

Climate Action Route Map for Schools and Settings

What is the Climate Action Route Map (CARM)?

This Route map will support senior leaders to provide high quality Climate education through describing 10 steps based on established good practice and evidence of what works. In making progress against a backdrop of the current declared climate emergency schools/settings should adopt a strategic approach providing an underpinning infrastructure to support a journey to sustainability. Schools/settings are invariably at different stages and should view this Route map in that context; even the most advanced schools/settings will have something to gain from this Route map as it provides the latest advice, guidance and support on everything from policy and resources to effectively engaging pupil voice and participation in developing Climate education provision.



1. Communicate the facts

The debate over the causes of climate change has a long and turbulent history which continues to this day. Overwhelmingly, however, the scientific community acknowledges the impact of human activity on the environment and evidence is clear that, unless the world takes urgent action to limit carbon emissions within this decade, average global temperatures will rise above 1.5°C with catastrophic consequences. Recent instances of direct action across the world provide both a spotlight on, and reflection of, a heightened sense of anxiety, particularly amongst our children and young people which is, in some cases, negatively impacting their mental wellbeing. Increasingly professionals report a surge in 'eco-anxiety'; a concern or worry about ecological disasters and the advertised risk to the natural environment. Arguably, this puts even greater emphasis on clarifying a school/settings' position alongside an awareness of the impact of the language used when communicating with pupils i.e. key vocabulary needs to be communicated in a positive way empowering pupils to take action and seeking to galvanise their passion rather than leaving them feeling powerless, uninvolved and potentially even more anxious – a solutions focussed approach (see 4 below).

In response to the landmark **United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C** warning that, unless urgent action is taken, the opportunity to avoid the worst effects of climate change will be missed, Leeds City Council declared a climate emergency at full Council (March 2019). This marked an important turning point for the Council and the city to put sustainability, biodiversity and the reduction of carbon emissions firmly centre-stage. Importantly, there was complete political consensus that we are in an emergency situation – the climate is changing and the impact of the increased regularity of extreme weather events is being keenly felt. The UK government has set a target for carbon neutrality by 2050, the vast bulk of the reduction will need to be achieved this decade – a 50% reduction by 2025 and 85% by 2030. Leeds City Council is focussed on 2030 and working towards achieving carbon neutrality by that date. To meet this a significant reduction in carbon emissions is required through action in key areas such as energy, buildings, transport, food, waste, tree planting, public engagement, etc. In working to make Leeds carbon neutral by 2030 tackling climate change is now one of the Council's 3 key strategic plans, sitting equally alongside inclusive growth and improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

What this might look like in practice:

- A dedicated statement outlining the position of your school/setting regarding Climate education has been communicated to the whole school community (see Step 5)
- Climate education is referenced in the School/setting Improvement/Development Plan (SIP/SDP) and reported in the Self Evaluation Summary (SES)

2. Leadership

Overseeing effective, sustainable change requires schools/settings to designate a member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with a remit for climate education. Similarly, nominating a Governor with a specific responsibility for climate education, would not only strengthen the leadership and direction of climate education provision in school, but would also be good practice. The school/setting should agree and publish its position on the Climate emergency – see Step 5.

What this might look like in practice:

- Climate education is clearly referenced in the School/setting Improvement/Development Plan (SIP/SDP) and reported in the Self Evaluation Summary (SES)
- Strategic school/setting senior leader for Climate education is designated
- A Climate education working group is established
- A role of Governor with specific responsibility for Climate education is created
- TLR for a climate education action Co-ordinator

3. Assessing your current provision

To action plan and implement your school/setting Climate education priorities you will need to know your current provision both in terms of teaching and learning through the curriculum as well as in your values and ways of working (school estate/campus). These should not be seen as mutually exclusive rather the broadest perspective should be adopted whereby the school estate/campus and the local community are viewed as practice grounds where pupils apply their learning to 'real world' situations and challenges e.g. improving energy efficiency in school buildings, emergency planning response in preparation for extreme weather events such as heatwaves and/or flooding, etc. and embracing circular economy principles to reduce waste and single-use plastic products in school.

What this might look like in practice:

- Consult with colleagues to identify where climate education may already be being delivered e.g. requirements in PSHE/Citizenship/Geography/Science curriculum
- Engage with your school Caretaker/Facilities managers to identify potential opportunities for students to engage in real world learning through e.g. monitoring energy/water use

4. Pupil voice and participation

Given the 'futures' dimension of Climate education it is critical to engage pupils in the change process as early as possible not least because this will help to counter feelings of helplessness and associated anxiety through a solutions focussed approach but local consultative activities ensure provision can be tailored to meet the concerns of pupils as well as opening up discussions around priority actions.

What this might look like in practice:

- Establish a Pupil Voice forum (Climate education Group/Eco-Committee/Green Team) whose role it is to seek the views of peers and propose, discuss, agree and plan appropriate actions
- Support for pupil audits of current provision and pupil perceptions

5. Develop/Refresh your Climate education position statement

A climate education position statement sets out your whole school/setting approach to Climate education including reference to the current climate emergency that demands action and measurable systemic change and signals the school's intent to use climate education to enhance learning and the future aspirations of your pupils. Including adaptation and any emergency planning in preparation for extreme weather events such as heatwaves and/or flooding, etc. will strengthen your position statement. Your Climate education position statement should also link in to your school ethos, safeguarding policies and equal opportunities and should reflect your aims, aspirations and school/setting values summarising how you will achieve your objectives.

What this might look like in practice:

- Published climate education position statement countersigned by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors
- To be meaningful your climate education position statement involves establishing what a climate emergency means for your school e.g. for one school* this meant; acknowledging the scientific indicators e.g. IPCC reports on warming (above) and UN reports on 'loss of biodiversity and consequences of economic growth; accepting the urgency of the situation - for a realistic chance of tackling these issues urgent and immediate action must be taken within the next few years, and; acknowledging that the purpose of educators, of building bright futures for our children and young people, is severely threatened.

(*Morpeth School, London: <https://neu.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-12/Declare%20a%20Climate%20Emergency%20At%20Your%20School.pdf>)

6. Curriculum review and development

An effective curriculum for Climate education needs to be comprehensive, spiral and responsive to pupil need. You will need to identify any gaps in current provision and regular updates will ensure your programme is inclusive with engaging lessons reflecting real life issues and developing a balance of skills, knowledge and attitudes. The education Inspection framework from September 2019 with its' renewed focus on a 'broad and balanced curriculum' provides opportunities for greater integration of Climate education. Currently there are calls for reviewing how the whole of the English formal education system is preparing students for the climate emergency.

What this might look like in practice:

- Review your school curriculum to identify any opportunities to teach more broadly about Climate education e.g. ask colleagues to use curriculum time to discuss how climate education could be incorporated into their lessons as a priority e.g. links to citizenship and character education, using recycled fabrics in art and DT looking at persuasive writing featuring climate change, etc.

7. Supporting your staff

Addressing Climate education and identifying solutions is not easy. The schools/settings leadership should consider and encourage all staff to think about how to; work differently; review policy changes and investments needed to transition from where we are now to where we have to be e.g. how can individual car use be reduced? how can energy use in school buildings be minimised? how can less waste be produced? Clearly this will affect everyone who works in a school/setting, it's everyone's business and all staff have a role to play - some may need further specialist training. Teachers "*need the confidence, knowledge and skills to be able to help their pupils understand the causes, drivers and consequences of climate change in order to shape their environmentally conscious mindsets*" (UN Secretary general 2018 Antonio Guterres). Are you aware of the current CPD needs of your staff and have you considered how these will be met?

What this might look like in practice:

- Determine staff CPD needs through a whole school/setting staff survey on Climate education
- Schedule whole school INSET on the climate crisis so all members of staff have a good knowledge base
- Have at least one teacher specifically trained in teaching Climate Education through e.g. EduCCate Global climate change education program at <https://www.educateglobal.org/> or WWF's Education for a Sustainable Planet: an online course for Educators <https://www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/schools/teacher-development>

8. Action Planning and implementation

Having established your current school/settings' Climate education provision (Step 3) you will be in a stronger position to be able to identify key priorities for action.

What this might look like in practice:

A School/setting Climate education Action Plan has been drafted detailing;

- Specific targets and action to be taken to achieve the targets
- Person(s) responsible for overseeing each target
- Success criteria
- Timeframe for achievement of targets, and
- Review date and contingency for what happens if targets are not met

9. Review and evaluation

As with all subjects effective monitoring and evaluation is crucial to indicating if your planned outcomes are being met and, if not, to identifying what needs to change.

What this might look like in practice:

- Systems for monitoring and evaluating Climate education have been incorporated into your routine monitoring and evaluation cycle.

10. Communication is key

Bring the whole school/setting community along with you, through continuous dialogue with parents, staff, governors and pupils.

What this might look like in practice:

- School/setting plans for Climate education and updates are regularly reported and communicated through your normal channels of communication e.g. assemblies, letters, school website and in news articles
- Pupils and staff are encouraged to apply their learning to their lives outside school/setting supporting them to share their learning at home and in/with the community

