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