

2021 Sustainability Stewards Topic Selection

Introduction

Ridgeway Academy's Environmental Stewards team have selected three topics using an environmental review by the Eco-Schools Award. From this survey, we recognised a need to focus on Biodiversity, Energy and Litter. The purpose of this paper is to justify this selection concerning our school environment. We hope that establishing this project will benefit future generations of students for years to come.

Energy

While there are many forms of generating energy, it is clear that using renewable energy can be cost-effective in the long term and environmentally friendly. As a school, we have already started this with our sports centre relying mostly on solar panels for energy. Other school buildings also have the potential to house solar panels generating renewable energy.

While sources of energy are essential, monitoring the amount of electricity we use as a school can also be useful. Opting for a green energy tariff is practical and can offer a cheaper alternative to being entirely solar-powered as a school. Additionally, a monthly aim of cutting down on energy consumption can be as simple as making a few changes in our environment such as;

- Turning off lights when not in use.
- Checking buildings for proper insulation
- Using natural lighting as much as possible in classrooms
- Switch desktop computers for laptop computers as these consume far less energy.
- Replace incandescent lights with LED or energy-efficient fluorescents as they are four times more effective than incandescent lights.

The estimated cost of electricity per school is £27,000, while secondary schools can have bills of more than £80,000 – double the amount paid four years ago. Case study data shows that typical secondary schools could save up to 20% of their electricity bills by replacing heating, lighting and cooling facilities.

Litter

The next topic we have selected to focus on this year is litter, a recurring theme throughout the investigation. While the school does have some student and staff volunteers to participate in regular litter picking on school grounds, emphasis on what type of litter goes in which bin could be considered a priority for our school.

Educating students on which materials can be recycled forms part of a collective global effort to reduce the amount of litter in landfill sites. A way forward from this would have clearly labelled and coloured bins around the school site, stating what materials belong in them. In addition to this, having designated bin monitors in popular student gathering locations such as Attimore Hall could also impact reducing litter within our school community.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity for our school environment can be an exciting opportunity to reflect on the wildlife species found in the area. At Ridgeway Academy, we are lucky enough to have several green spaces on school grounds. Focusing this year on Biodiversity may provide our school with educational opportunity to observe and even encourage new species of British wildlife into the area, from red kites to hedgehogs and foxes. Saving and conserving their habitats can also mean preserving important ecosystems that play a larger role in Welwyn Garden City's green spaces.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper, Litter, Energy and Biodiversity will be this year's focus for our school environment. We hope that this paper sets out reasoning and justification for our selection. With a few small local changes, we will be one step closer to preserving our environment.

Further Reading

- The Coalition: our programme for government (By David Cameron and Nick Clegg)
- CarbonTrust.com
- Renewable Energy Association
- Eco-Schools Award
- RecycleNow.com