



#ThisisLfs

Towards a whole setting approach
to Learning for Sustainability:
Inspiration & Insights



Colmonell and Ballantrae Primary Schools

Local Authority: South Ayrshire

2 small, rural primary schools with a shared Headteacher



Summary

Colmonell and Ballantrae Primary Schools, rural schools in South Ayrshire, have a whole school approach to Learning for Sustainability (Lfs). In both schools, Lfs underpins the rationale for their curriculum.

“About five years ago, as a collegiate staff, we looked at the principles underpinning our curriculum, and identified that Learning for Sustainability was the key driver of our ethos, and the life and learning that we provide.”

Yvonne Templeton, Headteacher

The children’s voices are recognised as a crucial part of who they are. The schools created action plans, identifying key areas to develop with both children and staff alike and Lfs is a main priority each year in their school development plans.

Over a number of years, both schools have been involved in a range of initiatives including [Rights Respecting Schools](#), Outdoor Learning, Sustainability, Global Citizenship, [Eco-Schools](#),

Climate Justice (Light Up Malawi) and the [UN’s Sustainable Development Goals](#). The Education Scotland [Whole school and Community Approach to Learning for Sustainability](#) self evaluation and improvement framework is used as a tool for measuring the impact of Lfs within the school. The school’s Lfs activities have contributed fully towards a coherent and holistic approach to Lfs and have significantly enhanced their links with the wider community.

However, their journey towards a whole school approach has taken time and is continually evolving in response to the world and contexts which we all live in. The most surprising aspect of their Lfs journey has been the passion and articulate voices of their young people, recognising the importance of small changes at a local level and their global links.

How did Colmonell and Ballantrae Primaries start their whole school approach?

- As a collegiate staff, the two schools looked at the principles underpinning their curriculum, and saw that LfS was **the** key driver of their ethos, and the life and learning that they provide.
- Initially, the [Learning for Sustainability Word cloud](#) was used as an audit tool. Staff highlighted the aspects of learning they felt were already included in the schools' day-to-day work. They identified the central importance of children's voice.
- From this point on, they created an Action Plan, identifying key areas to develop with both children and staff
- Learning for sustainability became a main priority each year in the Schools' Development Plans.
- As a major focus for School Improvement, staff identified professional learning activities to enhance their own knowledge and understanding of Learning for Sustainability. Most have undertaken a 'Connecting Classrooms' course.
- Learning for Sustainability has now become a focus for Staff Development Sessions. As collegiate learning, staff identify time for a focus on aspects of LfS to improve on, ensuring that they continue to have a whole school approach to LfS. Teachers now plan collegiately and all take responsibility for LfS.

"Our young people recognise the importance of small changes at a local level. They have a strong sense of both social and global justice, about fairness and equity. From a very young age our children drive Learning for Sustainability, to a point now, in which it has become an implicit part of who we are." Yvonne Templeton, Headteacher

Taking it further

During their LfS audit staff recognised that many aspects were addressed, but in an ad hoc and disjointed way. Pupil surveys also highlighted poor communication between pupil groups and an overlap in activities.

Climate Justice professional learning by [Eco-Schools Scotland](#) led to participation in the whole school '[Scotland Lights Up Malawi](#)' project. This was diverse and grew in a dynamic way. It encouraged staff to look at learning in a differently; to allow learning to be responsive and flexible, adapting as they went along.

Involvement with this whole school project led to the development of '**Community Action Groups**' with groups of children working on themes such as the community garden, improving biodiversity along the riverside, finding out about and working with Guide Dogs for the Blind, Community coffee and games afternoons and a healthy eating group. Parents are updated through newsletters, parents' evenings and open days and planning is undertaken regularly with the community

Reflections to share

'Learning for Sustainability, is a work in progress that will continue to evolve as the contexts within and out-with our schools change. As the children become more knowledgeable and their voice increases, so we will adapt our curriculum to suit. Staff development is crucial. Encouraging staff to work together, to collegiately plan and evaluate, develops confidence and reduces workload. This is what we have found to be the key element, having the greatest impact. Our three key reflections would be to: work together; listen to the children's voices, what do they have to say about the planet?; and use the Sustainable Development Goals to create action at a local level'.

Thanks to Yvonne Templeton, Head Teacher, Colmonell and Ballantrae Primary Schools, May 2019