



Sustainable Schools for Pupils, Communities and the Environment

Government Response to the Consultation on the Sustainable Schools Strategy

What concerns you about the way people treat the world?

“ I do not like how people think that everything will last forever.”

(age 15-19)

“ The fact that no one recycles anything and the world is just becoming one big rubbish tip. When people recycle it gets taken to a special factory which turns it in to something else.”

(age 12-14)

“ It concerns me most when people do not care about their world, because they're the ones that do the most damage to the environment.”

(age 12-14)

“ My major concerns are the lack of respect people show to life, that people will hurt each other sometimes without even thinking, and the lack of respect for the environment around us.”

(age 15-19)

“ They should not leave litter and rubbish on the floor. They should not waste too much fuel driving around. Everyone should recycle their stuff.”

(age 5-8)

“ My area usually has fresh air in the morning, but lately it smells of car fumes and truck fumes.”

(age 12-14)

“ The fact that so many new houses have been built taking away the beautiful landscape that used to exist, now its just another skyline full of close cramped houses.”

(age 15-19)

“ There are hardly any flowers or environment around as there is mainly litter which is spoiling our village and area.”

(age 12-14)

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foreword

There is a singular need to educate children and young people for sustainable development, and to enable them to develop positive, sustainable behaviours from a young age. This is not only the responsibility of schools and formal education – the responsibility is shared with parents and carers, business, the media and government at all levels. However, as a result of their core interest in teaching and learning, schools do offer a unique space in which to debate, understand and practise sustainable development.

We are committed to helping schools achieve the vision outlined in this strategy. It is ambitious, but then the issues we all need to address – from climate change to global poverty – are large and urgent. In setting off down this path we derive encouragement from the fact that so many people working in the education system have told us they are enthusiastic about this approach.

Our task is to turn a challenge that may seem overwhelming at times into a movement for innovation and improvement in schools: the kind of improvement that underpins and enhances existing strategies for raising standards; the kind that focuses on the well-being of children, young people and families; the kind that helps schools benefit from better behaviour, lower running costs and stronger relationships with their local communities.

Schools should know that we are behind them all the way in this endeavour and look forward to recognising their achievements.



Parmjit Dhanda MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Children, Young People and Families



introduction

Our Sustainable Schools consultation attracted interest from a wide range of people working in or with schools, including children, illustrating just how relevant sustainability is to education and children's services. We deeply appreciate everybody's contribution.

Children and young people told us how worried they are about the state of their local environment, and about big issues like climate change and injustice around the world. They also expressed concerns about the apparent careless use of the natural resources on which they will depend in their lives ahead.

These are big issues for all of us, not least because of their potential to limit opportunities for children now and in the future. Two major themes in Government – Every Child Matters and Sustainable Communities – are particularly relevant to their concerns. We believe that sustainable development provides an excellent means of promoting the five ECM outcomes and securing a better future for children and the communities in which they live.

Schools can play a part in delivering these objectives, and in doing so improve their performance by other measures. Children's interest in the issues can translate into higher standards of achievement and behaviour. Schools that consume less energy, water and materials, and produce less waste, are simply more cost-efficient. Sustainability opens up many avenues for school-community cooperation with practical and mutual benefits. These are important advantages that help meet our aspirations for schools and young people in this country.

If we were to summarise the adults' responses to the consultation it would be "We back your vision, but show us that you are serious about seeing it through."

While you were overwhelmingly positive about the idea of (and need for) sustainable schools, you asked many searching questions about how they can be encouraged to take root in practice. These are important messages and we will attempt to address them in our future policy.

There is an opportunity for everyone to exercise a leadership role. This academic year must be a **Year of Action** on sustainability. We are sponsoring the development of tools, guidance, competition, awards and events to empower and enthuse different parts of the school community. Most importantly we are now publishing this strategy and, shortly, an action plan on sustainable schools to better support the fantastic work in schools that has already begun.

Fact: Schools account for 15% of carbon emissions from the UK public sector. Half arise through electricity and heating; the rest from areas like travel, purchasing and waste. [Sustainable Development Commission]

Sustainable development is a global issue with serious implications for the way we all live and work. This paper confirms how Government expects schools to respond to the challenge by empowering young people to lead sustainable lives and by becoming models of good practice for their communities.

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background

“In our experience the primary school has been a shining example of what can/should be done to encourage our community to take action on climate change.”

Gary Charnock,
Ashton Hayes
Going Carbon
Neutral Project

What is sustainable development?

Sustainable development is a way of thinking about how we organise our lives and work – including our education system – so that we don’t destroy our most precious resource, the planet.

From over-fishing to global warming, our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet, which cannot be sustained. Things which were once taken for granted such as a secure supply of energy or a stable climate do not look so permanent now.

If our prosperity is tied to the health of the planet, then no one’s well-being is secure unless the environment is protected. If we cannot prosper in a world that suffers from poverty, inequality, war and poor health, then our future is intimately bound up in the future of other people and places.

Sustainable development means inspiring people in all parts of the world to find solutions that improve their quality of life without storing up problems for the future, or impacting unfairly on other people’s lives. It must be much more than recycling bottles or giving money to charity. It is about thinking and working in a profoundly different way.

Improving our quality of life without damaging the environment and adversely affecting future generations should be a core value of all that we do in education – a necessary part of building a society that cares for its children. Through its Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14), the United Nations is currently promoting this message in every part of the world.

A child born today may live until the 22nd century. It is difficult for us to predict what their lives will be like at that time. All we can do is help to prepare them for the kind of challenges they will face, and not exacerbate their problems by leaving a damaging legacy.

Government recognises that behaviours need to change in all parts of society in order to achieve sustainable development, and that education is one of the key ways in which it will realise that aim. Government also recognises that it must lead progress by example and has tasked itself with meeting challenging goals on procurement and internal operations. It has also committed to basing future policy on the principles of sustainable development (see box opposite).

The Government's aims for sustainable development

In *Securing the Future* (HMG 2005) the Government sets out its long-term aims for sustainable development in the UK. It wants to help people make the right choices now in order to secure the future of our children and our children's children. Its immediate priorities for action are as follows:

- Sustainable consumption and production – achieving more with less.
- Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement – protecting the resources on which we depend.
- Sustainable communities – creating places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.
- Climate change and energy – confronting the greatest threat.

Five principles – shared among the UK Government, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Administration – are intended to shape all future policy decisions. These translate as: “We want to live within environmental limits and achieve a just society, and we will do so by means of sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science”.

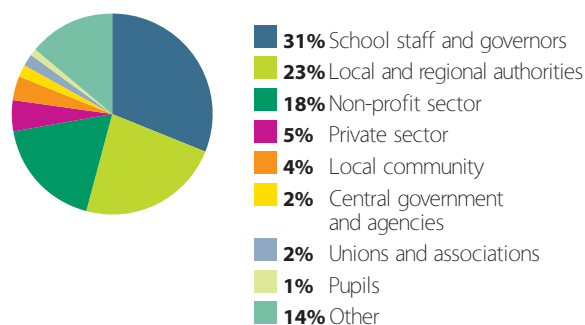
To keep moving towards a healthier, more inclusive and fairer society we need to make a decisive move towards sustainable development. This builds on the strides towards greater equity in society that our policies for education and families have engendered.

The consultation process

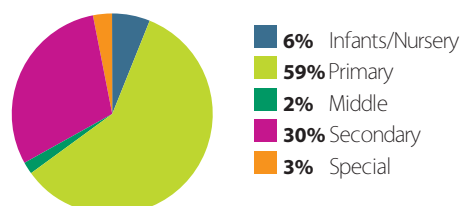
We received 870 responses to the consultation on the Sustainable Schools Strategy. The following charts show who responded.

(a) Adults consultation

Please describe yourself as a respondent:

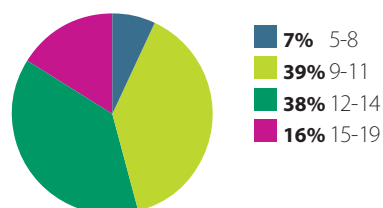


If you work in a school please tell us what type it is:

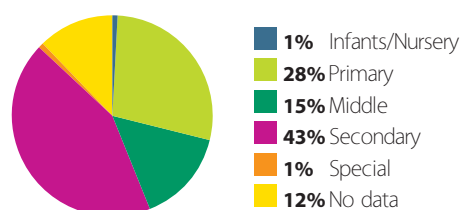


(b) Young people's consultation

How old are you?



What type of school do you attend?



2

a clear message from young people

FACT: In the UK we recycle just over a fifth of our waste – one of the lowest rates in Europe. Within six months almost 90% of the consumable goods we buy are waste. [Defra]

A total of 347 children and young people aged 19 and under responded to the sustainable schools consultation. In their own language they produced a highly consistent picture of how young people regard the challenges of sustainable development.

What children told us

Many told us they are worried about climate change, global poverty, war, loss of biodiversity, pollution, traffic, litter and anti-social behaviour. Some voiced their concern that if we don't act now these challenges could have a dramatic impact on our prosperity – possibly our survival.

Their views can be summarised as follows:

- Frustration with the state of the environment in their communities, typically road danger, noise and pollution; vandalism, litter and graffiti; and destruction of nature for building/industry.
- Concern over anti-social behaviour, from racism to vandalism and litter, and a lack of respect demonstrated by young and old people alike.
- Concern at the continuing presence of poverty and injustice in the world, and the backdrop of war.
- Anger at the careless use of natural resources at the expense of future (their) generations; unthinking pollution militating against their quality of life; and a sense that adults are disinterested in the issues.

It was particularly worrying to hear that 63% of the children who responded thought the world was becoming a worse place to live in, with just 11% feeling that it was getting better.

Are we letting children down?

Young people have a high stake in the future and they are well aware that it holds many challenges. They are also aware that adults are not changing their behaviour, and that some of them do not appear to register the problem at all. All of this begs a very serious question: are we the first generation to knowingly leave the planet in a worse condition than we found it?

Certainly, from a child's perspective, the contradictions are easy to see. On the one hand you hear adults protest their love for you. On the other you see them polluting the environment, using up your resources, and sowing the seeds of future conflicts. Through outlets like Newsround you are aware of what is happening – more aware than many adults believe – and may be feeling concerned, frightened and let down. As one young respondent commented, the message received from adults is highly contradictory: "Oh yes, we're concerned about global warming and loss of biodiversity...no, we don't recycle, we don't turn off electricity, we still drop litter."

"We have a duty as educators and adults to educate young people about sustainable living and the best way to do this is by the demonstration of good practice."

Jane Denny,
Extended
Schools Project
Coordinator,
Weobley High
School

Traditionally we have viewed children's well-being as a social and economic problem, but it is also an environmental problem. A busy street is a play area taken out of reach of children, or a threat to safe movement around the community. Litter dulls a community's sense of respect for the environment; it can lead to a downward cycle of vandalism, crime and anti-social behaviour, especially when combined with difficult family situations or other forms of hardship in the community. Poorly insulated homes are expensive to keep warm – a waste of energy, money and a source of ill-health. Junk food – the norm for some children – has a negative impact on health and distances them from the origins of their food.

Development has meant changes in noise, traffic, and the way we produce food, not all of which have been positive for children.

Every Child Matters

Every Child Matters recognises that children want to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and secure their economic well-being. It is clear that the children responding to the sustainable schools consultation also want to achieve these things. However, given the signs of unsustainable development around them, they are legitimately asking:

- How can I be healthy when the air is polluted, I am driven everywhere by car, and eat processed food grown with chemicals?
- How can I stay safe when I have to cross busy roads to move around? And when people live in poverty all around the world and war is a backdrop to my life?
- How can I truly enjoy and achieve in a society where people think only about what they want?
- How can I make a contribution to other people's well-being, and to the needs of other living creatures?
- What are my prospects of economic well-being in the face of climate change?

It is clear that the goals of ECM and sustainable development are highly relevant to one another – that sustainable development is a powerful means of delivering ECM outcomes. School leaders, teachers and all of those who work in or support schools should regard sustainable development as a smart way of drawing together their separate practices behind the idea of children's current and future well-being.

However, not everyone in education and children's services recognises how their work contributes to sustainable development, whereas in reality they are working on its front line. One of the most important agendas in government today – sustainable communities – is trying to form the necessary links at the local level.

Sustainable communities

It is clear from the young people's responses that they have formed connections between what is happening on their doorstep and larger global issues. Throwing a crisp packet on the ground and cutting trees down in Brazil represent part of the same story as far as many of the respondents are concerned. The most commonly voiced connection is a lack of care.

Government is approaching this challenge by promoting the idea of sustainable communities.¹ All Councils and their Local Strategic Partnerships have a Community Strategy in place, and the challenge is now to turn these into Sustainable Community Strategies which integrate social, economic and environmental issues and tackle the area's longer term and more global impacts.

This requires a distinctive approach to the way services are planned and delivered, including education and children's services: one which goes beyond professional or service silos to address the area's current and longer term needs together.

It is essential for schools – along with services like childcare and youth work – to help children contribute positively to their local areas, learn about them in more depth, and have fun. In this way schools can play an important role in realising sustainable communities.

“Sustainable communities are places in which people want to live, now and in the future. They embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level. This means they improve quality of life for all whilst safeguarding the environment for future generations.”

Sustainable Communities:
A shared agenda,
a share of the
action. Local
Government
Association
/Defra, 2006

¹ Communities described as: Active, inclusive and safe; Well-run; Environmentally sensitive; Well designed and built; Well Connected; Thriving; Well-served; and Fair for everyone.

3

a strategy for sustainable schools

FACT: Food production, packaging and transport accounts for nearly a third of our climate impacts. A third of food grown for human consumption in the UK is thrown away. [Sustainable Development Commission, Fare Share]

Our task in education must be to equip children to take on the challenges they will face in their lifetimes so that they live successful, fulfilling lives. With challenges like climate change, where older generations have not yet succeeded in adapting their behaviour, we cannot allow ourselves to perpetuate our old thinking on future generations.

Empowering pupils



Schools are there to give children the knowledge and skills they need to become active members of society. Many children are rightly worried about climate change, global poverty and the impact of our lifestyles. Schools can demonstrate ways of living that are models of good practice for children and their communities. They can build sustainable development into the learning experience of every child to encourage innovation and improvement.



Alan Johnson, October 2006

The education we provide to help children understand the changes they will see in their lifetimes is not a substitute for action by adults now. But at the same time, the problems are real, and we must do everything within our power to help children feel confident about finding solutions.

The Chief Adviser to London Schools, Tim Brighouse, says our task is to help children and young people “take responsibility for their own futures.” But how do we actually do this? How do we help children become part of the solution to global challenges, rather than part of the problem as we view ourselves?

Clearly school is only one of numerous situations experienced by children, yet it is an important one that many children recall throughout their life. For schools to be successful in empowering pupils to make a difference they need to ensure several things are in place:

- Children gain first-hand experience of identifying the challenges and finding solutions in the school, local area and at home – otherwise the issues will remain too abstract and confidence will not be built.
- Teaching about sustainable development is mirrored by actions within the school, otherwise we risk producing a generation of cynics.
- Parents and the wider community are involved at an early stage of initiatives, particularly in areas like school food and travel where their own behaviour may need to change.

“Government has a distinctive and critical role to play. It must place sustainable schools high on the education reform agenda if it expects mainstream schools to take notice.”

Liz Jackson,
WWF-UK

“This is a fantastic way forward and seems to reflect what young people themselves believe to be important.”

Helen Stichbury,
Isle of Wight
Council

A commitment to care

Not everyone is familiar with the language of sustainable development, and so we have searched for a form of words that conveys the idea in a way that complements and underpins the purposes of a school. In brief, we believe that sustainable schools are guided by a commitment to care:

- Care for oneself.
- Care for each other (across cultures, distances and generations).
- Care for the environment (near and far).

Schools are already caring places: they put a high value on the achievement and well-being of their pupils. A sustainable school builds on this commitment and extends it into new areas. For example, 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 own community and in other parts of the world.

Care has other repercussions. 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. Care also breeds responsibility. Schools that involve pupils in the design of playing areas experience reduced incidents of bad behaviour, including bullying and vandalism. Pupils begin to feel: “This is my school and I want to look after it.”

Above all, the school takes these positive messages out into the community, opening parents' eyes to the possibilities of sustainable living. The vision encompassed by sustainable schools (which at its heart concerns one thing – children's well-being) offers schools a ‘bigger picture’ in which to position their work on existing initiatives like Every Child Matters, Extended Schools, travel planning, healthy living, Citizenship and Learning Outside the Classroom.

Core aims

We have explained our motivation for encouraging sustainable schools, and noted that a commitment to care provides a useful rallying point for many aspects of this agenda. But what specifically are we looking for in terms of outcomes? Here are three important aims:

• New skills and behaviours

Children need to acquire new skills at school if they are to become part of the solution to challenges like climate change, not part of the problem. Listening, expressing points of view, weighing evidence, cooperating, thinking critically, tackling real problems, participating in decisions, making informed choices – these are the skills cultivated by sustainable schools. Children should be expected

to put these skills into practice in their school, and be encouraged to do so in their homes and local area. We would like them to leave school with the confidence to challenge old patterns of behaviour.

• **School efficiency and improvement**

It is quite clear that sustainable schools are efficient schools that consume less energy, water and materials, and produce less waste – a win-win between efficiency and sustainability. They are also effective schools that recognise the power of sustainability issues to motivate pupils, engage them in learning, and boost their achievement, behaviour and well-being.

• **Sustainable communities**

As places of learning, schools can demonstrate good practices to pupils, staff, parents, governors, suppliers and other schools, and engage them in activities that create positive change in communities. It is difficult to envisage a sustainable community without a sustainable school at its heart.

Where should schools focus?

The best way is for schools to define their own plan based on their individual circumstances and level of confidence with the issues, and we have developed a self-evaluation tool, known as **s3**, to help them do so. Sustainable development is part of the whole-school improvement process tying together many existing areas of practice under a single, compelling vision.

The range of concerns covered by sustainable schools extends from areas like food and travel that affect the immediate well-being of pupils, to wider issues like local quality of life and global justice. A common idea runs through all these issues: the need for a long-term, joined-up approach to addressing children's needs now and in the future – truly the inspiration of Every Child Matters.

In order to help schools draw together these issues, and link them to existing agendas, we have developed a national framework for sustainable schools comprising eight sustainability 'doorways' or areas that schools should consider when thinking about their sustainability performance (for more information see enclosed poster or the Sustainable Schools area of Teachernet). The doorways interconnect, providing different openings onto a set of common challenges. Each can be taken forward through the major areas of school life – the curriculum, campus and community:

- Food and Drink
- Energy and Water
- Travel and Traffic
- Purchasing and Waste
- Buildings and Grounds
- Inclusion and Participation
- Local Well-being
- Global Dimension

“Schools that practice sustainable development already share the values of Every Child Matters.”

**Mo Morrison,
Headteacher,
Harthill
Primary School,
Cheshire**

Food and drink



Opportunity

An unhealthy diet contributes to obesity and poor pupil concentration. Healthy, ethically sourced food can offer nutritional benefits while protecting the environment and supporting local producers and suppliers.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be 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.

Buildings and grounds



Opportunity

The design and management of the school estate affects its environmental performance, and its ability to help pupils learn sustainable living. A well-designed and cared-for estate provides a rich resource for learning and play – not only about the environment but more widely – benefiting pupils' well-being and behaviour.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all school buildings – old and new – to make visible use of sustainable design features and to chose green building technologies, furnishings and equipment as opportunities arise. Through their grounds, we would like all schools to enable pupils to learn about the natural world and sustainable living.

Energy and water



Opportunity

Rising demand for energy and water is storing up problems for future generations. Energy and water conservation can tackle this problem while saving the school money.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy use and water conservation, showcasing efforts such as wind and solar energy, and rainwater harvesting, to pupils and the whole community.

Inclusion and participation



Opportunity

Schools can promote community cohesion by providing an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere that values everyone's participation and contributions. They can challenge prejudice and injustice in all its forms.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be 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.

Travel and traffic



Opportunity

Rising vehicle use adds to congestion, road accidents and pollution, including carbon emissions. Car-sharing and public transportation help to ease these concerns, while walking and cycling also boost fitness and well-being.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be 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.

Purchasing and waste



Opportunity

Waste, and the throw-away culture that encourages it, can be addressed through sustainable consumption. Schools can reduce costs and support markets for ethical goods and services at the same time.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of sustainable procurement, using goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards from local sources where practicable, and increasing value for money by reusing, repairing and recycling as many goods as possible.

Local well-being



Opportunity

With their central locations, facilities and extensive networks, schools can act as hubs of learning and change in their communities. Problems on their doorstep offer relevant and engaging opportunities for pupils to learn, and a means of strengthening local relationships.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of good corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.

Global dimension



Opportunity

Growing interdependence between countries changes the way we view the world, including our own culture. Schools can respond by developing a responsible, international outlook among their pupils, based on an appreciation of the impact of their personal values and behaviours on global challenges.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of good global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.

“I believe it is essential that a whole-school approach is taken to sustainability, not just one or two keen members of staff championing the cause.”

School Travel
Adviser,
Leeds City Council

The doorways are just different ways of approaching the task of building a sustainable school. Most schools are already working on one or more of the doorways even if they don't recognise them as sustainable development. As one headteacher profiled in the consultation paper said, “We didn't realise we were doing sustainable development until somebody told us. We were just trying to meet the needs of our children.”

Through a series of small, positive steps, we would like all schools to have achieved the vision for each of the doorways by 2020. We recognise that these are demanding expectations, but then so are the challenges that schools can and must help to address. Though we are laying down our long-term aspirations for schools, we are encouraging them to define their own plans and approaches to success without prescription, in the process adding to the mix of choices for young people and their families.

Thinking across boundaries

There is much that schools can do, and are already doing, to make sustainable development a natural part of their work. Our belief, backed up by the experience of practitioners and expert organisations, is that a whole-school approach to sustainable development is the best way to achieve results.

What does this mean in practice? First and foremost it means that everyone in the school has a role in advancing sustainable development. Secondly it means that a holistic approach is taken to school improvement covering the major areas of school life:

- **Curriculum – teaching provision and learning**

Through its focus on issues that matter to young people, sustainable development provides a means of developing pupils' sense of enquiry, enjoyment and interest in the learning process (see box opposite). By exploring real issues in real places – inside and outside the classroom – it helps to make learning relevant to pupils' lives. Because the range of learning opportunities is so wide – from practical outdoors work to designing projects and writing letters to local councillors – it also creates opportunities for greater personalisation of learning.

- **Campus – values and ways of working**

Schools that manage their operations sustainably provide a powerful example for their staff and pupils to follow. Moreover it is quite clear that sustainable schools are efficient schools that consume less energy, water and materials, and produce less waste. Better catering can improve pupils' health, concentration and learning outcomes. Greener travel arrangements contribute to the safety, fitness and alertness of pupils. Efficient management of school buildings can result in lower

energy and water bills. A strategy of 'reduce, reuse and recycle' can result in less purchasing, less cost and less waste. And the use of school grounds for food growing and nature conservation can lead to exciting learning opportunities.

- **Community - wider influence and partnerships**

Schools are well placed to exert a broader influence in their communities.

Through their contact with parents and carers, suppliers and local organisations, they can advance an extensive well-being agenda among local people. Pupils are in school for less than 15% of the year. What they experience outside has a significant impact on their self-esteem, achievement and behaviour. By promoting safer, stronger, healthier and greener (i.e. sustainable) communities, schools are raising the expectations and aspirations of their pupils.

Innovative teaching and learning

Sustainable schools are great places to learn, where pupils develop self-esteem and reach high standards of achievement. Motivation is enhanced by using issues that matter to young people, from the state of the local park to global warming, as a context for learning across the curriculum.

Sustainable schools are natural innovators in teaching and learning. They draw on their estate and local area as a resource for learning, encouraging pupils to explore the problems and opportunities on their doorstep while studying the connections to larger, sometimes global challenges. For example, putting the health of the local community under the spotlight creates opportunities to take stock of the schools' own food and travel practices and explore their impacts on local well-being. Maths, English, Science, Geography, RE, PSHE and numerous other subjects can be brought into play.

The 'Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto' provides a powerful impetus for sustainable schools. It highlights the importance of learning about real issues in real places among real people, helping children to form connections with things that really matter. It is difficult to imagine a child seriously valuing the natural world unless they have experienced it at first hand. It is difficult to understand how they can make informed decisions about the food they eat without visiting the countryside and perhaps growing some food of their own.

By focusing on sustainable development in the curriculum, modelling good practices within the school, and promoting positive behaviours in the community, many schools are discovering that not only can they make an extraordinary contribution to society, they become great schools by every other measure.

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conclusions and way forward

Fact: In 2004 the average UK citizen made 625 journeys by car and only 15 by bicycle. Between 1991 and 2004 the number of pupils walking or cycling to school fell from 53% to 47%.
[Department for Transport]

We are committed to helping schools achieve the vision outlined in the Sustainable Schools strategy. It is ambitious, but then the issues we all need to address – from climate change to global poverty – are large and urgent.

The Sustainable Schools consultation attracted interest from a wide range of people illustrating just how relevant sustainability is to education and children's services.

The goals of Every Child Matters and Sustainable Communities are particularly relevant to the concerns voiced by children and young people. We believe that sustainable development provides an excellent means of promoting the five ECM outcomes; that it is a fertile source of ideas for securing a better future for children.

These are important messages and we will attempt to address them in an action plan for sustainable schools in the new year.

In addition, we want this year to be a Year of Action for all of us to take forward this vital work. By the end of the Year of Action we hope that:

- All schools have received information about the Sustainable Schools strategy.
- At least 60% of schools have addressed the goals of the strategy in their school development plans.
- 90% of schools taking action on sustainable development consider that the action has had, or will have had, a measurable impact on the pupils' knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues and/or improved the schools' environmental performance.
- We have set in place the appropriate challenge/prompt, support and evaluation measures from central, regional and local government to help schools maintain their commitment to 2020.

One effect of the Year of Action will be to encourage a frank discussion about sustainable development within the education sector. We want to reinforce the idea that although great progress can be made within each doorway area, there is value in considering how the doorways can be advanced together, how they support existing initiatives like Every Child Matters, and how all of these areas contribute to common sustainability goals.

“It is our driving ambition to make our out-dated buildings more sustainable, to save money for the school and to reduce our impact on the environment.”

Mark Boast,
The John Cleveland
College

Target group	Activity
Pupils	<p>Detective kit A package of resources for Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils to help them investigate the sustainability performance of their own school and develop practical suggestions for staff and governors on moving forward.</p> <p>Online pupil conference This will go live for two weeks in May 2007 in cooperation with WWF and Global Learning Communities. It will contribute to WWF's 'One Million Sustainable Lives' initiative as well enable schools and pupils to engage with the sustainable schools framework.</p> <p>'Change the world' competition Building on the hugely popular 'Change the world for a fiver' publication from We Are What We Do© a new and exciting version will be produced by and for young people. Pupils across all schools will be invited to come up with their own suggestions and ideas and submit these to a competition.</p>
Senior school staff	<p>Assembly plans Suggestions for headteachers and school leaders on how to profile sustainability within school assemblies, and hence open a dialogue about these issues with pupils and staff.</p> <p>Self-evaluation tool (s3) s3 has been designed to help schools evaluate their current efforts to create a sustainable school and to inform their next steps. Because it is structured using the headings in the Ofsted self-evaluation form, it provides a neat way to demonstrate how sustainability contributes to school improvement.</p>
Teachers	<p>Resource pack This will feature schemes of work from the Foundation Stage to post-16. The schemes are based on the eight sustainable school doorways and include links to National Curriculum subjects.</p>
Whole school	<p>Teaching Awards For the first time the 2006-7 Teaching Awards programme will include an award for sustainable development, open to all schools.</p>

Target group	Activity
Governors	<p>Guidance</p> <p>Concise and practical guidance for governors to help them understand the benefits of sustainable schools, and provide the leadership necessary to position sustainability at the heart of school life.</p>
Bursars, caretakers, catering staff and school managers	<p>Guidance</p> <p>A short handbook addressing energy, water, waste, travel and procurement issues in schools. The guidance will summarise potential measures with a quick visual indication of costs and benefits, and a page of supporting information, explanations and links.</p>
School suppliers and partners	<p>Sustainable procurement event</p> <p>Firms that supply goods and services to schools will be asked to consider how they could begin offering more sustainable choices to schools.</p> <p>Sustainable design case studies</p> <p>Ten case studies describing school buildings that exhibit a high degree of sustainable design. Intended as a guide and inspiration for architects, contractors, buildings commissioners, and school teams involved in new build/refurbishment projects.</p>
Regional and local government	<p>Network support</p> <p>We are working with Government Offices, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Assemblies to ensure that children's and learning services are joined up with wider action on sustainable development in the regions. Each Government Office will receive £25,000 for both 2006/07 and 2007/08 to stimulate good practice networks linking schools with regional demand for sustainability skills.</p>
Central government and its agencies	<p>Action plan</p> <p>In January 2007 we will publish an action plan explaining what actions we and other government departments, and our agencies, will do to support sustainable schools.</p>

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further resources

FACT: Global fresh water use has more than tripled since 1950. One billion people now lack access to clean drinking water, and 2.6 billion lack adequate sanitation. [Defra, UN]

Here are a range of web sites to help you follow up the ideas in this document.

Sustainable Schools area of Teachernet:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools

Government web portal:
www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

Independent advisor and watchdog:
www.sd-commission.gov.uk

Indicators:
www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/progress/national/index.htm

DfES policy and action plan:
www.dfes.gov.uk/aboutus/sd

If I were Prime Minister...

“ I would try and make a different kind of fuel that was good for the world. I would make people share their cars more. I would make an eco-adventure park where people could have fun and learn stuff.”

(age 5-8)

“ Cars would not be permitted for distances under half a mile, which would reduce global warming and would give people more exercise. People would have to pay taxes for every bag of rubbish they throw to landfill.”

(age 9-11)

“Teach Fair Trade in schools.”

(age 12-14)

“ More money for things like solar panels to make schools more sustainable. Have fines for not recycling recyclable materials, then the money would go to trying to make sustainable products.”

(age 9-11)

“ Keep the environment clean from pollution. More public transportation instead of your own cars. More small roads for bikes to go on.”

(age 12-14)

“ Make Britain almost 100% dependent on renewable energy.”

(age 15-19)

“Windmills instead of pylons.”

(age 9-11)

“ Charge traffic and aeroplane taxes to make people think twice before flying or driving. Plant free new trees every time someone dies. Lessons on the environment and sustainable development should be compulsory.”

(age 9-11)

“ Sort the energy crisis NOW, sort the water crisis NOW and promote more eco-friendly ways to make our world better.”

(age 15-19)

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www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

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The Department for Education and Skills sources its paper through the Recycled Printing Papers (RPP) Framework established by Government to mainstream the use of recycled paper in printing, copying and publications.

The sustainable schools consultation is *climate neutral*. Working with Climate Care, we have offset the CO₂ emissions arising from all printing and distribution, consultation events, and response routes. The money used to offset these will go towards sustainable energy projects, like the production of energy efficient cooking stoves for schools in India.

