



Using nature and the great outdoors to
make learning fun for everyone.

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1. About Nature's Classroom

Nature's Classroom' was launched in February 2007 and continues to reach over 2,000 pupils each year from schools and groups across the Derry City and Strabane District Council area. Workshops are designed to meet the aims and objectives of the National Curriculum including Key Stages 1- 3 and GCSE Geography and Science.

Workshops are also designed to support primary and secondary schools taking part in the Eco Schools Programme. The Eco-Schools programme is an ideal way for schools to embark on a meaningful path towards improving the environment in both the school and the local community while at the same time having a life-long positive impact on the lives of young people and their families. The Eco-Schools Seven Steps methodology is a series of carefully engineered measures to help schools maximise the success of their Eco-School ambitions.

While the Seven Steps are the most important aspect of the Eco-Schools programme, schools also work on topics to help give the programme even more structure; **marine, biodiversity, energy, litter, global citizenship, healthy living, school grounds, transport, waste and water.**

Nature's Classroom is designed to support schools in the delivery of the following topics:

- Biodiversity;
- Energy;
- Litter;
- Global Citizenship;
- School Grounds;
- Waste; and
- Water.

Workshops are designed to help pupils develop their numeracy and literacy skills, improve self-confidence and self-efficacy and connect them with their local community.

2. Why Environmental Education?

Children are spending more time indoors than ever before. They are disconnected from nature and the joy that comes from exploring their community. The effects of “nature deficit disorder” are reflected in increasing child obesity rates.

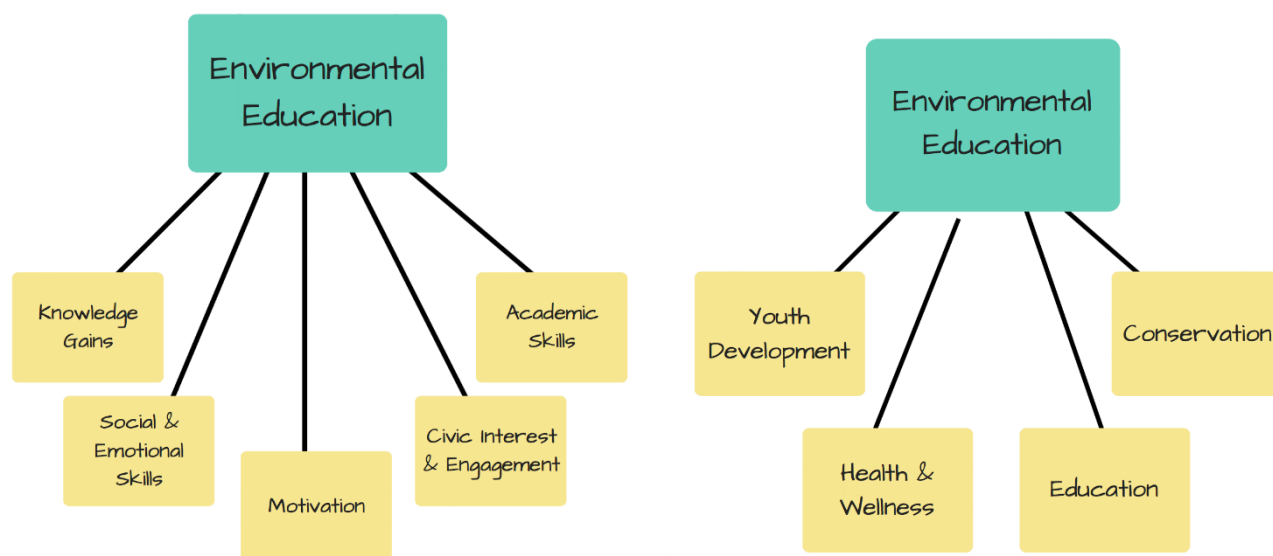
Environmental education engages learners as they understand how nature works and how humans impact our world. EE is hands-on, interdisciplinary, empowering, and relevant to learners’ everyday lives. It gives them the knowledge and tools they need to be environmentally literate—ready to face environmental and social challenges with confidence and optimism.

Environmental education helps us to understand the world around us. This understanding can be facilitated through work in virtually any subject area, including science, math, technology, literacy, history, civics, language, physical education, music, art, and more. Good environmental education helps students see the connections between disciplines and apply knowledge in flexible, adaptive ways.

There is mounting evidence on the widespread benefits of environmental education, including positive impacts on academic performance, motivation and interest in school, social and emotional skills, and civic interest and engagement.

Environmental education is a win-win – it’s good for the environment and it’s good for children.





Ardoin, Bowers, Roth, & Holthuis, 2016.

Bowers & Phukan, 2016.

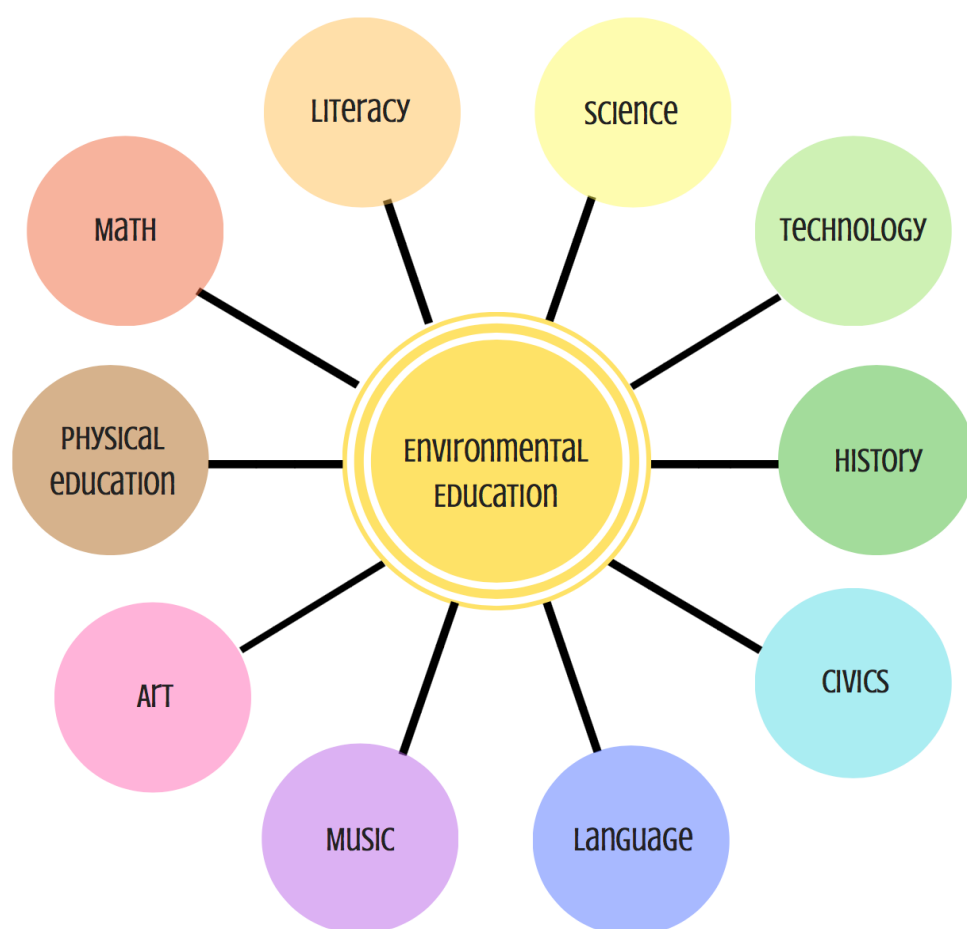


Fig 1. Environmental education and links to other subjects and skills

3. The Green Infrastructure Plan

Derry City and Strabane District Council in partnership with the Green Infrastructure Stakeholder Group have launched the first Green Infrastructure Plan in Northern Ireland. As an active member of the GI Stakeholder Group, Creggan Country Park will help lead projects that link directly to the action plan. An important part of this process is environmental education.

GI is an interconnected network of multi-functional natural & semi-natural areas, which provide multiple environmental, economic & social benefits, linked throughout the urban and rural landscape. It is mostly comprised of countryside, parks, natural habitats, allotments & green links (river & stream corridors, pedestrian & cycling routes). These spaces provide a mix of functions including recreation, sustainable transport, education, wildlife habitat, flood risk management, local food production, energy production & ecosystem services. Often these functions overlap, for example, a woodland can provide a habitat for wildlife, a recreational asset, a landscape feature and a fuel supply.

GI will provide a strategic approach for the creation of a planned and managed network of multi-functional green and blue spaces. Together, these deliver a range of environmental, economic and social benefits for local communities within the Derry & Strabane district. It will highlight the importance of enhancing biodiversity, safeguarding ecosystem services, how to mitigate and adapt to climate change and improve health & well-being.

For more information on Derry City and Strabane's Green Infrastructure Plan, please visit: <http://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/bbed1ff9-254b-4af7-a7f0-851e2110a8ae/GI-Framework.pdf>

Contact:

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4. Nature's Classroom

| Workshop title | Description | Suited to | Eco Schools Topic | What to bring |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|---|---|
| Tree Maths | Available from November – June. Interactive workshop allows pupils to explore why trees are important and common species found at Creggan Country Park. Pupils will then use equipment to estimate the height and age of trees around the park. | KS1-2 KS 3 | Biodiversity - Biodiversity; - Energy; - Litter; - Global Citizenship; - School Grounds; - Waste; and - Water. | - Wear strong footwear - Wear warm waterproof coat |
| Power from the Planet | Available from January – June Renewable energy and energy efficiency. Includes quiz, games, discussion and site visit to see our wind turbine, biomass boiler, turf roof and hydroelectric scheme. | KS1 – 3 GCSE A level | Energy | |
| Our Planet | Available from January – June The science behind climate change. Includes slide show, multimedia session, games, quiz, science based experiments and discussion. | KS1 – 3 GCSE A level | Global Citizenship Biodiversity Water | |

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| Bats a Fact | Available October Includes slide show, discussion, games, quiz and pupils meet a real bat. Practical session includes creating a diary of a bat and an art or planting activity. Can include story telling/reading session on request with our partners at Libraries NI. GCSE Physics focuses on echolocation and sound analysis using bat detectors and sound analysis software. GCSE Biology focuses on bat ecology and rehabilitation. | KS1 -3 GCSE | Biodiversity | |
| Big Bug Hunt | Available May – June Slide show, site safety, map reading, invertebrate ID, pollinator experiment, habitat ID and practical session using pooters, beating trays, pond nets and microscopes. Can include story telling/reading session on request with our partners at Libraries NI. | KS 1 -3 | Biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm waterproof coat - Strong footwear |
| Nurture Nature | Available November Looks at impact of litter, gorse fires, micro plastics, off road vehicles and bonfires on biodiversity. Promotes recycling and community pride through slide show, activity sheets, games, art and discussion. | KS 1 -3 | Biodiversity Global citizenship Waste Litter | |

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|-----------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| All About Birds | Available from January-February Slide show on common garden birds, habitats, practical session on flight and make a cake for birds. Pupils will take part in a bird watching session in our conservation area. Can include free story telling/reading session on request with our partners at Libraries NI. Bake a cake for birds no longer uses nuts and seeds. | KS 1 -3 | Biodiversity | |
| The Nature Hub | Available from September - June Can be instructor or self-led. Nature themed games, environmental art & crafts, messy play, The Lorax Story book trail & activities and hedgerow maze. Can include story telling/reading session on request with our partners at Libraries NI. | KS 1 - 3 | Biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm waterproof coat - Strong footwear - Packed lunch LEAVE NO TRACE Please take litter home with you. |
| Good As New | Available from October – December Pupils learn how to use a sewing machine to upcycle wetsuits into new items and create planters from boats | KS 3 GCSE A Level | Waste Global Citizenship | |

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| What about water? | Available April Online animations available on our Youtube channel to accompany workshops. Pupils investigate reservoirs, rivers and lakes and how they link to biodiversity and people through health, drinking water, bathing and recreation. Practical activities include drama, art, water sampling demonstration and water safety demonstration. | KS 1 -3 GCSE A level | Water Litter Waste Biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm waterproof coat - Strong footwear If going outside for water safety demonstration or sampling. |
| Walk On the Wild Side | Available from September – June Self-led nature themed treasure hunts. Treasure hunt using printed tiles along the path around the middle reservoir. Explores flora and fauna found at the park. Environmental Officer can email you the resources to print in school and bring with you. | KS 1 -2 | Biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waterproof coat - Strong footwear |
| Festive Tree Planting Party | Available December Pupils learn about why we need trees, how to identify species without their leaves and learn how to plant their own tree at the park. | KS 1 -3 GCSE A level | Biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm waterproof coat - Strong footwear - Non uniform event |
| World Wetlands Day | 2nd February Topic and activities change each year depending on Ramsar's chosen theme | KS 1 -3 | Global citizenship Water Biodiversity | |

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| Nature On Your Doorstep | <p>June</p> <p>Annual wildlife and outdoor themed event for schools. Partners display information stands and deliver activities including wildlife art, bug hunt, treasure hunt and wildlife story telling with Libraries NI. Free event subject to ongoing funding.</p> | KS 1 -3 | <p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Global Citizenship</p> <p>Litter</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waterproof coat - Strong footwear |
|-------------------------|---|---------|---|--|

Table 1. Nature's classroom workshops and curriculum links

We provide all equipment, pencils, recording sheets and instruction. If funding available, break is provided.



Funded by the Department for Communities

'Nature's Classroom' Booking Form

Teacher Name:

School:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone no.

Email:

Activity Details:

Date:

Time:

Group number:

Age group:

Access/Mobility/Medical conditions you want us to be aware of:

Allergies:

Signed (Teacher) _____

Please email completed form to karen.healy@creggancountrypark.com

PLEASE NOTE:

- Teacher supervision is required at all times during workshops.
- Workshops are delivered at Creggan Country Park - unfortunately we cannot fund transport.
- We want pupils to have the best possible experience in outdoor learning using our facilities and 100-acre site. We understand travel may be a barrier for some schools so we can arrange to bring some workshops to schools located in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas – please email or call to discuss
- We provide all equipment, work sheets, clipboards, pencils and art materials.
- A copy of our insurance/risk assessments/safeguarding policies and procedures available on request. All Creggan Country Park staff and volunteers have been subject to an Access NI check.
- Due to demand and limited resources, unfortunately our environmental education programme cannot be used as end of term reward days.