

# Forming an Eco Committee

## Notes for Teachers

For schools working for an Eco-Schools award, an active and enthusiastic Eco Committee is essential. The Committee should be the driving force behind your Eco work, leading the planning and running of your projects, as well as spreading Eco messages to the rest of the school. The group should contain pupils from a range of year groups, supported by adults.

For advice provided by Eco-Schools on forming and running a Committee see:

[www.eco-schools.org.uk/gettingstarted/ecocommittee](http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/gettingstarted/ecocommittee)



### About this document

This document answers to the questions BHee is often asked about the Eco Committee. In most cases there is no 'right' answer; every school is different, so find what works for you. If you'd like further advice on setting up / running your Eco Committee please contact Helen:

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## 1. Could we use our School Council as our Eco Committee?

It is possible for the School Council to operate as a very effective Eco Committee, with designated 'Eco' meetings at least once a term. This works well in small schools where there may be insufficient adults to run two separate groups. Most larger schools decide to have a separate Eco Committee, allowing more pupils to take on roles of responsibility. This also means pupils with a particular interest in the environment can throw themselves into Eco projects without having to address wider school issues.



If you decide to have separate School Council and Eco Committees, think about ways to give them an equally high status. For example, providing members of the Eco Committee with badges will make them instantly recognisable and give them profile within the school. If your School Council has designated notebooks, the same could be provided for the Eco Committee.

## 2. Which age groups should we include?

If possible, the Committee should include pupils covering the full age range of the school. Some schools divide their Eco Committee into two or more groups, with some pupils concentrating on strategic planning while others form an 'action team' (for example collecting recycling / checking lights have been switched off around the school etc.)

If you adopt this split approach, be sure to allow the members of the 'action team(s)' opportunities to contribute ideas to the planning process.

If some year groups are not included in your Eco Committee, look at ways to inform and include those pupils in your Eco projects. For example, upper KS2 pupils could learn valuable skills from visiting Early Years classes to spread key messages using puppets or action songs.

### 3. Should we have class / form reps?

An important role of the Eco Committee is keep communication flowing between the group and the rest of the school. Having class / form Eco reps facilitates this process, as long as pupils are given time to lead discussion with their class / form on a regular basis.

You may decide that the most important thing is for pupils who are really enthusiastic about Eco issues to be allowed to join the Committee. This could be 4 pupils from one class, and none from another! If this is your approach you will need to discuss with the Committee the best way of keeping the whole school in the loop, and ensuring that all pupils who are not part of the Committee have opportunities to suggest ideas.

### 4. Should we hold elections?

Holding elections for the Eco Committee is likely to give it a high status and profile within the school, on a par with the School Council. Some schools ask 'candidates' to prepare and deliver a talk to their class about why they would make a good Eco Committee member. Others ask pupils to complete an 'application form' explaining why they would like to be considered for the Eco Committee. (To download editable application form templates see the BHee website: <http://bhee.co.uk/resources/eco-committee/>)



While elections have many advantages, there is a risk that pupils vote for their friends rather than for those with a genuine interest in Eco issues. Another option is to ask pupils to volunteer for the Committee and / or to ask teachers to nominate pupils who they think will both contribute to and benefit from being part of the group. You could decide to have different selection methods for different age groups e.g., elections in KS2 and teacher nominations in KS1.

### 5. Do we have to call it the 'Eco Committee'?

You can choose what to call the group e.g., Eco Council, Eco Prefects, Green Team, Eco Ninjas. Naming the group could be a decision for pupils at their first meeting. But be cautious about changing the Committee's name too frequently – this might interfere with the process of establishing a clear sense of identity for the group within the school.

### 6. How often should we form a new Eco Committee?

Most schools select a new Committee in September and pupils remain in the group for the academic year. However there are advantages to a more flexible approach. Allowing pupils to remain in the Committee for several years gives continuity from one year to the next, and makes it much easier to run campaigns and projects that span more than one school year. It also means pupils who are genuinely passionate about the environment can remain in the group, developing their skills and interests.

One additional advantage of allowing pupils to remain in the Committee for more than one year is that when your Green Flag assessor visits you will have pupils who can talk confidently about eco projects from the previous school year.

### 7. How do we keep the Eco Committee motivated?

Keep the status of the group high within the school, and make being a member fun! Be sure to balance discussion-based meetings with lots of practical activities. If you can, arrange an end of year treat for the Committee to reward them for all their hard work e.g., a trip out of school or a special activity in the school grounds. And last but not least, be sure to apply for your Eco-Schools awards when you're ready!

