



Department  
for Education

Policy paper

# **Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems**

Updated 20 December 2023

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**Applies to England**

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# Scope and purpose

This strategy applies to:

- the Department for Education (DfE), its agencies and public bodies
- the education and children's services systems in England – including:
  - early years
  - schools (and independent schools where applicable)
  - further education
  - higher education
  - children's social care

DfE has an important role to play in all aspects of sustainability. But the area in which we have the most work to do is reducing our environmental footprint, particularly in the drive to achieve net zero.

While the policies set out here are focussed on the environmental aspect of sustainability, this is done with consideration for how those policies will interact with the social and economic aspects of sustainability.

The UK government and the devolved governments (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) are committed to climate action, and we will work together in our international action. The targets and strategic aims set out relate to England.

It brings together short, medium and longer-term actions that will enable us to make progress towards achieving our 4 strategic aims and overarching vision. It is a strategy to 2030.

Action will be reviewed and updated annually to respond to new opportunities, scientific updates, evidence and data.

This strategy has been informed by:

- young people
- sustainability and climate change experts
- sector representatives

## Foreword

**Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP**

Since spring of 2020, the British education system faced its most challenging period for generations: sustaining learning through a pandemic. The whole sector met this challenge with great resilience. Now, the UK must show the rest of the world how our education system can transition out of the pandemic and, in doing so, face the even greater environmental challenge ahead of us, by Building Back Greener.

We have promised to level up the country, to boost economic growth, encourage innovation, create good jobs and enhance educational attainment so all may share equally in our nation's success. To achieve this in a world influenced by the effects of climate change, we must level up within a context of sustainability, giving all children, young people and adults the knowledge and skills to thrive in the green economy and to help restore nature.

The challenge of climate change is formidable. For children and young people to meet it with determination, and not with despair, we must offer them not just truth, but also hope. Learners need to know the truth about climate change – through knowledge-rich education. They must also be given the hope that they can be agents of change, through hands-on activity and, as they progress, through guidance and programmes allowing them to pursue a green career pathway in their chosen field.

I would like to thank the large number of people that have worked with us in developing this strategy. The feedback from young people, educators, academics, leaders, governing bodies and experts has been invaluable in shaping this first step on our journey. By continuing to work together in the delivery of the strategy we will seek further opportunities to build on the action set out and update on shared progress annually.

I am confident that together we will support net zero through skills and decarbonisation; play a significant part in nature's recovery; build an education system resilient to climate change; and, provide the truth and hope that young people need to flourish in our changing world.

## Context

The UK requires the education sector to play its role in positively responding to climate change and inspiring action on an international stage. This strategy sets out ambitious activity to respond to recommendations for education from the:

- Committee for Climate Change
- Dasgupta Review
- Green Jobs Taskforce report

It supports the delivery of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and Net Zero Strategy. It includes how we will meet legislative requirements and work in the context of:

- the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030' which set out the key role of education in the successful achievement of the goals
- the Paris Agreement and Glasgow Climate Pact, which are important steps towards keeping the goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius alive
- [Action for Climate Empowerment \(ACE\) \(https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/the-big-picture/what-is-action-for-climate-empowerment#:~:text=Action%20for%20Climate%20Empowerment%20%28ACE%29%20is%20a%20term,%281992%29%20and%20Article%2012%20of%20the%20Paris%20Agreement\)](https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/the-big-picture/what-is-action-for-climate-empowerment#:~:text=Action%20for%20Climate%20Empowerment%20%28ACE%29%20is%20a%20term,%281992%29%20and%20Article%2012%20of%20the%20Paris%20Agreement) which includes taking action to empower society to engage in education and training
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) ensures the needs and views of children are taken into account in the development of climate change policies
- the UK Climate Change Act (2008) and National Adaptation Programme (NAP), which include action for education in adapting to climate change and require progress reporting against priority risks
- UK government legislation to meet net zero by 2050 – the UK is the first country to set legally binding carbon budgets, placing a restriction on the total amount of greenhouse gases the UK can emit over a 5-year period. In the latest, Carbon Budget 6, the UK legislated to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels
- the Environment Act (2021) reflects the need to tackle climate change through nature-based solutions – following the close of the targets consultation in May 2022, government will set statutory targets for air quality, biodiversity, water, resource efficiency and waste reduction, and a new target to reverse the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030, while the act also strengthens the biodiversity duty on public authorities, including the Department for Education
- the cross-government 25 Year Environment Plan, which commits to encouraging children to be close to nature both in and out of school

## The challenge and the opportunity

Children and young people are worried about climate change and want to know more about:

- the impact it is having now

- how it will impact their future lives

DfE and the education sector have a joint responsibility for preparing children and young people for the challenges and opportunities they will face – with the appropriate knowledge, skills and pastoral care.

## Education

Through education we have the privilege to be able to engage directly with children and young people who:

- are passionate about the natural world
- want to do their best to protect it
- can influence their wider communities

Through their learned and lived experiences from early years to further and higher education, we will provide opportunities to develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the importance of nature, sustainability and the causes and impact of climate change and to translate this knowledge into positive action and solutions.

In the UK, there are more than 16 million children, young people and adults in education. The enthusiasm of youth can inspire the whole of society to work together at the start of this crucial decade for the planet.

## Green skills and jobs

Green jobs will not be niche. We anticipate that sustainability and climate change will touch every career.

The UK government's Net Zero Strategy will support the transition to net zero and 190,000 jobs by the middle of the 2020s and up to 440,000 jobs in 2030. The increased investment and legislation for nature's recovery driven by the Environment Act will also create many green jobs in the nature sector. Our programmes will provide the opportunity for people of all ages to train, retrain or upskill to go into green careers.

## Learning from and connecting with nature

## The [Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>) states that 'connection with nature declines in childhood to an overall low in the mid-teens. Creating an environment from an early age where we are able to connect to nature is essential for self-enforcement in protecting and valuing nature'.

We will increase opportunities for all children and young people to:

- spend time in nature and learn more about it
- become actively involved in the improvement of their local environment

We know that regular contact with green spaces can have a beneficial impact on children's physical and mental health. However, access to green space is not equal and we must do more to ensure that all children have opportunities to benefit from access to green space and build connections with nature.

## Buildings

Climate adaptation and decarbonisation activity in nurseries, schools, colleges, universities and care buildings can provide powerful learning opportunities. Young people can:

- participate in the implementation of climate adaptation measures
- learn in buildings designed for net zero
- find out more about the impact of energy and water use

Seeing sustainability brought to life in the buildings around them will allow children and young people to gain experiences which will enhance and contextualise their learning.

### [Leading by example: cutting energy bills and carbon emissions in the public and higher education sectors](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/leading-by-example-cutting-energy-bills-and-carbon-emissions-in-the-public-and-higher-education-sectors)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/leading-by-example-cutting-energy-bills-and-carbon-emissions-in-the-public-and-higher-education-sectors>) shows that schools and universities represent 36% of total UK public sector building emissions.

Costs are also significant and rising. [Data sources and interpretation - schools financial benchmarking](https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources) (<https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources>) shows that in 2019 schools alone were spending around £630m per annum on energy and we expect

today's figure to be far greater. To reduce energy usage and achieve legal targets for carbon emissions we need to:

- get a better understanding of the scale of the problem across the sectors through standardised reporting
- drive action based on evidence

Adapting existing buildings and designing new ones to respond to climate change and reduce emissions will undoubtedly be a significant challenge.

By developing and delivering evidence-based solutions for decarbonisation and climate resilience we will:

- reduce energy demand
- adapt to climate risks
- drive innovation in construction
- act as a catalyst for green jobs
- deliver savings

We will also drive a wide range of additional benefits that will contribute to a vibrant and resilient education community, including:

- health
- biodiversity
- the environment
- learning and play opportunities

## International

Through learning from others and sharing our own expertise internationally, we will be more effective and innovative. Sustainability and climate change are global problems which require collective efforts and evidence-based solutions.

## Vision and aims

**Vision:** the United Kingdom is the world-leading education sector in

## sustainability and climate change by 2030.

In England, we will achieve this through the following strategic aims:

1. Excellence in education and skills for a changing world: preparing all young people for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.
2. Net zero: reducing direct and indirect emissions from education and care buildings, driving innovation to meet legislative targets and providing opportunities for children and young people to engage practically in the transition to net zero.
3. Resilience to climate change: adapting our education and care buildings and system to prepare for the effects of climate change.
4. A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings.

## Guiding principles

### Partnership and collaboration

Success depends on DfE and stakeholders from across the sectors working together.

We know there are many organisations working to improve sustainability and mitigate against climate change, so we will seek opportunities to:

- work with others who share our objectives
- extend and amplify existing good practice and initiatives

We will also facilitate partnership across the sectors to maximise the use of resources, expertise and ideas to achieve more effective outcomes.

### Evidence and insight

Evidence will be at the heart of our activity. By 2023 we will develop and publish a framework to evaluate the impacts of the actions set out within the strategy.

We will also work with the sectors to develop reporting frameworks and processes to ensure strategic decisions can be taken at every level. While mandatory reporting is not currently set out within the strategy, this decision will be kept under regular review. The decision to mandate is subject to uptake and legislative reporting requirements in line with government's Net Zero Strategy.

We will work together to set science-based targets from 2025, ensuring we play our part in reducing public-sector emissions against a 2017 baseline by:

- 50% by the end of Carbon Budget 5 (2032)
- 75% by the end of Carbon Budget 6 (2037)

There are many opportunities to improve sustainability and impact climate change. Ensuring we learn before we leap, we will work across the sector to research, test and pilot with:

- young people
- experts
- analysts
- delivery partners

As our evidence base for what works grows, we will prioritise funding where it will have greatest impact.

### **Leadership and support**

Sector representatives have called on DfE to provide greater leadership in sustainability. We will work across government and intervene where we add value (for example through sector-wide data gathering, reporting, funding and guidance). Wherever possible we will facilitate autonomy and foster innovation.

Sector leadership and institution-level accountability for sustainability will be key for success. We will continually seek opportunities to share best practice and provide support for those leading at a local level.

### **A whole system approach**

Together we will make the greatest impact. We will adopt a systems-based approach and ensure our initiatives are delivered via action areas to deliver outcomes for the education system, rather than focussing on specific age or sectors.

By taking a holistic view of education (from formal and extracurricular learning opportunities, the physical buildings and surroundings, to the way in which they operate) we will positively improve the environment. At the same time we will influence and inspire, not only those that use the settings, but the communities around them.

## **Initiatives to drive the strategy**

We have carried out work with sector representatives and experts to develop initiatives that bring together activity to drive the strategic aims:

- increasing opportunities for climate education and access to nature
- driving opportunities to increase biodiversity and climate resilience
- co-ordinating and leading a whole-setting approach to climate change and sustainability

## National Education Nature Park

By considering the whole physical education estate as a virtual National Education Nature Park, we have a unique opportunity to:

- deliver improvements in biodiversity
- contribute to the implementation of the nature recovery network
- play our part in halting nature's decline
- drive greater climate resilience

The National Education Nature Park will:

- engage children and young people with the natural world
- directly involve them in measuring and improving biodiversity in their nursery, school, college or university
- help reinforce their connection with nature

This will help connect and amplify the excellent work already happening in this area through many national and local stakeholders and community groups.

As their work starts to have an impact, the young participants will upload their progress on the park's digital mapping services. They will be able to:

- see how the park is 'growing', while increasing their knowledge of species
- develop important skills, such as biodiversity mapping, data collection and analysis

The nature park's online hub will enable the sharing of best practice across the education estate. With time, it will go beyond biodiversity to show impact and climate resilience, including flood, overheating and air quality status of the estate.

A number of universities will support the launch of the National Education Nature Park by:

- acting as champions of nature and biodiversity for local education settings and wider communities
- providing opportunities to share their expertise and natural environment
- supporting other education settings in developing and delivering a better environment for future generations

## Climate Leaders Award

A Climate Leaders Award will complement classroom learning and allow us to celebrate and recognise education providers, children and young people for:

- developing their connection with nature
- making a real contribution to establishing a sustainable future for us all

The award will provide a structured route through existing awards in this area, such as the John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Junior Forester Award and others.

Participation will enable children and young people to acquire credits towards the prestigious Climate Leaders Award. This will be recognised and valued as supporting progression to employment and further study.

In the [Children's People and Nature Survey for England: Summer holidays 2021](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-childrens-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-summer-holidays-2021-official-statistics/the-childrens-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-summer-holidays-2021-official-statistics) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-childrens-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-summer-holidays-2021-official-statistics/the-childrens-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-summer-holidays-2021-official-statistics>), more than 8 in 10 children and young people (85%) agreed that being in nature made them very happy. However, the same study showed that:

- children spend less time outdoors as they get older
- feelings of connection to nature decline with age

We want all young people to feel connected to their local environment and see improvements in biodiversity. In the design and implementation of the park and award we will take steps to drive participation among more disadvantaged children and young people. We will also ensure all children and young people, whether they live in an urban area or rural one, have opportunities to feel empowered through practical positive action.

The National Education Nature Park and Climate Leaders Award:

- are being designed and developed with young people, sector representatives and stakeholder organisations
- will build on the learning and experience of the [Year of Green Action](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gove-kicks-off-year-of-green-action) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gove-kicks-off-year-of-green-action>)

They will feed in ideas for making the initiatives as inclusive, impactful, and engaging as possible and will also consider the best names for the programmes. The park and award will be launched in autumn 2022.

## Sustainability leadership

Throughout the development of this strategy, we have received feedback from the sector that they have seen the greatest impact and success in developing and delivering a whole-setting approach to sustainability and climate change when there is co-ordination and leadership of activity at a local level – with the support of senior leadership teams and governors.

Through our engagement to date, we have been consistently told that to do this best, they need more support to:

- share best practice
- access funding
- develop networks

We recognise the impact of the pandemic and the priority need for education catch up. We know that for every setting, the ability, or the way in which they are able to engage with sustainability and climate change may differ. While our end goal is for all settings to have a sustainability lead owning a climate action plan (to include curricular and extra-curricular activity, procurement, adaptation and decarbonisation plans), we are keen to:

- develop a facilitative approach to sustainability leadership
- test where support makes the most impact

The [National Climate Education Action Plan](https://www.reading.ac.uk/planet/climate-education-summit/climate-education-plan) (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/planet/climate-education-summit/climate-education-plan>)

has already brought together 16 organisations and universities with STEM Learning, aiming to encourage their staff to become Climate Ambassadors to support schools and further education institutions. We will work with them to test an approach that includes support in:

- climate education
- accessing public and private funding

- engaging in the National Education Nature Park and Climate Leaders Award
- reporting emissions
- developing and delivering Climate Action Plans for individual settings

As part of this approach, we will include the provision of carbon literacy training for all sustainability leads in every nursery, school and college by 2025. We will encourage a joined-up approach to leadership which brings together children, young people and governors.

## Action area 1: Climate education

We know that young people are eager to:

- create a greener, sustainable world
- tackle both the causes and impact of climate change

We will empower all young people to be global citizens, through a:

- better understanding of climate change
- greater connection to nature

Practical opportunities to participate in activities to increase climate resilience, reduce carbon impact and enhance biodiversity will enable children and young people to translate knowledge into positive action to improve their local communities, their country and the planet.

### 1. Learning about the natural environment

Building on a foundation of fundamental numeracy, literacy and broad academic knowledge, all children learn about:

- nature
- the causes and impacts of climate change
- the importance of sustainability

From birth to 5 years old, the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework ensures that all children develop an understanding of the world and the natural environment.

As they progress through primary and secondary school, children and young people continue to build on this knowledge through science, geography and citizenship programmes within the national curriculum. Existing GCSEs such as design and technology, food preparation and nutrition, and economics contain opportunities for students to be taught about the environmental and sustainability context of the processes and principles underlying these subjects.

By 2025 we will aim to introduce a natural history GCSE, giving young people a further opportunity to engage with and develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the natural world. In studying this GCSE, young people will explore organisms and environments in more depth, gain knowledge and practical experience of fieldwork and develop a greater understanding of conservation.

An environmental science A level is already available for those that have a keen interest in the sustainability of our planet and wish to build on their scientific knowledge of the interconnection of human activities with natural systems.

From 2022, to assess the impact of our action, we will introduce an annual climate literacy survey to benchmark progress in improving the climate knowledge of school leavers.

For those that continue their studies in further and higher education, there are many excellent opportunities to gain a more in-depth knowledge into sustainability and climate change. Many further and higher education providers are already taking steps to embed the relevant teaching of sustainability and climate change across the full range of their courses.

We will continue to identify appropriate opportunities to align climate education with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD for 2030) framework.

## **2. Support for teaching**

World class teaching will ensure all children and young people get the best possible climate education. The schools white paper sets out how we will provide an excellent teacher for every child, by giving every teacher and school leader access to world class training and development opportunities, including the first-ever national professional qualification (NPQ) for early years professionals.

Through our engagement with the teachers and representative bodies, we have heard that more support in teaching about climate change and in navigating the many different resources available is also needed. Therefore,

recognising the importance of building confidence as well as capability, we will provide additional support to teachers of all levels.

From 2022 we will:

- include climate change and sustainability in science teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure all young people receive high-quality teaching on the scientific facts about climate change and environmental degradation
- include content on sustainability when DfE is tendering for new CPD, (where it is relevant to the subject area)
- deliver pilots through the National Education Nature Park, which will test an approach for sharing university climate expertise and learning opportunities with colleges, schools and nurseries
- share best practice, demonstrating how sustainability and climate change has been incorporated into teaching (and how it has enriched the broader curriculum, where it is relevant) in early years settings, schools, colleges and universities, so teachers and leaders can consider how best to integrate within their own settings
- consider where further steps could be taken to support the teaching of sustainability in relevant subjects, for example, the circular economy in design and technology, sustainable chemistry in the sciences, and through the learning initiatives being taken forward in the Government Food Strategy
- continue to work with higher education to identify opportunities to work together to further enhance best practice in teacher training and the teaching of sustainability within university courses
- promote and share relevant teaching resources from other government departments, including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Environment Agency

By 2023 we will:

- develop a Primary Science Model Curriculum, to include an emphasis on nature to ensure all children understand the world around them
- develop an occupational standard for further education teaching which explicitly requires all new teachers to integrate sustainability into their teaching, through modelling sustainable practices and promoting sustainable development principles in relation to their subject specialism
- support the [National Climate Education Action Plan](https://www.reading.ac.uk/planet/climate-education-summit/climate-education-plan) (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/planet/climate-education-summit/climate-education-plan>) in setting up an independent expert body (including members such as the Royal Meteorological Society, STEM Learning, Association of

Science Teaching) for the validation and creation of climate education resources that support the delivery of the national curriculum

- provide free access to high-quality curriculum resources through the National Education Nature Park online hub, so that teachers in all settings and subjects can confidently choose those that will support the teaching of sustainability and climate change
- this will initially work in tandem while we build on the success of Oak National Academy's work in the pandemic and establish a new arms-length national curriculum body which will work with thousands of teachers to co-design, create and continually improve packages of optional, free, adaptable digital curriculum resources and video lessons that are effectively sequenced to help teachers deliver an evidence-based, high-quality curriculum
- provide the opportunity for all staff (teaching, leadership and support) to build their understanding of climate change and sustainability by receiving shared carbon literacy training through their sustainability leads within their setting (more information about sustainability leadership is set out in the Operations and Supply Chains Action Area)

### 3. Learning in the natural environment

Education settings provide a wealth of learning opportunities, practical activities and clubs which allow children and young people to bring their learning to life. Children and young people may:

- take part in eco-clubs or vegetable growing
- be exposed to sustainable food choices, recycling, adaptation projects or weather and energy monitoring

On top of the learning benefits, these activities can aid pastoral work in all educational settings. The physical and mental health benefits of time spent in nature can form part of targeted support to:

- improve engagement and attainment, including as part of wider packages of support for pupils with SEND
- give young people a sense of agency where anxiety stems from climate concerns

The National Education Nature Park and Climate Leaders Award will build on this excellent activity, ensuring all children and young people have opportunities to get practical experience and turn their knowledge into positive action. We will design these initiatives with inclusivity at their heart.

We are committed to enabling those from disadvantaged backgrounds to access these opportunities.

Retrofitted educational buildings and new-build net-zero settings will also provide various learning opportunities through their design, how they work and their environmental impact. They will foster environmental knowledge that can be applied outside of the educational setting.

In 2022 we will:

- explore opportunities to increase access to the outdoors in DfE's successful [Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) programme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2021) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2021>)
- ensure that children attending the HAF programme participate in activities that improve their knowledge and awareness of affordable, healthy eating and sustainable practice – for example, through:
  - taking part in activities such as food preparation
  - cooking, discussing food and food sources
  - growing their own fruit and vegetables
- build on our investment into the Children and Nature Programme, by engaging with DEFRA on further research into how outdoor learning can be delivered for the greatest impact, with a view to exploring opportunities to support education settings to deliver quality outdoor education
- link up across government to identify new opportunities and strengthen action as part of the levelling up agenda – for example, with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on climate education, and with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the [National Youth Guarantee](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people>) to increase access to out-of-school activities for all children
- provide co-curricular opportunities for young people to experience and learn about nature through the National Education Nature Park, which will drive a greater knowledge and understanding of the importance of native species and develop young people's data and analytical skills
- build on learning from the Children and Nature Programme, encouraging schools to join up with local delivery partners to develop effective school-specific options and build links with local communities
- provide educational activities so that leaders, teachers, children and young people will learn about energy efficiency, the circular economy, climate resilience and green careers as part of educational building, maintenance and procurement projects, such as:
  - low-carbon boiler replacements

- smart meter installation
- energy monitoring pilots
- sustainable drainage systems

## Political impartiality

Teaching about climate change, and the scientific facts and evidence behind this, does not constitute teaching about a political issue and schools do not need to present misinformation or unsubstantiated claims to provide balance.

However, in climate education there is relevant political and scientific debate about the best ways that climate change can be addressed – there are different views and opinions, and different solutions. Debates on political and policy change need to be grounded in wider citizenship education on democracy and democratic values and topics should be handled in line with [schools' legal duties on political impartiality](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools>)

## Action area 2: Green skills and careers

It is critical young people and adults have the green skills that will allow them to build careers and participate as Britain leads the world into the Green Industrial Revolution and strives for nature's recovery.

We will harness young people's passion and interest in climate change and sustainability to enable them to have the knowledge and skills (in STEM and other key subjects) required for green jobs. Through our education and skills system, we will seek to inspire young people to choose career paths that support the:

- transition to net zero
- restoration of biodiversity
- a sustainable future

We will continue to support adults already in work to retrain and reskill in line with the needs of the green economy.

# 1. Net Zero Strategy

The government's Net Zero Strategy sets out in detail how our skills reforms will support more people into green jobs and help grow future talent pipelines. This includes:

- aligning apprenticeships to net-zero objectives through the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (IfATE) Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel
- continuing the roll-out of T-Levels to support young people into green careers
- driving STEM provision through our growing network of Institutes of Technologies (IoTs)
- expanding Skills Bootcamps so that adults are able to upskill and retrain in key green sectors

Through the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, we are legislating to ensure employer leadership of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) have regard to skills needed to help deliver on our net-zero target, adaptation to climate change, and other environmental goals.

Building on the work of the [Green Jobs Taskforce](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/expert-report-every-uk-job-has-the-potential-to-be-green) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/expert-report-every-uk-job-has-the-potential-to-be-green>) through a Green Jobs Delivery Group, government will bring together representatives from industry, the skills sector and other key stakeholders to develop data-driven action to support the delivery of plans for green jobs and skills. This will ensure that we are offering young people and workers the opportunity to develop the skills needed to deliver the low-carbon transition.

Since the publication of the Net Zero Strategy we have:

- set out investment of £3.8bn in further education and skills, to ensure people can access high-quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity and supports levelling up – this includes funding for programmes to support green skills crucial to the net-zero transition
- committed to expanding Skills Bootcamps to provide more opportunities for adults to gain new skills, prioritising green skills in areas such as heat pumps, zero emission vehicles, and carbon capture
- widened the eligibility criteria of our Free Courses for Jobs offer – from April 2022, any adult in England earning under the National Living Wage annually, or unemployed, will be able to access these qualifications for

free, including qualifications linked to green sectors such as agriculture, building and construction, engineering, environmental conservation, horticulture and forestry and science

- launched a pilot of our new General Further Education College Accountability Agreements that will ensure colleges strategically plan provision to meet skills needs at both local and national levels, including those in the green sector
- established 8 LSIP trailblazers, where employer representative bodies have been working closely with providers and key local stakeholders to develop tailored plans to help shape technical skills provision to better meet local labour market needs, with multiple trailblazers considering the skills needed to support green growth in their local economy
- started delivery of our £65 million Strategic Development Fund pilots to identify employers' skills needs, design provision, and build the capacity of local further education providers to deliver them so that, where local areas identify skills needs, providers can use this funding to, among other things:
  - purchase equipment
  - train their staff
  - bring in industry expertise to provide training
  - deliver new provision

## 2. Additional support for green jobs and skills

In addition to the extensive skills reforms set out in the Net Zero Strategy we will also increase the opportunities for young people and adults to engage in wider green skills and jobs needed to deliver the government's 25-Year Environment Plan.

We will support the further and higher education sectors as they deliver programmes teaching the skills of the future and nurturing future leaders.

We will continually seek to improve diversity in the take-up of STEM subjects at all levels, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to pursue a rewarding career in a STEM occupation:

- by September 2023, a T Level in agriculture, land management and production will be available – this will support the increased focus of the UK agriculture sector on more environmental and sustainable practices and provide a further opportunity and pathway for young people looking for careers in agriculture and horticulture

- we will engage employers, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), further and higher education sector representative groups and students in developing opportunities to forge further links between course content and the skills needed for green careers of all kinds
- Green Skills Bootcamps are available in environmental areas such as agriculture technology, and Wave 3 Skills Bootcamps will seek to prioritise further green sectors, including those specific to the environment such as nature restoration, waste management and recycling, woodland management and arboriculture.
- the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has convened a Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel (GAAP) to:
  - work with employers to align apprenticeships to net-zero objectives
  - endorse existing apprenticeships which support green career pathways specific to the environmental sector, such as arborist, forest operative, agriculture or horticulture professional advisor and ecologist
  - map existing apprenticeship standards against green occupations
  - identify opportunities to create new standards in areas including agri-tech and renewable energy
- investment of up to £75 million in a National Scholarship Scheme will support high achieving disadvantaged students to reach their full potential while studying in higher education, including degree courses or apprenticeships that can lead to green careers
- our network of Institutes of Technology (IoTs) across England are utilising their state-of-the-art facilities to:
  - offer training in green skills, such as in the built environment and agri-tech sectors
  - support increased participation from under-represented groups, including women, helping to grow the pipeline of individuals with STEM skills needed for green jobs
  - invest £120 million in the second wave of IoTs, to be set up by 2022
- by 2025, as part of the pathway towards the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, we will trial short-course provision at levels 4-6 to support in-work adults to upskill or retrain, enabling learners to build flexibly towards a full qualification in subjects crucial for net zero, including STEM and digital innovation
- by 2023, we will co-host an International Green Skills Conference with the higher and further education sectors to exhibit the best of UK green skills and education opportunities at further and higher education levels
- we will link the Climate Leaders Award to skills required by employers and explore how participation in the award can act as a progression route to further study

- by 2030, significant numbers of young people will have graduated from the Climate Leaders Award with the skills needed to enter the green economy
- by 2030, we anticipate that participation in the National Education Nature Park, and increased opportunities to connect with nature, will increase the number of young people that become data scientists, ecologists and biologists, which are needed for nature's recovery
- our specifications for new buildings set out low-carbon, climate-resilient standards – such as the installation of heat pumps for energy efficiency – while, as one of the largest construction buyers in the nation, these specifications will drive the market and assist in driving the development of technical fitting skill

### **3. Support and guidance for green careers**

We are actively supporting young people and adults to understand the training and careers opportunities available to them and we will support existing organisations in their endeavours to promote green careers. This includes:

- supporting schools and colleges to embed best practice in the delivery of careers information, advice and guidance, so young people are aware of the full range of training and careers available to them and have access to a broad range of employers and workplaces, including those in the green sectors – this will be delivered through the national roll-out of Career Hubs, Career Leader training, and the Enterprise Adviser Network
- as part of wider improvements to the National Careers Service we will ensure the provision of relevant and accessible information on green career pathways, which will bring together all the learning and careers routes available to aid the development of a single source of government-assured career information
- our educational building maintenance and procurement projects will provide opportunities for students to gain careers guidance, while installation of low-carbon boiler replacements, smart meters and energy monitoring or sustainable drainage systems, will be accompanied with assembly information and interactive class exercises allowing students to see and learn about a wide range of green careers and skills in action

## **Action area 3: Education estate and digital infrastructure**

A green, sustainable education estate that is resilient to the impacts of climate change will normalise and inspire young people to live sustainable lives, with impact felt widely in their families and communities. By improving the physical environment in and around education settings, we can impact positively on both the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people. We will act on both the challenges and opportunities the vast education estate presents.

There is still a lot of evidence to gather on new technologies and innovative approaches to sustainable building design, retrofit, ICT, building management and the surrounding environment. Our focus until 2025 will be piloting – gathering evidence and sharing research to learn from our experience. This work will build on and align with existing guidance currently available to help public sector organisations achieve net zero, for example, the Modern Energy Partners tools. From 2025 onwards, we will accelerate change once we understand the best value for money approach. Our approach can be summarised as innovate, test and invest.

## 1. New builds and new blocks

All new school buildings delivered by DfE (not already contracted) will be net zero in operation. They will be designed for a 2oC rise in average global temperatures and future-proofed for a 4oC rise, to adapt to the risks of climate change, including increased flooding and higher indoor temperatures.

Secure children's homes delivered by DfE will also be built to our net-zero standard.

In November 2021 we published our delivery framework for [employer's requirements for school projects Part A and Part B](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/output-specification-generic-design-brief-and-technical-annexes) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/output-specification-generic-design-brief-and-technical-annexes>) and made it freely available so that all new schools and colleges can meet the same low-carbon, climate-resilient standards as centrally delivered projects.

We have uplifted basic need grant-funding rates to help local authorities deliver school capital projects to these standards. When planning the use of basic need funding allocations, local authorities will consider environmental sustainability, carbon reduction and energy efficiency to develop solutions for projects that are in line with government targets and objectives, regardless of their chosen delivery route.

From now on bids into our Further Education Capital Transformation Programme will also be assessed to determine if the new works will be net zero in operation.

We know many higher education institutions are already demonstrating innovation in this space and are going beyond these standards. We will look to the higher education sector to inspire and drive greater ambition through their net-zero buildings and campuses.

So that our education building standards remain world-leading, we will:

- continue targeted and specific monitoring of education buildings to better understand their use and energy consumption
- continually improve our technical standards and building specifications

This will include the use and assessment of nature-based classroom design to maximise access to the outdoors and opportunities for outdoor learning, so our education buildings positively impact on physical and mental wellbeing.

Sustainable ICT solutions will be integrated into new-build schools as standard, via sustainable procurement, design, implementation and management.

The implementation of ultra-low carbon education buildings will be accelerated. By 2025 at least 4 schools and one college will have been built via the Gen Zero Platform that we demonstrated at COP26.

We will also accelerate our Gen Zero programme and other pilots so, over time, all centrally delivered new-build projects are built using ultra-low carbon solutions.

## 2. Existing estate

Improved collation and use of data on energy usage, water, heat and biodiversity will allow individual settings, and DfE, to make evidence-based decisions on where to act and invest to make the greatest impact. Smart meters and energy management systems can reduce bills and usage. They also provide learning opportunities for data analysis and understanding the impact of human behaviour. We will:

- continue to work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and water companies to trial the delivery of smart meters in schools and encourage the uptake across other settings
- in 2022, work with the education and children's services sectors and energy companies to explore sharing smart meter data to avoid additional reporting requirements, and this data would also be used by DfE to help advise settings how they can reduce their energy bills and improve their energy efficiency

- during 2022 and 2023, work with BEIS and [Energy Sparks](https://energysparks.uk/) (<https://energysparks.uk/>) to trial the delivery of Energy Management Systems in schools which will provide schools with real-time information about their energy usage, presented within a user-friendly online portal
- by 2025, have supported education settings to put in place Climate Action Plans, facilitating the use of setting-level data to inform action – these will increase carbon literacy and inform government on the implementation of decarbonisation solutions and nature-based solutions to alleviate flood risk, protect against increased heat, and improve air quality

A strategic approach to piloting new building technology will also be launched in order to support the future retrofit of the education estate and act as catalyst to the construction sector for implementing new technology. Our building technology pilots will support action to adapt the existing estate to protect against the current and future effects of climate change. They will also provide evidence for the efficient decarbonisation of the estate to mitigate the causes of climate change.

We will continue to seek opportunities for research, including developing innovative approaches for the delivery and use of digital infrastructure. Where opportunities arise, this will be tested in schools by retrofitting ICT to deliver energy savings.

We will also exploit existing research –higher education is already driving world leading building technology – and innovative solutions will be shared across the wider education sector

In 2022:

- we will work with BEIS to help education settings access the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to support them in decarbonising their estates and, as part of that work, we are looking at how we can better align our application processes and funding windows

By 2023:

- all bids for capital funding for further education and higher education will need to consider environmental impact, carbon reduction and adaptation measures, and align with the government's targets and objectives
- we will share best practice and advice to help education settings in deciding where to invest money to reduce carbon emissions, improve sustainability and resilience, and share options and case studies for the retrofit of existing settings by building type
- we will also develop the existing Good Estate Management for Schools guidance with updated tips and good practice on the sustainable management of the school estate, covering topics such as energy and water efficiency and addressing issues including ventilation and leaks

### 3. Resilience, adaptation, access to Nature and environment conditions

The 3 highest priority risk areas identified in the Climate Change Committee [Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk](https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/independent-assessment-of-uk-climate-risk/) (<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/independent-assessment-of-uk-climate-risk/>) were:

- increased heat risk
- flood risk
- water scarcity

To meet these challenges and those outlined in the Third Climate Change Risk Assessment (the statutory cycle set out in the Climate Change Act 2008, specifies the next key milestone in the statutory cycle as the third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) in 2023) we have a duty to demonstrate:

- a clear set of objectives for adaptation
- policies
- programmes
- investments with clear timelines
- measurable metrics
- progress indicators

We know that nearly half of schools (10,710) are at risk of flooding, which is expected to increase to at least 13,662 by the 2050s, or 16,394 in the worst-case scenario. While overheating in education buildings is a significant threat, we need to continue to work with other government departments to get a greater understanding of the risk.

A formal Memorandum of Understanding between DfE and the Environment Agency (EA) will ensure that our response to risk aligns with the objectives and measures set out in the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy and is based on the latest environmental data, advice and intelligence.

We know there is hope if efforts are focused in the right way. The latest [International Panel on Climate Change report](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/) (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>) outlines the power of nature against the worst effects of climate change. We will use the National Education Nature Park to champion the case for nature.

Through the National Education Nature Park we will provide opportunities and advice for education settings to initially improve their biodiversity and also, with time, their flood resilience and air quality. For example, we will work with EA and DEFRA to produce guidance for schools that explains how to improve their flood resilience and access free trees to improve shading and biodiversity of their grounds.

We will accelerate pilots to investigate:

- the resilience of existing buildings
- how their access to nature can be improved
- how their environmental conditions can be improved (overheating and air quality)

We will also empower universities to lead the way in demonstrating models for resilient, biodiverse campuses. We will share best practice via the National Education Nature Park online hub.

By 2023, we will:

- work with partners to explore how funding may support nurseries, schools, colleges and universities in driving on the ground innovation to link separate parts of the National Education Nature Park, improving the biodiversity, air quality, shading and flood resistance along the routes between settings
- continue evaluating the UK's first 'Biophilic' primary school, which will provide evidence of the impact of a greater connection to nature within the built environment, on the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- pilot the use of smart air and environmental quality monitors in schools to understand the practical implications, benefits and drawbacks of using smart monitoring devices with pilots providing a rich dataset on environmental performance, which can be used to help feed into school building design and understand where energy efficiencies can be achieved
- support [DEFRA's Clean Air Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>) which aims to diminish the highest concentration of exposure to fine particle matter (PM2.5) to help tackle air pollution and reduce emissions affecting education settings
- provide guidance to all education settings for practical ways to reduce indoor and outdoor air pollution, encouraging schools and partners to expand anti-idling zones to reduce the impact of the school commute
- support the Department for Transport in delivering initiatives to increase active and safe travel to school (such as Bikeability for children, their

families and carers, Walk to School Outreach and School Streets), to improve wellbeing, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality

- support an EA pilot investigating offsetting carbon emissions from their flood scheme construction work by contributing to tree planting and greening on available, nearby school land

By 2030:

- through the National Education Nature Park and cross-government collaboration, we will have significantly increased the biodiversity on the education estate and implemented 'Green Corridors' for access to education settings, improving climate resilience, physical and mental wellbeing, and protecting and enhancing wildlife and ecosystems along the routes between nurseries, schools, colleges and universities
- we will have supported the Department for Transport to increase active travel to school, contributing to the Prime Minister's vision that half of all short journeys in towns and cities will be walked or cycled
- we will have minimised barriers to nature in school building design programmes and education building standards, increasing opportunities to connect their users to nature

## 4. Heating solutions

The [building energy efficiency survey](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-energy-efficiency-survey-bees)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-energy-efficiency-survey-bees>) indicates that approximately 60% of energy use in education settings is associated with high carbon intensity fuels such as natural gas, coal and oil. There is a need to reduce demand for heating and hot water use and to deliver through sustainable means.

We are launching 10 pilots to test our Energy Pods as a way of providing off-site manufactured, low-carbon, heating solutions on the existing school and college estate. The results of these pilots will inform our strategic approach to condition, safety and sustainability for the education estate and provide important research data for education and public sector net-zero projects.

In 2022 we will:

- test the feasibility of replacing school boilers with ground or air source heat solutions, and use the learning to consider how this can be scaled up to accelerate decarbonisation between 2025 and 2035
- continue to work with BEIS to help education settings access the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to support them in replacing fossil fuel

## heating systems with low carbon heating

### 5. Water strategy

In partnership with EA, water companies and local authorities we will deliver our water strategy to improve:

- flood resilience
- sustainable urban drainage
- water efficiency
- resilience to drought

We will work together to improve learning and awareness of risk and resilience and encourage all education settings to sign up to available weather and flood warnings. For schools at highest risk, we will share a flood risk plan template to set out emergency plans. In addition:

- by 2023, the risk of school flood will be displayed alongside emissions and biodiversity on the National Education Nature Park
- by 2026, we will have reduced the flood risk in over 800 schools through our Water Strategy initiatives
- we will work with Ofwat and Market Operator Services Ltd to ensure their regulatory mechanisms and incentives enable and drive the water market to improve efficiency across the education estate and, should this prove successful, by 2030 we will have worked with water wholesalers and retailers to improve water efficiency at the 10,000 least water-efficient schools, significantly reducing usage and spend
- we will align strategic action with the Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy to ensure education settings are ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change

### 6. Reporting Frameworks, Reporting Processes and Targets

With increased legislation on net zero, environment and nature, it is inevitable that we are going to have to ensure consistent reporting on the activity of our sectors.

The government's Net Zero Strategy commits to legislate reporting of emissions if insufficient progress is made voluntarily. We will work with BEIS in the development of guidance on monitoring and reporting for the education sector and we will look to support and facilitate reporting.

We will work with energy providers to receive data from the school estate directly (unless individual schools choose to opt out), so that by 2024 all schools are reporting their emission via a standardised framework. The installation of smart meters will improve the accuracy of this data.

We have supported the Queen's Jubilee Challenge for the further and higher education sectors to accelerate a sector-led review. This review will enable all further and higher education settings to report their emissions via a standardised and comparable framework by 2024. From 2025 we will publish targets and institutional progress for the further and higher education sectors. We will also work with nurseries and schools to set standardised reporting frameworks and implement effective data-gathering mechanisms. With the campaign [Let's Go Zero \(https://letsgozero.org/\)](https://letsgozero.org/), we will set targets for schools between 2025 and 2035.

## Action area 4: Operations and supply chains

We have a valuable opportunity to drive change by introducing children and young people to more sustainable practices, such as:

- the circular economy
- waste prevention
- resource efficiency

We can inspire and instil habits that they will take into their wider communities and adult lives. Sector representatives have also confirmed that they have had the greatest results in driving sustainability in their operational processes when action has been linked to learning.

Coordination and leadership are required to bring this type of change. We recognise how much is already being done across the sectors by enthusiastic individuals, governance boards and leadership teams. They are driving effective whole-setting approaches to the challenges of sustainability and climate change – not only in teaching and learning or the decarbonisation of the estate – but in the way settings are operated and regulated.

Within DfE we will also publish and monitor progress against a DfE Corporate Sustainability Strategy. This will demonstrate how we will embed sustainability across everything we do – from how we maintain and use our office estate to our decision-making and business processes. We will align action with this strategy, the Greening Government Commitments and our overall organisational strategy.

By 2023 we will:

- start rolling-out carbon literacy training for at least one person in every locally maintained nursery, school, college and university to build their knowledge of climate change, access to public funds, engagement with the nature park and Climate Leaders Award, understand emissions reporting and how to develop a climate action plan so that they can share learning and training within their own setting as appropriate, for example with leaders, support staff, care takers, cooks and teachers
- support the work of the National Climate Education Action Plan to bring together universities with STEM Learning to identify Climate Ambassadors to support schools and further education institutions in the delivery of their sustainability and climate change action plans
- update Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) guidance to include the latest sustainability and climate change advice, covering topics such as efficient waste and water management – we will signpost to other relevant third-party materials
- encourage and support education settings to procure from companies that commit to achieving net zero by 2050 and have a plan in place, showing how they will meet this target
- ensure sustainability is part of the assessment and validation criteria for including suppliers on procurement frameworks, to support sustainable purchasing of products and services, including energy, in schools
- support schools to buy from procurement frameworks that offer sustainable goods and services
- work with education settings and partners to share best practice for delivering and improving uptake of nutritionally balanced, affordable and sustainable meal choices
- pilot a food curriculum and whole-school approach to food, promoting accountability and transparency of school food arrangements by encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites, which sets out their whole-school approach to food, with voluntary reporting initially, and the intention that this will become mandatory when schools can do this effectively
- pilot new training for school governors on a whole-school approach to food as set out in the forthcoming Government Food Strategy (school governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should

appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations)

- support schools to drive up their sustainable practices in line with the school food standards, particularly in relation to school food contracts and their food preparation and practice, with consideration of the ingredients they use and their environmental impact
- encourage and support education settings to gather data and take action on food waste, and to share their evidence-based best practice for sustainable waste prevention and management
- work with DEFRA and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to share resources for schools and children that support food waste prevention
- support education settings in aligning with DEFRA's Resources and Waste Strategy to reduce all waste, moving away from single-use items and towards reusable alternatives where possible
- continue to encourage all settings to drive initiatives that promote the circular economy – providing guidance to reduce reliance on single-use items in favour of alternatives, such as reusable nappies, as well as recycled materials, second-hand uniforms and other consumables, such as sustainable cutlery and cleaning products
- continue to offer a range of free sustainable period products to learners in schools and colleges across England and use the success of this programme as a catalyst for similar initiatives
- seek opportunities to rationalise deliveries to education settings, through minimum order values or changes to delivery models, and encourage settings to consider a rounded approach to providing food, including practical guidance on consolidating food deliveries and sourcing food locally where possible

By 2025:

- all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan
- all services and products procured by DfE for schools through the 'get help buying for schools' programme will go through environmental procurement frameworks
- we will review existing procurement frameworks and identify those where net-zero targets can be applied, highlighting these frameworks to education providers as sustainable and net zero-compliant buying frameworks
- we will ensure there is a clear route to market and associated support for schools to buy goods and services that help them to generate their own energy or reduce their existing energy consumption, for example, solar panels and LED light bulbs

- we will eradicate single-use plastics and encourage the use of reusable and recyclable materials in schools and encourage all other education settings to match this target
- we will work with DEFRA to provide guidance to education settings for meeting the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 – this will require settings to arrange for the collection of a core set of materials for recycling, including glass, paper and card, plastic, metal and food waste, increasing the amount of material recycled and diverted from landfill
- we will develop a sustainable assessment model in partnership with the Standards and Testing Agency, considering the environmental impact of digital testing and the trade-offs with existing testing methods
- we will continue to support DEFRA with implementing the Resource and Waste Strategy, to eliminate unnecessary plastics in education settings

By 2030:

- education settings will be supporting a circular economy through their participation in the Climate Leaders Award and National Education Nature Park – for example, by using food waste to produce compost that can then be used directly or in the local community

## Action area 5: International

We set out our vision for the United Kingdom education sector to be world leading in sustainability and climate change by 2030. In achieving this vision, we want to both inspire and respond to international action and make a difference to children and young people all over the world. There is no time to lose: extreme weather events are increasing in severity and frequency, and [Safe Schools: The Hidden Crisis](#)

(<https://theirworld.org/resources/safe-schools-the-hidden-crisis/>) shows that it is disrupting the education of nearly 40 million children a year worldwide.

Children in the UK say they are [worried about how climate change is affecting children and families in developing countries](#)

(<https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/9-in-10-children-are-worried-about-climate-change-finds-new-report-from-votesforschools-and-uk-committee-for-unicef-unicef-uk-2/>).

The [UK Foreign Policy Integrated Review](#)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>) positions climate change as the UK's number one international priority. Education is one of our nation's greatest strengths. We will take positive international action to enhance climate change and sustainability learning in and outside of the classroom and, in particular, through DfE's key bilateral relationships.

In doing so we will work across government with the:

- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
- Department for Business and Trade (DBT)
- Cabinet Office
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- British Council

Together we will provide young people and adults everywhere with the knowledge and skills needed to:

- be resilient to changing climates
- take positive climate action
- drive solutions

Our action will align with and support the UK Government's International Education Strategy and supplement the great work the UK already does overseas, led by the FCDO, through education partnerships with around 20 poorer countries as leading donor to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait Fund, to support countries to respond to weather related disasters and make education systems more resilient.

The international action set out below represents the whole of the UK. Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England each bring unique offers to an international strategy, and we will work closely with the governments of each nation to champion them effectively.

At COP26 we put education on a global stage, bringing education and environment ministers together to pledge action on climate education. We will continue to encourage other countries to make pledges. We will also track progress on our international commitments to complement and promote the Glasgow Works Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) negotiations agreed by countries at COP26 through our work and partnerships.

This work programme positions education as integral to the achievement of long-term climate goals, and calls for an approach which is grounded in principles of collaboration, flexibility and inclusivity.

## **Champion education and learning on the global stage**

We will promote education as a key tool for tackling climate change through:

- bilateral exchanges
- multi-lateral forums
- international dialogue, such as the Education World Forum

We will elevate the voices of youth in these discussions, as well as the rich experiences of other countries and stakeholders.

## **Inspire, share and learn**

We will work across government and convene international partners to build a coalition for action for sustainable education. We will:

- work closely with youth partners and multilateral institutions, such as UNESCO, UNEP and OECD, and in the G7 and G20 to exchange good practice through global discussions on climate education, learning and sustainable development
- showcase our Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and activities, sharing our strategy as a model for others to learn from
- build an international evidence base on the support and solutions needed for a range of contexts
- share our latest lessons, challenges, insights and evidence from the delivery of all action areas of our strategy
- learn from others, including those working at local, national, regional and international levels

## **Trade and exports**

We will provide expertise, services, trade and exports overseas to support others in achieving their net-zero targets, increasing resilience and adaptation, and improving climate education. We will work with FCDO, DBT and the UK international trade network to:

- identify appropriate export opportunities for our climate learning programmes, including the National Education Nature Park and Climate Leaders Award, sharing our expertise on flood resilience and flood risk assessments, and export innovative sustainable products such as the Gen Zero Platform and Biophilic Primary School
- continue work with the further and higher education sectors to ensure prestigious green-skills learning, training and research opportunities are

developed to attract overseas students

## International initiatives

We will identify opportunities to broaden our actions to share innovation and provide opportunities for young people from across the world to connect and learn, ensuring we align with the UK government's [Child Safeguarding Due Diligence \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners/child-safeguarding-due-diligence-for-external-partners\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners/child-safeguarding-due-diligence-for-external-partners) guidance. We will:

- support UK universities to deliver an annual International Green Skills Conference, demonstrating their excellence as top destinations to develop green skills and prepare for green career pathways
- expand the National Education Nature Park so that children across the globe can connect virtually, broaden their understanding of global challenges and amplify work happening in their communities
- develop an international climate leaders award by 2027

## Leadership, engagement and next steps

### Leadership

In recognition of the importance of this agenda to the Department for Education, the Secretary of State for Education will also be Climate Change Minister for the Department for Education. The Secretary of State for Education will also oversee the Climate Leaders Award.

The Secretary of State for Education will be supported in his role of Climate Change Minister for the department by:

- Baroness Barran – net zero of DfE-delivered buildings, procurement and supply chains (this also includes the biodiversity of the education estate)
- Minister Donelan and Minister Burghart – green skills, green jobs and net zero in further education and higher education
- Minister Walker – climate education
- Minister Quince – physical and mental wellbeing

DfE will nominate a non-executive director for climate change. They will champion climate issues on departmental boards and provide further leadership and expertise to support the department with its unique climate mission.

## Engagement

From November 2021 to March 2022, sector representatives and young people reflecting a diverse range of voices, backgrounds and experiences brought together feedback on this strategy from those they represent.

We will continue to engage formally through a quarterly youth panel and user group as we develop and deliver the strategy, to ensure it meets the needs of those it serves.

## Next Steps

Each year we will publish progress against the strategy and set out new action.

The following actions will support this:

- an annual climate literacy survey for school leavers, to be introduced in 2022
- a published risk assessment of flood, overheating and water scarcity of the education estate, reviewed on an annual basis from 2023
- biodiversity of the education estate, baselined by 2023 to allow annual progress reporting
- on-site emissions from the education estate, baselined by 2024, and progress against national targets published from 2025 onwards

**Vision:** the United Kingdom is the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030.

## Strategic aims

- Excellence in education and skills for a changing world

- Net zero
  - Resilient to climate change
  - A better environment for future generations
- 

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