

# Sustainable Schools

A brief introduction



## **The future holds many challenges for young people.**

Climate change, obesity and global poverty are clear examples. Our current model of development is placing an increasing burden on the planet. In order to secure the future of children all over the world, we need to make a decisive move towards sustainable development.

## **Schools have a special role to play in preparing young people to build a brighter future.**

As places of learning, they can help pupils understand our impact on the planet and encourage them to weigh up the evidence themselves. As models of good practice, they can offer young people the chance to contribute to sustainable living, and demonstrate good practices to others.

## **The Government would like every school to be a sustainable school by 2020.**

Empowering young people to take responsibility for their own future is not only desirable: it is a crucial feature of their education.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools)



## What is a sustainable school?

A sustainable school prepares young people for a lifetime of sustainable living, through its teaching, fabric and its day-to-day practices. It is guided by a commitment to care:

- Care for oneself (our health and well-being);
- Care for each other (across cultures, distances and generations); and
- Care for the environment (both locally and globally).

It is hard to imagine pupils showing respect for other people, cultures or the natural world if they don't possess an underlying sense of care.

Sustainable schools are great places to learn, where pupils develop self-esteem and reach high standards of achievement. You might notice that:

- little is wasted and anything surplus is recycled, composted or donated;
- food is seasonal and locally sourced;
- rainwater is collected for the school grounds and flushing toilets; and
- there is a zero-tolerance approach to litter, graffiti and bullying.

## The National Framework for Sustainable Schools

Sustainable development is a wide ranging concept with implications for the whole education and children's services sector. To help schools identify what success might look like from here to 2020, a national framework has been established to ensure schools understand where government would like to see attention focused.

It comprises three interlocking parts:

- **A commitment to care**

Schools are already caring places, but a sustainable school extends this commitment into new areas. It cares about the energy and water it consumes, the waste it produces, the food it serves, the traffic it attracts, and the difficulties faced by people living in its community and in other parts of the world.

- **An integrated approach**

A sustainable school takes an integrated approach to its improvement. It explores sustainable development through its teaching provision and learning (**curriculum**); in its values and ways of working (**campus**); and in its engagement of local people and partners (**community**).

- **A selection of 'doorways' or sustainability themes**

The doorways (see table) are entry points, or places where schools can establish or develop their sustainability practices. Each of the doorways draws its inspiration from a range of national priorities around sustainable development.

## Support for schools

A dedicated area of TeacherNet supports schools' work on sustainable development. A range of informative resources are available from this site, designed for governors, bursars, pupils, teachers and school leaders, as well as those supporting schools such as local authorities and NGOs. The resources include a planning tool to help schools work out for themselves how to apply sustainable development, and a self-evaluation tool (called 's3') to help them assess their progress towards the national expectations. There is also a guide to how well-known award schemes such as Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools can be used to meet the expectations.

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## Doorways

## By 2020 we recommend that all schools...

 <p>Food and drink</p>	<p>Are model suppliers of healthy, local and sustainable food and drink, showing strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare in their food and drink provision, and maximising their use of local suppliers.</p>
 <p>Energy and water</p>	<p>Are models of energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation, showcasing opportunities such as wind, solar and biomass energy, insulation, rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling to everyone who uses the school.</p>
 <p>Travel and traffic</p>	<p>Are models of sustainable travel, where vehicles are used only when absolutely necessary and where there are exemplary facilities for healthier, less polluting or less dangerous modes of transport.</p>
 <p>Purchasing and waste</p>	<p>Are models of waste minimisation and sustainable procurement, using goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards from local sources where practicable, and increasing value for money by reducing, reusing, repairing and recycling as much as possible.</p>
 <p>Buildings and grounds</p>	<p>Manage and, where possible, design their buildings in ways that visibly demonstrate sustainable development to everyone who uses the school. Through their grounds, we would like schools to bring pupils closer to the natural world, capture their imaginations in outdoor play, and help them learn about sustainable living.</p>
 <p>Inclusion and participation</p>	<p>Are models of social inclusion, enabling all pupils to participate fully in school life while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures and creative expression.</p>
 <p>Local well-being</p>	<p>Are models of corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.</p>
 <p>Global dimension</p>	<p>Are models of global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.</p>

## What concerns me most about the world? . . .

"A lot of people are just throwing things on the ground without noticing, also I think that people should do less driving and more walking."

*Pupil response to Sustainable Schools consultation.*



## Further resources

Sustainable schools on TeacherNet:  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools)

DCSF sustainable development action plan:  
[www.dcsf.gov.uk/aboutus/sd](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/aboutus/sd)

NCSL's sustainability area:  
[www.ncsl.org.uk/sustainableschools](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/sustainableschools)

Ofsted's latest survey of sustainable schools:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Government-and-community/Initiatives/Schools-and-sustainability](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Government-and-community/Initiatives/Schools-and-sustainability)

Growing Schools:  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools)

Learning Outside the Classroom:  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom)

## Umbrella groups

SEEd – supporting education for a more sustainable world:  
[www.se-ed.org.uk](http://www.se-ed.org.uk)

DEA – promoting education for a just and sustainable world:  
[www.dea.org.uk](http://www.dea.org.uk)

## Government sustainability sites

Web portal:  
[www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government](http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government)

Independent advisor and watchdog:  
[www.sd-commission.org.uk](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk)

## If I was Prime Minister I would. . .

"Make sure that all communities have the best possible recycling facilities that they can. Make sure there is more renewable energy. Make sure that everyone in the world has a good supply of water."

*Pupil response to Sustainable Schools consultation.*

A commitment from  
**The Children's Plan**



If you have any questions email:  
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