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 **Biodiversity Plan**

**Introduction and Rationale**

As a school community we wanted to utilise our beautiful surroundings to a greater extent for education. In line with our Green School status, we appreciate the importance of playing our part in supporting and protecting the ecosystems and biodiversity of our planet, starting with our actions in school. It is our intention that by delivering these messages through hands on experiential learning that the importance of the initiative will be embedded in our children’s awareness as they grow up.

**Involvement**

Emer Russell, Maresa McDevitt, Carmel Duke and Finola Quirke came together to discuss the development of the outdoor area to include the following:

* Signing up to All Ireland Pollinator Plan
* Developing a ‘wetland’ to cultivate ecosystems
* Utilising the outdoor classroom to support learning around biodiversity and protection of the environment
* Provision of bird, bat and owl habitats
* Development of a woodland walkway
* Cultivation of meadow grass for bees and butterflies
* Erection of a bug hotel and woodpiles to provide habitat for insects

**Future involvement**

It is envisaged that all children will be involved in a hands on way appropriate to their age.

Class levels will be given areas of responsibility so that by the time they reach 6th class they will have accumulated a wealth of knowledge around biodiversity. By formalising this plan it

will make it possible for teachers to link it to the curriculum, their planning and learning objectives.

**Role of Parents**

Parents will be informed of the development and parents with skill sets in different areas are welcomed and encouraged to come on board (in line with Covid compliance).

**Action Plan:**

* Elimination of pesticide use inside school grounds
* Provision of noticeboard for Biodiversity awareness
* Use of assembly time to spread the message about Biodiversity
* Linkage to stands of curriculum for SPHE, Literacy, Numeracy, SESE and Art
* Installation and maintenance of bird feeders around the bird table.
* Installation of bird boxes and an owl box to promote bird nesting on the school grounds.
* Installation of bat box in school grounds
* Hosting a talk around bat conversation in school with bat expert
* Native tree planting and identification – catalogue of same made by students on display at reception.
* Designated area of the garden for mini-beasts, creating a bug hotel and investigating different habitats of mini-beasts.
* Design of a wood pile house.
* Signed up as Supporters to All Ireland Pollinator Plan
* Linkage with Wexford County Council about the project
* Linkage with Biodiversity in Schools about the project
* Setting up of a webpage ‘Outdoor Classroom’ tab on school website for sharing of work ongoing.
* Creation of a wild flower garden to promote pollinators.
* Creation of a biodiversity trail around school with child friendly bilingual signposts (English/Irish) for identification of the various areas
* Recording of data for All Ireland Pollinator Project
* Recording of frequency of bird visits
* Designing fairy doors to engage younger learners but with the identity of the various trees named on each door
* Compilation of species in the grounds in a categorised folder for use in school
* Painting of tyres to create aesthetically pleasing planters
* Digging of wetland area for the cultivation of ecosystems
* In-school competitions based on sustainability – eg Hallowe’en and Christmas decoration from recycled materials competition, junk art in Aistear
* Picker Pals initiative in 1st class
* Children being part of the maintenance of the grounds with the aim being to develop personal pride in their local environment

*\*This list is not exhaustive and is expected to grow*

**Local experts**

Local experts will be invited in to give workshops about trees, species and cultural festivals/traditions such as Bealtaine. The significant expertise of school staff will be utilised to help the children to explore their surroundings in a meaningful way. Local amenities such as Clone beach and Ahare river will be visited and environmental protection and awareness promoted.

**Digital learning Framework**

* Ipad devices/chrome books will be used for photography and video recording
* Apps will be downloaded to enable children to identify trees by their bark and leaves

**SPHE/SESE/ Green School Linkage**

There is an obvious link between the endeavours of this Biodiversity project and our Green School ethos along with the curriculum areas of SESE; Geography (Natural environments – The local natural environment, lands rivers and seas of my country. Environmental awareness and care- environmental awareness, caring for the environment), Science (Environmental awareness and care, caring for my locality) and SPHE (Myself and the wider world- living in the local community, environmental care. The Green School policy, Geography and Science policies are available on our website for cross referencing

**Communication**

Communication will be shared via Class Dojo app, school website [www.castletownnationalschool.ie](http://www.castletownnationalschool.ie). Twitter @Castletown\_NS, Facebook – Scoil Ghormáin Naofa, school newsletter and local newspapers. We also appeared on RTE’s News2day to speak about our efforts.

**School Spiral Plan – areas of responsibility.**

*\*This is not exhaustive but a minimum commitment. This may alter with class splits – these may be seasonal, based on weather*

Junior/Senior Infants: Woodpile - habitats for mini beasts, identification of mini beasts

1st/2nd class: Birds – feeding, habitats, identification (by sight and call), small projects

3rd/4th class: Bees – All Ireland Pollinator Plan, cultivation and protection of meadow area

5th/6th class: Monitoring of wetland area and maintenance of woodland walk. Identification of species, record keeping and monitoring.

Ratified on : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)