

# Eastchurch Primary School

## Isle of Sheppey, UK

### 2006



## Good energy housekeeping

### Summary

Eastchurch Primary School has developed a culture of 'Good Energy Housekeeping'; led by classroom Energy Monitors, and an 'E-team' of Year 4 pupils who monitor classrooms during the lunch hour.

Eastchurch Primary serves Eastchurch and two other villages on the Isle of Sheppey. Employment at the docks is declining, and though there is seasonal employment in holiday businesses, this is a relatively poor area with a high percentage of pupils receiving free school meals.

Since 1998, the school has had a programme of improving the efficiency of the fabric of the school: including the use of low-energy lighting; installation of covered areas to reduce heat loss from doors; and the replacement of old kitchen equipment with energy-efficient devices. After considerable time and effort, a 3 kWp photovoltaic (PV) array was installed in 2005, linked to a prominent display outside the canteen which shows current and cumulative energy generation and CO<sub>2</sub> savings.

The major focus of the school is on careful use of energy, with a strong culture of switching off lights and appliances, and closing doors. Each class has an Energy Monitor to encourage this, and there are pupil-made posters and notices around the school. A group of the oldest pupils (eight- and nine-year-olds in Year 4) is selected to join the E-team, and visit each classroom every lunchtime to check lights, appliances and doors, and record their observations in a book. At the end of each week they report their findings to the whole school and award a certificate to the best-performing class. The E-team also records the output of the PV array each day, and reads the school's utility meters each week with the caretaker. These findings are documented and reported to the School Council, staff and governors. The E-team has given presentations to other schools in the areas. Joining the E-team is seen by children as a great privilege, and parents are impressed by the confidence which this responsibility gives to their children. Pupils develop the attitude that "everyone can do their bit" and take home an individual list of five targets for their own homes.

Sustainable energy is integrated into many aspects of the Eastchurch curriculum. Data from the PV array is used in maths teaching and problem solving, and Year 4 children learn about energy-saving techniques and make leaflets which are copied and sent home to parents. Less obvious aspects of sustainable energy, like transport and food miles, are also discussed in class.

Many people in the Eastchurch school community are engaged with the sustainable energy ethos. Paula Owens, the Deputy Head Teacher and Geography Coordinator has particularly championed this work, and is responsible for the energy-saving fund which contributed to the PV array; but all curriculum coordinators incorporate energy in their particular disciplines. Kent County Council has provided advice and regular support to teaching. All pupils are expected to act responsibly over energy use.

What is most replicable about the work of Eastchurch is the tremendous emphasis on caring for the environment and personal responsibility. It is this ethos which set up the E-team, and which has made it so successful and popular among pupils. The approach does not rely on capital equipment, although the recent installation of the PV array has certainly given an added interest.

The Ashden judges made a joint first-prize Award to Eastchurch Primary School and Cassop Primary School, recognising the exemplary work carried out by each. The focus at Eastchurch has been on developing the personal responsibility of all children to play their part in energy saving.

## **The school**

Eastchurch Primary School is a state-funded Church of England primary school. It serves three villages and has 285 pupils, aged between 4 and 9. Pauline Shipley, the Head Teacher, leads a team of 14 teachers and 19 other staff.

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## **Use of the Ashden Award**

Eastchurch Primary School is very keen to add to their renewable electricity supply by installing a small wind turbine, and the Ashden Award will contribute to this.

*This report is based on information from the application submitted to the Ashden Awards by Eastchurch Primary School, findings from a visit to the school by two of the judges, and discussions between Paula Owens and the Ashden judges at interview.*

*Dr Anne Wheldon, Technical Director of the Ashden Awards  
Jeremy Rawlings, Technical Assistant  
July 2006.*

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