

## **Sir John Thursby Community College “Waste Not, Want Not” Summary**

This case study is from the perspective of the school business manager and focuses on just one Doorway - Procurement and Waste.

Sir John Thursby Community College was formed in 2006 from the merger of two schools as part of Burnley’s BSF programme. From the start the college began working with the Sustainable Schools Framework and by 2007 there was some piecemeal activity in aspects of sustainability, but no coherent or whole-school policy. In September 2007 an Eco-School development group was set up and the newly appointed school business manager (SBM) initiated an audit of current practice. Amongst other activities, a whole-school recycling programme was set up, led by the SBM and year 7 students. How this was established, its successes and problems are detailed in the case study.

**Impacts:** There have been short term cost savings, through reducing general waste collection by improved reuse and recycling. Longer term impacts are becoming evident in growing staff support and student engagement.

**Key leadership role:** School Business Manager

### **My work, its outcomes and leadership**

This case study describes my experiences in beginning the sustainable journey at Sir John Thursby Community College. I joined the college as school business manager in September 2007, one year after the college had formed as part of the BSF programme in Burnley, by merging Walshaw and Barden schools. SJTCC had begun to actively engage with some aspects of the Sustainable Schools Framework, but this work was erratic and not joined-up. There was no policy governing a sustainable school strategy, no leadership of sustainability in school and no inclusion of sustainability in the School Development Plan. However, there was much valuable work being undertaken in relation to the eight doorways of the framework.

The school had begun to initiate several strategies addressing school improvement, and had invested in the development of a rural area and a plan to deliver land-based and horticultural studies as a vocational option at Key Stage 4. An eco-school development group was established with effect from September 2007 with the specific aim of supporting this development and helping the school achieve

eco-school status. The associate head and an assistant head led this development group which I used as the catalyst to begin my work on sustainable development in school.

Setting the vision

In September I invited the group to complete the eco-school audit and the S3 audit which clearly identified what was already in place, and, more importantly, what work needed to be undertaken to improve the school's environmental performance. One of the areas that particularly concerned me was waste management. Being a committed 'recycler' at home, and as business manager recognising the financial opportunities for savings, I felt the school could demonstrate a significant impact by adopting a whole-school waste management policy.

Communicating and interpreting

I learned from our site team that 70% of our weekly waste was paper and cardboard. We had 2 x 1 litre paper bins which the local council collected fortnightly, and a Year 7 form group were completing a paper recycling project. I consulted staff about their paper disposal. In the main, they expressed an interest in recycling if the facility were available. I started with the administration team, initiating a recycling policy in all the office areas (as this was an area I line-managed). I began investigating the actions needed to roll out a whole-school strategy for recycling and what streams of waste we could recycle. The Year 7 form group, who were already recycling, were enlisted to make collections from additional points around the offices. In October I was advised that we needed more collection bins, and a call to the council resulted in the delivery of a further 8 bins. By November we had requested 6 more, and set up additional plastic, can and compost recycling points in school.

Innovator

Engaging others

Learning leaders embraced the proposals to introduce recycling across school. Through influencing them it was much easier to engage all curriculum departments to actively participate. By December 2007 we were collecting paper, cardboard, cans, bottles, mobile phones and printer cartridges.

Risk taker

Our main issues were: having suitable receptacles and collection points around school and a collection service for the streams we could separate from general waste. In November I contacted our existing waste collection service provider Veolia to discuss our needs. Our current contract involved the collection of 12 x 1100 litre bins every week. I was eager to re-negotiate and a caveat was

added to our contract so we only pay for the number of general waste bins collected each week rather than adhering to our fixed contract. Veolia were launching a recycling collection service and we agreed to participate for the provision of paper collection bins. 180 paper recycling bins were sited around school during the Christmas holidays, and these began to fill very quickly.

Innovator

Our next challenge now is how to pro-actively reduce the amount of paper generated around school. I have begun to tackle this by making documents available electronically and introducing new voice messaging systems, but there is still much work to be done.

My approach to leading this activity was to create the vision, set the direction and influence others, with an aspect of leading by example. I had to be resilient and not become disillusioned when I discovered staff and/or pupils who were not committed. I am now known in the staffroom and the dining room, observing disposal, and reminding people what should be going where. My regular announcements in staff briefing, and the call to action for all staff to support the eco-school plan is beginning to pay off. Networking and a collaborative approach will now help to improve our recycling strategy.

### **The benefits**

Linking to other school priorities

This activity has contributed significantly to the school's environmental performance and has also saved costs in waste collection. By January 2008 we were now down to 9 waste collection bins with plans to reduce this to 6 by April 2008. Staff feel empowered that they are making a contribution to school improvement by supporting the recycling strategy, and pupils are benefiting by recycling habits becoming embedded in the culture.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

I honestly felt that I was making slow progress and was disappointed that we had only reduced our general waste by 3300 litres in 3 months. However, I was surprised by positive comments from learning leaders recognising and valuing the progress achieved to date.

Student voice/ leadership

My initial plan had been to directly appeal to pupils and I firstly approached a group of students in Year 11. However, I was disappointed to find this group somewhat unengaged with the

challenge of managing a recycling campaign. My experience certainly seems to suggest a keener interest in sustainability at KS3 and Year 7 pupils in particular appear much more engaged and committed to effecting change. They seem much more in tune with the 'climate change' agenda, and I wonder if this is the legacy of the adoption of environment awareness raising that has occurred across the primary sector over recent years. Bridging the KS2 to KS3 transition will now feature as the focus of my research.