

Origins: Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools

Healthy Schools

The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) was launched in 1999 following a 2-year pilot programme as part of the WHO/EC/CoE initiative - the European Network of Health Promoting Schools. The scheme was developed following recommendations from a Task and Finish Group and the aims on set-up were to ensure that local healthy school schemes were established in health and education partnerships in each local authority area in Wales.

The WNHSS now consists of twenty-two local healthy school schemes, one in each local authority in Wales, and over 99% of maintained schools are actively involved. Each scheme employs one or more healthy schools co-ordinators who recruit and support schools and organise appropriate local training and accreditation. Schools appoint their own In-school co-ordinators who work with the healthy schools co-ordinator to plan and implement actions identified by the school. As schools progress through the scheme, health-improvement measures are expected to make a lasting difference to the way in which school life is organised.

In order to ensure consistency of achievement, the WNHSS National Quality Award was introduced in 2010. This has clear indicators for 4 aspects of school practice - Leadership and Communication, Curriculum, Ethos and Environment, and Family and Community Involvement - for 7 aspects of health (Mental and emotional health and well-being; Food and fitness; Personal development and relationships; Substance use and misuse; Environment; Safety and Hygiene).

The Healthy and Sustainable Pre-school Scheme has been developed as an extension of WNHSS and the criteria have clear parallels with the WNHSS National Quality Award.

Eco-Schools

The Eco-Schools programme is an international initiative that encourages pupils to engage with environmental and sustainable development issues. It provides a highly structured system for the environmental management of schools. The programme is a learning resource and topic areas include: Litter, Waste Minimisation, Transport, Healthy Living, Energy, Water, School Grounds and Global Citizenship.

Pupils take key roles in decision making and participation in order to reduce the environmental impact of their school. In this way, Eco-Schools extend learning beyond the classroom and develop responsible citizenship attitudes both at home and in the wider community.

