



# Development of Projects Encouraging and Promoting Sustainability at International School Hilversum

## Introduction

The concern to make this report was raised ever since the leaders of the Sustainability Committee, Yasmine, Kriti and Saanvi went to the Leadership and Sustainability Conference in Luxembourg with our supervisors, Ms van Lemmen, Ms Vint and Ms Agterdenbos. After thorough discussion with members of other schools in Europe, business managers, journalists and tech developers, the necessity to engage in sustainable acts became more apparent than ever. We were determined to take some of these actions back to our school. However, it came to light that our school has made many advancements and is very progressive regarding sustainability in the school. According to our Principle Ms. Neethling: "Sustainability has grown so much in the last 15 years that I have been at this school. It wasn't such a big topic before."

## Sustainability in the school

### Sustainability Committee

The driving force between many sustainable developments, small or large, is the Sustainability Committee. The Sustainability Committee has been a significant group for 6 years. Before the establishment of the current Sustainability Committee, students on multiple occasions tried creating 'green clubs', which usually ended in nothing. However, as the school collectively focused more on student-driven projects, the Sustainability Committee took shape. With the efforts of countless students and motivated teachers such as Ms. van Lemmen and Ms. Vint, it has evolved into a group of more than 100 students meeting regularly and taking action.

The full Sustainability Committee meets in the school's auditorium on Thursday mornings every other week. The Committee is split into several groups. In these groups, usually led by older students, students from every grade and class work together on specific projects based on a concept or idea which they find interesting. Groups include the Bee Group, Hedgehog Group, Sustainable Fashion Group, Social Media Group, Sustainability Day Group, Food Group and Social Justice Group. Besides raising awareness, each group has seen their own success throughout the years, here are some examples of what the groups do:

- **Hedgehog Group** in 2024 organized a bakesale in which 168 euros was raised for the hedgehog refuge in Huizen. Gave a presentation during lunch time for a full aula informing students and teachers how they could take care of hedgehogs.
- **Bee Group** on multiple occasions organized workshops where students made their own bee hotels. They have also visited local primary schools to promote the importance of bees and plant bee friendly plants.
- **Fashion Group** in 2023 upcycled clothes which were proudly worn and shown off by teachers and students in front of a full gym during a fashion show on sustainability day. This aimed to increase awareness on the possibility of recycling/ mending clothes.
- **Food group** have organized the famous 'unwrapped lunch week' over the last couple of years in which students are encouraged to bring their packed lunch unwrapped in a lunchbox. The food group also wrote a cookbook filled with delicious 'sustainable' recipes and alternatives.
- **Social Justice Group** arranged for a guest speaker from the Red Cross to come into school to talk about their work with refugees.
- **Sustainability Day Group** focuses the whole year on organizing the sustainability day. Once a year, a full school day is dedicated to sustainability, where all students partake in activities and presentations centered around a theme. Each year, a guest speaker comes in, students learn and then create their own creative piece of work (song, video, poem, etc.) based on the given topic.
- **Social Media Group** documents all the projects mentioned above and many more and posts these on the sustainability committee account on Instagram, keeping our students informed of the progress were making.
- **Education Group** goes out to local primary schools to teach about sustainability. They have also done a teacher workshop on how to be sustainable in school.

The Sustainability Committee is proud of what students have achieved and will continue to raise awareness and take action with real-life impacts.

## Buildings

At ISH we try our best to keep our buildings running in a sustainable way. When we were rebuilding parts of the school, water irrigation boxes were installed outside. These boxes collect the rainwater that is absorbed into the ground and uses the water to water our tree. This means that the water does not go into the sewage system but is recycled in an environmentally friendly way.







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## Teacher's efforts

With many teachers become increasingly aware of the importance of sustainability, many teachers have taken efforts towards a more sustainable lifestyle, inside and outside school. As mentioned previously, Ms. van Lemmen and Ms. Vint are key figures in keeping the Sustainability Committee effective. Despite being student-run as much as possible, these teachers have supported the committee and seen it grow over the years, helping in organizing meetings, days, and other special events.

Ms. Agterdenbos has been able to finance large projects such as the solar panels. She has been great in creating and executing well thought out plans leading to very large sustainable changes in the school. A lot of what she does is not seen as it is a structural part of the school buildings.

Ms. Neethling, in her time as a design teacher, developed a unit on upcycling materials. In the final design project of grade 10, students are tasked with designing and ultimately constructing a lamp made of at least 50% found materials (which would have otherwise been discarded as trash). This unit presents to students and parents how upcycling materials can result in beautiful creations, with an undoubtedly powerful effect on environment. When we were rebuilding parts of the school, water irrigation boxes were installed outside. These boxes collect the rainwater that is absorbed into the ground and uses the water to water our tree. This means that the water does not go into the sewage system but is recycled in an environmentally friendly way.

Making sure we don't waste energy is important to us. In Our C building (where the primary students are and some of the DP classrooms) all of the lights are LEDs, and we collect energy through the 40 solar panels installed on the roof. The C building is also completely gas free, instead of using gas we have an electric system that heats and cools the classrooms. There are more difficulties with our main building, as it is a protected building meaning we cannot change certain things. However, this has not stopped us from making switches to become a more sustainable school. On the roof of our main building, we have 299 solar panels, and all the bathrooms use motion detectors for the lights. In our bathrooms our taps are set to a shorter timing, so that water is not wasted. We also changed the towels from cloth to paper, the paper is made of recyclable materials. Two years ago, we upgraded the heating system that was over 30 years old. Since then, our gas consumption in the main building has been cut in half!

Our canteen at ISH is also finding eco-friendly alternatives for food packaging and food ingredients to make sure they stay sustainable. This year they started to replace some of our meat options with vegetarian and vegan options and reduced the amount of red meat used in their sandwiches. The packaging used is made from biodegradable materials, like bamboo, paper, and cardboard. While lots has been done already, they are still working on the things they can do to help make the canteen a sustainable place.

## Don't waste energy

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## Waste

The students are given responsibility to put their own trash in the corresponding bin at school. Though this protocol is followed by most students, sometimes garbage is left in the aula or outside after lunch and the concierge help clean this up. The waste is divided up into 3 streams of waste: other, paper and PMD (plastic packaging, metal packaging, drinks cartons). These streams are put into large containers by the school and to make sure that all the waste is in the right container, a company comes to sort through what has not been separated correctly. It is very important that all trash is separated correctly because every 2 weeks all the trash gets collected and brought to be recycled, along with the trash of 9 other schools. If one of these schools' trash was not separated properly, then the waste from all the other schools gets burned as well. "We've got the facilities to recycle but if that's not done correctly, we are being less sustainable." Says one of the concierge. If we want to make an impact the paper and plastics must be clean because if one item is not clean everything gets burned. The chemical waste from the science labs is collected through the year and disposed of separately at the end of the school year as to not harm the environment.

## The concierge

The concierge also find a lot of clothes and lunchboxes around the school and these are also taken care of in a sustainable way. First the clothes are put in the lost and found box in the aula and after a couple of weeks these are taken away to storage. People can go to the storage and look through the things if something is missing, and after three months all these clothes are taken to a charity that can use them. The lunchboxes and water bottles are also collected and displayed for a period of time for people to collect them, but then sadly have to be recycled if they are not collected.

## Steps Towards Sustainability & Success

The Sustainability Committee has so many inspiring projects going! For instance, the Bee group project has been going really well, and we're even coming into contact with local surrounding primary schools. The Education group has been making significant progress too. The Education group has presented to the primary and secondary school of the ISH, as well other bilingual schools located in Hilversum. Additionally, as a school we have made considerable changes regarding sustainability. We have implemented the restriction of paper cups and single use plastics in the whole school. We as a school have set these rules even before the government banned single use plastics and non-reusable cups. The canteen is also a large daily aspect of the school life here at ISH. Which is why we have also tried to discuss with them the idea of offering less meat options and more vegetarian and vegan ones. The canteen has already worked really hard on making their packaging more sustainable, and with success! Canteen packaging is now mostly made from renewable resources and plastic alternatives which can be recycled or reused several times. In our school garden, we try to only plant bee friendly plants and plants that don't need large amounts of water, so that no water goes to waste. We can sustainably water all our plants and trees by the underground rain tanks the school has installed. As well as generating renewable energy through the installation of solar panels on the roof of our school building. In the C-building, the school has even installed new climate control windows, which save energy while also enhancing the warmth during cold winter months as well as the cool air during the heat of the summer. About 200 windows in the main building will also be replaced with the same climate control windows this summer (2024).

It can also be noted that teaching and learning about sustainability is so extremely important that it is even a mandatory part of the DP curriculum when discussing the theme's sustainable development and sustainability.

## In what does Ms van Lemmen take specific interest?

Ms van Lemmen is one of the two teacher supervisors of the Sustainability Committee and an extremely important asset to the committee! She guides the leaders of the Sustainability Committee and always helps out wherever is necessary. She personally takes a liking to the Bee group because of its concept and great success, as well as the Education group which has shown such growth and great success too! She would want to see the Hedgehog group grow bigger and grow more successful because of the potential it has, saying we could do much much more with this project idea.

## Our canteen

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## Goals and dreams

In conclusion, the Sustainability Committee together with the school have already achieved so much and are taking the more and more steps in the right direction to creating a more sustainable school and world! However, we still have so much more to achieve and more actions to take. In the coming years of the Sustainability Committee our goal is to start focusing more on coming into contact with local organizations, local institutions, and local schools, looking for surrounding people that we can work together with in this journey towards sustainability.

We currently have 8 people in our leadership team - six of which are from grade 10 and two from grade 9. As the Sustainability Committee, our dream is for sustainability to be fully integrated part of the within the school. We wish to see dedicated students take a stand in the coming years and lead projects, groups and the committee to move forward and make our school a better place. We want all young voices to be heard.

So, we can proudly and confidently claim that: "This is the way we are, and the way we do things!" Our biggest aim is to make the school not have a need for 'a Sustainability Committee', because we would already be as sustainable as we possibly can be.

Written by Peer Geraeds, Kyra Cambridge, Isla Allen and Guusje de Bruijn (Sustainability Committee Leaders)

## Working with WWF

The sustainability committee has been working very closely with the organization WWF. Last year as well as this year they have been present at the sustainability day raising awareness, hosting activities, and selling merch and plushies to raise money for their organization. A few years ago, the WWF have also helped us organize a conference with the International School of the Hague, even though it was relatively small. And of course, we all remember the sponsor walk last year in which the whole school participated to raise money for WWF! It was a great initiative to raise awareness while also raising money for the WWF. The students at our school collectively raised over 9,200 Euros, and all the funds raised were donated to the protection of the 40 most endangered animals as identified by the WWF.

