

SCHOOL FOCUS

STUDENTS AND MEMBERS OF STAFF ENCOURAGED TO WALK TO SCHOOL TO

HELP CUT TOXIC EMISSIONS AND TO INSPIRE OTHERS TO GET INVOLVED

Pupils lead the way in making changes for sustainability

'Climate change challenge week' raised awareness of environmental issues

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Every day at Newfield School is permeated with passion for a sustainable earth.

It comes after the introduction of a student eco-committee which formed last September to look at ways in which the secondary school in Norton Lees, and everyone in it, can be kinder to the environment and help improve the world we live in.

Through this the group of keen environmentalists have been able to introduce a number of schemes, from lowering the amount of single use plastic bottles and opting for reusable ones to turning off computer monitors at the end of each day, and share their knowledge to help encourage others to get involved.

More recently the whole school took part in a 'climate change challenge week' full of activities in a bid to spark conversations around the topic of climate change and offer a platform to discuss and raise awareness of sustainability.

Assistant Headteacher Paul Thornely said: "We've got a real passion for changing things and trying to create a sustainable earth. The vast majority of the mem-

bers of staff came here to give the children a better future and they're only going to get that better future if they've got a sustainable earth that they can live on and enjoy so we came up with the plan to do a climate change week.

"It coincides with a year to the day that the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) published their report which said that we've got 12 years to act on climate change, so we're down to 11 years now – we thought it was the perfect time to do this."

The week began with all the staff and students writing a pledge of something they could change in terms of their lifestyle over the course of seven days to help the environment, with the view to carry this on after the challenge had ended.

"We also had a meat free day in school," Mr Thornely added. "So we've tried to move people towards looking at that and the issues that we have around the meat market. We also introduced vegan food as well and staff had milk alternatives provided."

To bring the week-long challenge to a close, staff and students were encouraged to take part in a 'car free' day, instead travelling to and from school by foot, public transport, scooter, bike or even car sharing where possible in a bid to reduce pollution in the surrounding area

for at least 24 hours.

Mr Thornely said: "When we look at Sheffield you can see how pollution is causing problems particularly around schools – being in a car is causing problems for kids. Therefore, just by walking in, it would be healthier for them, they'd have chance to talk to their friends and other people and the benefit it would have to mental health.

"It's about raising awareness and making small changes and saying that collectively those small changes that each individual makes have a big impact when we're all doing it.

"One of the pledges we suggested was to get out there and talk to people. Staff are also encouraged, wherever possible in the curriculum, to talk about climate change. There have been conversations constantly and kids have been enthused by it."

Newfield is part of The Writing Instruments Recycling Programme, a scheme launched in partnership by BIC and TerraCycle which aims to collect old, used or worn out writing instruments – such as pens, felt tips, highlighters correction fluid pots and mechanical pencils – and turn them into new products, all the while raising awareness and making a responsible action for the environment.

In turn they receive 1p for every item handed in – sav-



Pupils have been cycling to Newfield School as part of their climate change week

ing unnecessary items from landfill and gaining funds to help support more eco projects within the school.

Year 11 student Molly Cowell, part of the schools eco-committee, said: "It's about trying to educate people about the consequences of their actions but also the importance of their choices.

"When you look at things

like the canteen, hundreds of plastic water bottles are thrown away every day, hundreds of kids come to school in cars which release toxic emissions and its about making sure those kids realise which are the right decisions to make and to open up that opportunity for them to make a real difference.

"It's about our future and

taking responsibility for that and acknowledging that there is a massive conversation about it and we need to be part of that because at the end of the day it is for our sake.

"It's not just a political issue, it is about morality, opening up the debate and making sure we're all healthy and happy and able



Paul Thornely, Amber Hannaford and Asher Walton-Mitchell, 12

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Ruby Deakin, 14, Laurie Guymer, 14, Olive Miller, 12, and Oscar Reade, 12

to reach our aspirations and not have the actions of previous generations take that away from us."

Students regularly take part in litter picking, collecting almost 1,000 plastic bottles and filling 40 bags of rubbish from school grounds.

Year 10 student Megan Rogers, also on the eco-committee, said: "We're look-

ing to set up a crisp packet recycling scheme because everybody within school is going to have crisps, its unavoidable.

"We're trying to set up a scheme around that so there is not as much guilt getting rid of that.

"We've also been using plastic bottles from the canteen to create an artwork."



Pupils walking to school as part of climate change challenge week