

Sustainable Development

There are many examples of projects that focus on improving the environment in which we live. Few would disagree with any project that aimed at improving the quality of the air that we breathe. Last week I mentioned the terrible smog during my recent visit to Xi'an. Although the air in Hong Kong is not as polluted as in Xi'an we must aim to reduce pollution levels nonetheless.

So what can we do to play our part? I ought to look at my own habits particularly when it comes to driving to work. There really is no excuse for driving the 2 kilometres to school from my apartment, a journey where I am the only person in the car. It would be just as easy to catch the bus. My excuse, of course, is that the air-conditioned car guarantees that I stay cool in summer and warm in winter. It also means that I can escape the poor air outside the car and not have to experience the high humidity over the wet season. These are weak excuses I must admit.

It is important for each of us to look at the ways in which our habits impact on the environment and take action to make improvements. And what better place is there to change our habits than here at school.

If we are really truthful, we do not do a very good job at SPC in environmental protection. The three environment watchwords are Reduce, Recycle and Reuse. These watchwords ought to be as well known to us as those written above the doors to the College Hall.

There are so many ways we could reduce our environmental imprint. We are told continuously that we live in a digital age yet the amount of paper used in the College is still great. Emails and notices are printed with little regard to the amount of paper that is consumed. Even a modest reduction would reap considerable savings.

The same is true of the electrical usage in our school. Lights and air-conditioners are left turned on in classrooms that are empty for long periods of the day. Indeed, I'm sure that you can think of many more examples of wastage.

But what of recycling in our College? Do we do a better job at recycling than reduction? There are certain times during the year when we turn our attention to recycling but it is not part of our daily routine. All rubbish is placed in the ordinary bins provided. This includes waste paper, polystyrene lunch boxes, wooden chopsticks, plastic forks, cardboard

boxes, aluminium cans, glass bottles and so forth. We make no effort to separate the rubbish according to its properties and even if we wanted to do so the College does not provide proper recycling bins. The large plastic rubbish bags are all taken to the area next to the car park below the Classroom wing. There an old lady and old man spend much time each day opening those bags and removing the aluminium cans, cardboard boxes and glass products, preparing the rubbish for delivery to the closest refuse station. It would be wonderful if we could assist the elderly couple in their efforts to earn a modest income.

On occasions, however, we provide suitable and safe containers for the collection of used batteries which are then disposed of in the proper way.

How successful are we at reusing? There are some teachers who take the reusing of used photocopier and printer paper very seriously. Used paper is reversed and run through the photocopier or printer a second time. Some teachers will reuse paper for handwritten messages or for preparing class notes. I'm sure you would agree that these teachers are conscious of the need to not only reduce the amount of paper consumed but also to reuse paper whenever possible. These are actions we could all adopt.

There are other projects that we should consider. The roofs of our buildings are flat, opening the possibility of roof gardens or equipment to create alternative energy sources. I have always envisioned that the final stage of the Hall renovation would be a roof garden. We shall soon carry out a feasibility study to see if and how the roof of this building might be utilised. The roof of the new South Wing is ideal for the installation of solar panels or the building of green houses in which we can grow plants and vegetables. I'm sure that many of you would be interested in projects of this kind.

Last month the College hosted a delegation from China UNESCO that was in Hong Kong to discuss the topic *Education for Sustainable Development*. I thought it timely to give our support to their work and to sign up SPC as a project school. We have much to do but over the next twelve months I would hope that many, if not all, of the ideas I have raised with you this morning will come to fruition.

J.R. Kennard