



CLIMATE CHANGE

THE ROLE OF ECO SCHOOLS IN CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLANS

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CLIMATE CHANGE**

DFE REQUIREMENTS



Department
for Education

Guidance

Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education

The Department for Education's (DfE) sustainability leadership and climate action plans initiative.

From: [Department for Education](#)

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As outlined in the **DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy** for the Education System, by the end of 2025, all schools must:

- Have a nominated sustainability lead, and;
- Put in place a climate action plan

Action Plans must act in 4 key areas:

- **Climate Education & Green Careers**
- **Decarbonisation (buildings & operations)**
- **Nature & Biodiversity**
- **Climate Adaptation & resilience**

The DfE's vision states: *'the United Kingdom is the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030'*

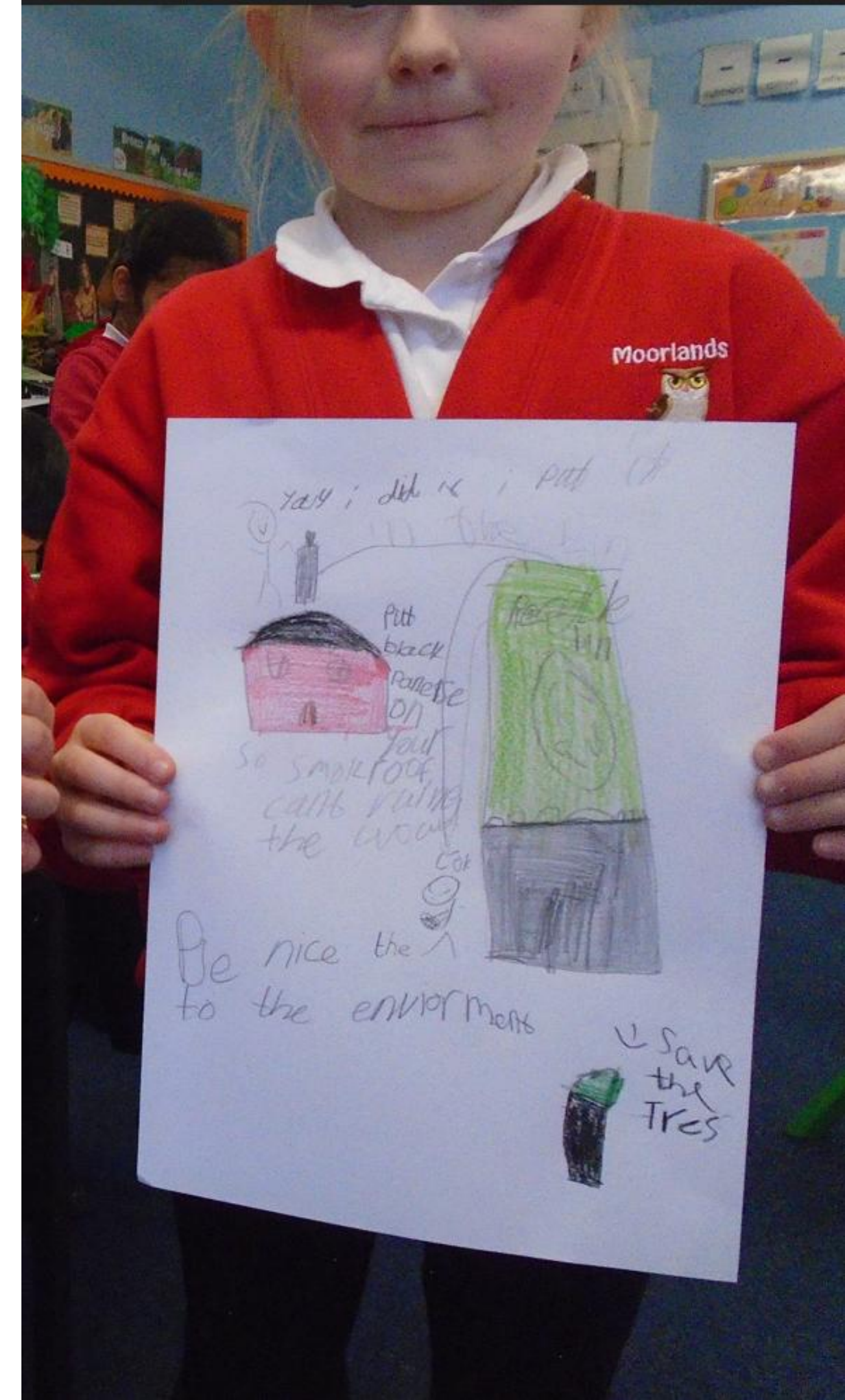
DFE REQUIREMENTS

Action plans require a **whole-school approach**, with leadership, planning, monitoring, and engagement.

- Plans should involve learners at all stages, to provide valuable skills and inspire them to take action
- It is doubly important to give young people a sense of agency, and the belief that they can make a difference - rather than contributing to climate anxiety

It is vital that Senior Leadership, governors and trustees are engaged with the process and help to drive progress alongside sustainability leads and students

Estate teams and school administration staff are also a key component of plans, for elements such as energy data and infrastructure



THE 4 KEY AREAS

Climate Education & Green Careers

- Promotes the importance of embedding sustainability into the curriculum
- Showcase the range of green career pathways and the key skills required to enter them
- Prepare learners for a world impacted by climate change and highlight ways we can all help to prevent it

Decarbonisation

- Reduce direct and indirect emissions from buildings and activities
- Plan retrofits, behaviour change activities, and renewable energy use to meet legislative targets
- Provide opportunities for young people to engage practically in the transition to net zero

Nature and Biodiversity

- Improve green spaces and biodiversity on school grounds
- Highlight the importance of good air quality and the role of nature in facilitating this
- Increase access and availability of green spaces
- Help improve local green spaces with litter picks
- Participate in the National Education Nature Park

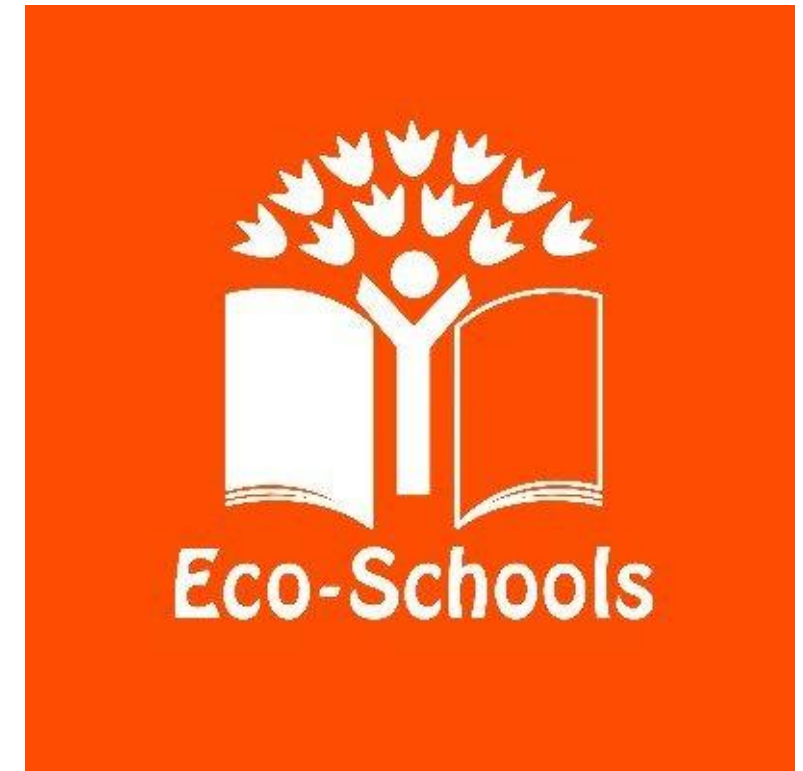
Adaptation and Resilience

- Identify and prepare for the potential impacts of climate change, e.g. flooding or heat events
- Populate climate risk assessments and plan for potential scenarios
- Implement measures such as sustainable drainage systems or increased shady cover

HOW DOES ECO SCHOOLS INPUT?

Eco Schools is a great way to both begin, and implement your Climate Action Plan.

- The programme is structured, with a 7 step process that takes a whole-school approach to action planning
- A student-led Eco Committee is formed which can support an appointed sustainability lead and ensure engagement with students and staff alike
- A key aspect of Eco Schools is ensuring that sustainability is embedded within the curriculum, and not just a one-off activity
- Schools choose which topics of sustainability they focus on, which compliment the 4 key areas in DfE action plans
- The process is repeated annually, which means plans are kept fresh and progress is continuous
- There is a large suite of resources and support available to schools through the Eco Schools web platform, as well as webinars, guides, templates, and school networks



Signing up and accessing resources is free - Schools only pay a fee for accreditation at the end of the academic year if desired

THE ECO SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Eco-Schools is a global programme that operates in over 70 countries worldwide, and is run by Keep Britain Tidy in England.

The scheme is youth-led and aims to empower children to make a difference in their schools and communities, embedding sustainability in the operation and curriculum of schools.

The programme operates under a simple **seven-step framework** that schools follow to aid them in beginning or developing their sustainable journey.

The Seven Steps:

1. Form an Eco-Committee
2. Complete the Eco-Schools Environmental Review
3. Decide on an Action Plan
4. Gather environmental curriculum links
5. inform and involve others
6. Monitor and evaluate projects in the action plan
7. Create an Eco-Code

ECO-COMMITTEE

The first step in any application is to form an **Eco-Committee**

- A group of people who take responsibility for delivering the Eco Schools programme
- Should include children across all year groups who have an interest in sustainability
- Makes up the key project group, but shouldn't be exclusive - membership should be flexible and open to all throughout the year
- Supported by an adult Eco-Coordinator

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The **Environmental Review** is a document that contains a series of questions that aim to establish the School's environmental baseline

- The baseline helps the Eco-Committee to identify key areas in their setting that can be improved
- Helps to identify any quick wins
- Also allows for year on year progress to be monitored

THE ACTION PLAN

The **Action Plan** is where the Committee plan the actions they will deliver as part of the Eco Schools programme following the environmental review.

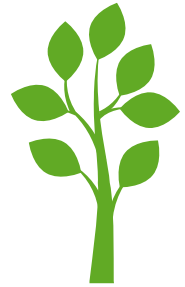
- Learners choose three out of the **Ten Eco-Schools Topics** to focus on for that year
- Actions can be big or small, and should include as many others from the school as possible, not just the committee
- Actions should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART)
- The action plan can feed into a schools wider plan, and is a great way of implementing it and showing progress
- The process must be learner led

The Ten Topics

- Biodiversity
- Energy
- Global Citizenship
- Healthy Living
- Litter
- Marine
- School Grounds
- Transport
- Waste
- Water



EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES



Biodiversity

- Creating insect and animal habitats
- Rewilding areas of the school grounds
- Wildlife-friendly/ native planting



Global Citizenship

- Organising charity events
- Collecting for food banks/ donation
- Learning about Fair Trade and Ethical produce



Energy

- Appointing Energy Monitors
- Electricity-free/ low usage days
- Investing in renewable energy



Healthy Living

- Plant based eating
- Growing fruits and vegetables
- Sensory gardens



Litter

- Appointing litter monitors
- Litter picks
- Great Big School Clean (Keep Britain Tidy)

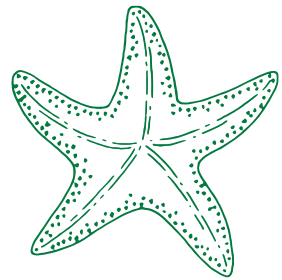
EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

School Grounds



- Tree Planting
- Outdoor learning spaces
- Greenhouses/ grow zones

Marine



- Reducing single use plastics
- Murals and artworks
- Overfishing awareness

Transport



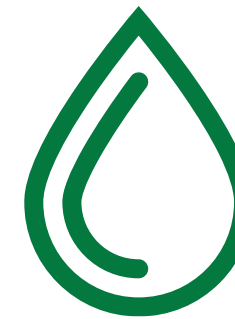
- Walk to school day or week
- Improved bicycle/ scooter storage
- School streets

Waste



- Difficult to recycle items
- Swaps and shops (refill stations)
- Awareness campaigns

Water



- Identifying leaks and waste
- Water saving devices
- Ponds and microponds

CURRICULUM LINKS

A key aspect of Eco-Schools is ensuring that sustainability is embedded in schools, **not just a side activity**

- As a minimum, schools must demonstrate at least 3 links to climate change in areas of the curriculum
- This could include creating eco-themed artwork from recycled materials, practicing letter writing skills by drafting a letter to an MP, or learning about how coal use created the smoggy conditions of Industrial Revolution London
- These should ideally link to the topics chosen in the action plan

INFORMING AND INVOLVING

It is important to ensure that **everyone benefits** from the Eco-Schools programme and has a chance to get involved

- Schools are asked to shout about the work they are doing, including newsletters, social media posts, local press releases, or eco-themed school assemblies
- Where possible, the committee should consider how to involve as many people as possible in the Eco-Schools work, including schoolmates, members of staff, and families

MONITORING

As with any project, it's important to be able to **monitor and evaluate** progress

- Eco schools are encouraged to monitor and log progress in a variety of methods - whichever works best for the school
- This may be reports, meeting minutes logged by students, graphs/ charts, before & after photos, or even diaries
- This step allows for schools to map their activities, and helps track progress on a wider climate action plan

ECO-CODE

The final step in the programme is to create an **Eco-Code**

- This should encapsulate all the work that took place over the year, and channel it into a poster, poem, song, or mission statement
- The Eco-code acts as a reminder of the school's commitment to help protect our planet

A fee of £200 + VAT is only payable on completion, should the School wish to become accredited with a Green Flag award

THE BENEFITS

Eco-Schools links directly to goals set out in the Department for Education's **Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy**

The programme provides a guided approach to forming and enacting a wider climate action plan, ensuring both students and staff are engaged along the way

Some wider benefits of the programme nationally include:

- Millions of kWh saved on energy bills across the Eco-Schools network
- 97% of participants stated that the programme expanded environmental education in their setting
- 96% agreed that participation led to increased pupil confidence
- 94% said Eco-Schools helped develop leadership skills
- 98% stated it promoted teamwork in their setting
- Tens of thousands of trees planted each year
- An estimated 3million kgs of waste diverted from landfill per year
- Over a million m2 of natural habitats created and looked after by young people



OTHER AREAS OF SUPPORT

Other support is available that can be used on its own, or alongside the Eco Schools Programme. Some DfE funded initiatives include:

Sustainability Support for Education

(<https://www.sustainabilitysupportforeducation.org.uk/>)

- Provides resources and tools to help identify appropriate actions to develop or build on your climate action plan

Climate Ambassador Programme

(<https://climateambassadors.org.uk/>)

- Provides access to qualified volunteer support through regional networks to support the development and delivery of Climate Action Plans

The National Education Nature Park

(<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/>)

- Provides free curriculum-linked resources and programmes to educators to educate children in nature and the improvement of the local environment. Funding allocations are announced each year by DfE to eligible schools to implement suggested biodiversity improvements

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-park-and-climate-action-awards-funding-allocations>)

CONTACTS AND INFO

Eco-Schools (sign up or find out more)

Website: <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>

Email: eco-schools@keepbritaintidy.org

For more information on Council support, or general queries:

Contact Daniel Lloyd at climate_change@sandwell.gov.uk