

CONFERENCE

Sustainable Schools:

A Year of Activity is Underway

Camden Town Hall, London, 1st February 2007.
Organised by Government Office for London (GoL)

2006-07: 'Year of Action' for Sustainable Development in Schools:

This half-day conference was opened by Jonathan Fairclough, Deputy Head, Children and Learners Division, Government of London, who reminded delegates that 'by 2020, the Government would like every school to be a sustainable school and to fulfil the aspirations set out in *Every Child Matters*. The academic year 2006-7 has been earmarked as a Year of Action for sustainable development in schools. From differing starting points and differing priorities, all schools can take this agenda forward. aimed to inform and update delegates on progress being made.'

Keynote speech, Dr Jake Reynolds:

The keynote speaker was Dr. Jake Reynolds, Senior Adviser on Sustainable Development at the DfES. He started by referring to *Climate Change*. While recognising the positive work being done in schools he reminded delegates that the UK is the least energy efficient country in Europe— with low rates of recycling, high levels of obesity, high car dependency being just some examples. Although people see *Climate Change* as a real threat, they do very little to offset the effects. While children are concerned about *Climate Change* they see very little action to make a change from the adults around them.

8 'doorways' to sustainable schools

Jake's presentation included the 8 Doorways to Sustainable Schools and how the doorways enable a school to start at any doorway which is most relevant to them at this moment. The 8 doorways are: *Purchasing & Waste, Energy & Water, Food & Drink, Travel & Traffic, Buildings & Grounds, Inclusion & Participation, Local Well-being, and the Global Dimension*. He spoke about 'S3: Sustainable School Self-evaluation' which is a toolkit to help schools assess how they think they are doing in terms of sustainable development. He finished with a key question: **'Can we deliver the Every Child Matters agenda if we do not consider sustainability?'**

Building Schools for the Future

Camden Council hosted this event and Councillor Gail Tolley, Assistant Director for Learning and School Effectiveness at London Borough of Camden spoke of some approaches the borough is using to encourage sustainability, which include listening to children's opinions, having a Councillor taking on the lead on sustainability issues across the council and Camden Environmental Education Network (CEEN). Cllr Tolley spoke of the eight

doorways, *the Building Schools for the Future* programme for secondary schools, and the five *Every Child Matters* goals. Jonathan Ibikunle, Design Manager with Partnerships for Schools gave more insight into the Building Schools for the Future programme and improving school design to increase energy efficiency. He gave examples of positive projects across the country.

Schools that inspire

An inspiring talk by Teddy Crane, teaching in Key Stage 1 at Charles Dickens Primary School in Southwark, shows what a school can achieve when the will is there! This is a 19th Century school building facing 21st century challenges, with limited space and in a very deprived part of south-east London. Teddy spoke of the school council where children set the agenda, a school where pupils are enabled to develop a sense of their roles and responsibilities in the school, the local community and the wider world. He spoke of sustainability being integrated into the curriculum, of growing food in bins, learning outside the classroom, support from parents, of partnerships with Southwark Council and a number of other charitable organisations. Their SATs results in year 6 have been pretty impressive too!

A positive view from OFSTED

Leszek Iwaskow, HMI and OFSTED inspector, was another very inspiring speaker. Leszek referred to the impact that the Stern Report made by looking at the financial costs of *Climate Change*. As an Ofsted inspector, he can see that Sustainable Development can be linked to school improvement, that best practice is where school management and the whole school support education for sustainable development (ESD). Leszek linked sustainable development to the *Every Child Matters* agenda and that sustainable development should be at the heart of the school culture: academic, moral and social. The S3: Sustainable School Self Evaluation document can help a school identify its strengths in terms of ESD in curriculum, pupils' personal development and active citizenship.

The next steps:

GoL's Sustainable Development Unit is planning to keep up the momentum on sustainable schools and develop networks across London.

ALONA SHERIDAN, NAEF Executive member for London