



SEEd – “Supporting education
for a more sustainable world”

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and on behalf of:

CREE – University of Bath

DEA

Development Education Centre (South Yorkshire)

Envision

GAP

Groundwork

Learning Through Landscapes (LtL)

Lifeworlds Learning

London South Bank University - CCCI

NAEE

NCB

RSPB

South West Learning for Sustainability Coalition

Tide Learning

UK TE ESD/GC Network

Wastewatch

WWF-UK

Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP,
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
London

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to bring to your attention some of the good work that has been done on Sustainable Schools by a coalition of organisations, universities, charities and all levels of government and to encourage you to explore with us, as a sector, how this work can be taken forward. We estimate that over 400 organisations and charities have become involved in this work over the past 4 years.

The voluntary Sustainable Schools framework has encouraged schools to link all their work such as: climate change; global issues; walking to school initiatives; community links; procurement; biodiversity and learning outside the classroom with developing resilience in pupils for their futures. This is such an important part of young people being ‘the authors of their own futures’ - academically, vocationally and as citizens.

This work has been a product of the last 20 years in the UK where early thinking about education for sustainable development (ESD) by NGOs put the UK at the forefront globally. Early pilots in schools were developed by NGOs but this has now matured into a 4-way programme of partnering work including local authorities, schools, NGOs and business (e.g. half the attendants at the National Sustainable Schools Conference run by SEEd in June 2010 were from Local Authorities and NGOs). This coalition enables schools to choose from a variety of sources what is appropriate for them without setting targets or dictating how they are to become more sustainable.

We understand this has been a very cost effective programme for central government because of the involvement of so many local and other organisations. The encouraging of local solutions, linked to the school and community is also maximised by being embedded in the curriculum the school develops for itself. We feel this links so well with the localism and Big Society agendas, especially since it is not about telling schools or young people how to behave but allows them to develop this themselves.

Our evidence is that more and more schools are choosing to engage in sustainability and climate change initiatives because they know it saves money, saves energy and CO2, engages the students in practical applications of the academic knowledge they are acquiring, and is fundamental to preparing children for their futures. There is a strong evidence base that has been developed in the past couple of years that shows what this approach achieves for learning and motivation outcomes for young people. This includes an Ofsted report and evidence from the last 20 years in the UK as well as overseas.

There are emerging case studies that show how schools are making savings year on year. The Teaching Award winners of the Sustainable Schools Award and the Ashden Award school winners are examples of this. One example in particular is Ringmer College in East Sussex where a pupil led sustainability initiative has led to so many savings they can employ a Sustainability Manager to continue to find more ways to save money.

The Sustainable Schools Framework encourages this work to continue – rather than to be a one-off initiative. Many schools prior to this joined up approach had moved from one award scheme or initiative to another and were feeling frustrated or ‘stuck’.

This last year has seen more schools beginning to take their first steps in sustainability, given the carbon reduction commitments and knowing that in the long term the cost of energy and other services is going to increase. Surveys show over and over again that schools and teachers are motivated by this work but feel they lack the skills and training to develop the teaching and learning approaches, as well as how to achieve energy savings and cost savings.

The framework for Sustainable Schools has helped organisations, including local authorities, and charities to work effectively and efficiently together in a way that we were not able to achieve before. It has encouraged businesses to get involved and has provided an opportunity to help schools navigate an often complicated field.

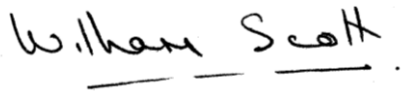
This is an important time since we are half way through the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the work done so far in the UK (not just England) is being admired by the rest of the world. We really hope this work will be driven to fruition as it now needs to be mainstreamed throughout schools in the UK. Scotland and Wales are showing strong commitment to the Decade with Action Plans across all sectors of learning.

We urge you to continue to support this important work and to give a strong message to schools that it is still important, and to support the excellent partnership working in all sectors that have worked so hard for one of our most important agendas. To that end we would very much like to meet with you to discuss how we can work with you to achieve this.

Yours sincerely,



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Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd)



Professor William Scott
Chair - CREE – University of Bath
And Chair of UNESCO UK NC – Steering Group on ESD

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