

Elswick House Nursery Goes Green - A Case Study



We first had the idea of 'going green' at Easter 2007. As I tend to do, I wrote down my thoughts some time in May but our timescale started to go awry almost immediately as events overtook us - my fault I'm afraid!

The first thing I did was to carry out my own environmental audit. I had a pretty clear idea on how to tackle the audit, but I started by looking at lots of environmental web sites with a view to getting further ideas, advice and direction on the best way to approach it.

I began a very thorough and detailed review, ranging from energy use to water and waste and travel – we even looked at the best way of handling nappies! Half way through the audit, I decided to look at 'short term greener practice' – changes we could implement comparatively easily and cheaply.

This was not within my original remit for the audit, but I wanted to get on with making changes. Why wait?

So, first I looked into green energy suppliers. I wanted one supplier for our gas and electricity, which limited my choice. I like Ecotricity but they do not currently offer a gas supply. They informed me that they plan to do so in the near future (18 months or so, I think they said). I opted for Powergen's Green Tariff in the short term. I was not particularly impressed by it, but it was at least a small step in the right direction. I intend to review this decision in the near future.

It was about this time that my accountant was getting on to me to isolate the Nursery's use of energy from our domestic use. Currently we just get the one bill for both and we have to estimate how much of the bill should be apportioned to the Nursery and how much to the house. Having separate meters fitted was ridiculously expensive, so I decided to check the gas and electricity meters daily and log the daily consumption by the Nursery and the family over a period of time and to calculate how much each was using from the figures.

It was during this energy monitoring period that I replaced the light bulbs in the Nursery with energy efficient ones. Some strip lights were already in place, but elsewhere standard incandescent 60W and 100W bulbs were in use. At the same time we were vigilant (for the first time!) in ensuring that all electrical appliances in the Nursery were turned off at night and were not left on 'stand by'.



After a slightly flawed start to the daily monitoring, I kept a record for a 9-week period. **At the end of that period the exercise revealed a reduction in our electricity consumption of 18.91%.** Just by making the simple changes I've described! And I'm convinced that there's plenty more savings where these came from.

So what's next for EHNS? We're committed to

- Continue with, and further develop, our own recycling, re-using and reducing.
- Acquire an allotment to be maintained partly by the older children.
- To develop a composting procedure.
- To begin to integrate our 'green' principles in some of the children's activities, for example, through the allotment and composting, perhaps with the introduction of a wormery, and possibly in our recycling, re-using and reducing activities. Though of course, any decision here will be taken with the children's best interests in mind. (This will be largely down to Linden and her staff.)
- To inform the parents of what we are doing and in this way encourage them to support our activities.

It's early days for us really, but what our exercise proves is that by getting on and making small changes, we can all save money and energy very quickly indeed.

Richard Green

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