

# Curriculum and Assessment Review – a statement of principles from the National Climate Education Action Plan Group

The [National Climate Education Action Plan](#) Group is a broad group of organisations that meet regularly to help deliver on a series of nine asks to make better climate education available to all. We have been working closely with DfE on this area and our work is referenced in the current Sustainability and Climate Change strategy.

Following the establishment of the Curriculum and Assessment review and the call for evidence, we met to share our ideas about this topic. Most of our members are planning to provide detailed evidence that reflects their own expertise and prior work. Nonetheless, through discussing our individual responses to the call for evidence, it was clear that there is quite broad agreement across the Group about how the critical area of climate and sustainability education fits within it. This document provides a succinct summary of these areas of common agreement. They are framed around the five key areas that the review seeks to ensure the curriculum will deliver. We have linked to relevant evidence to support the narrative with in-text html links.

According to the most recent [UNEP Emissions Gap report](#), current global policies would lead to global mean temperature rises of more than three degrees by the end of the century. As reported through the latest IPCC report, a temperature rise of this size would pose [high or very high risks](#) to a wide range of natural and human systems. Children entering education this year will be [70 years old by 2090](#), when many of these impacts will be most severely felt. Article 12 of the Paris Climate Agreement commits signatories, including the UK, to take meaningful [Action for Climate Empowerment \(ACE\)](#) by developing educational curricula to give young people a deep-seated appreciation of the climate challenge: its causes, its impacts and its solutions. By 2029, as announced at COP29, it is likely that climate literacy will be a key metric assessed in the OECD PISA benchmarks. The UK's Net Zero targets will be at risk if the future workforce does not have the skills to deliver them, and this needs to be reflected in curriculum choices and how we teach it.

## **An excellent foundation in core subjects of reading, writing and maths.**

We think a further fundamental foundation should be added to this core, an appreciation for and connection to our natural world. Currently, young people's [connection to nature](#) declines dramatically after the age of eleven. The [Dasgupta review](#) into the economics of biodiversity powerfully advocates for this transformative change. There would be no better way to signal this change to the sector and to wider society than by making nature connectedness a key mission of the education system.

## **A broader curriculum, with improved access to music, art, sport and drama as well as vocational subjects.**

Climate change and the biodiversity crisis impact many areas of human society and the natural world. It's therefore right that these topics should be taught across the curriculum, beginning with a strong foundation in science, geography and citizenship, crossing into subjects that allow us to develop and build climate solutions and throughout subjects that allow young people to express their fears and hopes for future and their connectedness to the natural world through their creative expression. Understanding of people, their values and behaviours and the societies in which they live is an essential part of addressing environmental challenges and [driving green growth](#).

Recent reviews ([Curriculum for a Changing Climate](#); [Climate Education in the Curriculum; Impact Report](#)) have shown that this [cross-curricula](#) approach can be achieved in the curriculum as it stands, with minimal but important changes and with a more dramatic re-imagining of the status quo.

## **A curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work.**

[Recent estimates](#) show that there are hundreds of thousands of jobs already involved in the green transition and that “between [135,000 and 725,000 net new jobs](#) could be created by 2030 in low-carbon sectors, such as building retrofit, renewable energy generation and the manufacture of electric vehicles.”

It is the role of the curriculum to equip the next generation to deal with the challenges we face. To achieve this, we need a curriculum that offers an improved, broad and compulsory climate and sustainability education. This will help to build and underpin the directly employed green workforce and ensure that as a nation we have the wider sustainability skills that our economy and society needs to make Britain a clean energy superpower. Indeed, the lack of a [diverse](#), skilled workforce has the potential to [constrain delivery](#) of the UK's carbon targets. Further links between the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) and these green skills would be a welcome step forward.

## **A curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented.**

As we note above, the climate and nature crises are arguably the defining global and national issue that will shape the lives of young people currently entering education. There is a strong intersection between the environmental vulnerability of societies and [historical and ongoing patterns of inequity](#). The latest [UK Climate Risk Assessment](#) notes the clear links between socio-economic and environmental vulnerability in the UK. Good climate and sustainability education should recognise those links and allow young people the time and space to properly interrogate and understand them.

There is widespread and legitimate concern about the impact of environmental challenges on the [mental health and well-being](#) of young people. Active learning on climate and sustainability in an education setting is one means of addressing this anxiety. A robust curriculum also nurtures resilience and supports protective factors relating to well-being and safeguarding policies

### **An assessment system that captures:**

- **The strengths of every child and young person**
- **The breadth of the curriculum**

Incorporating climate and sustainability broadly across the curriculum is one means of ensuring that critical green skills are taught to all children regardless of their educational journey. The current narrowness of the climate and sustainability offer means that it is possible for young people to miss out a great deal of this material.

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are [least likely to be engaged](#) in climate and sustainability issues. There should be focussed attention to address engagement with these communities. Education professionals also suggest that there is a particularly acute need for SEN pupils and a relative dearth of high-quality pedagogy or educational materials in this area.

**The statement has been prepared and endorsed by the following individuals and organisations who are part of the National Climate Education Action Plan Group.**

### **Organisations**

- Ashden/Let's Go Zero (Alex Green)
- Association for Citizenship Teaching (Liz Moore)
- Bertha Earth (James Canvin)
- Better Planet Education (Peter Littlewood)
- ClimatEdPsych (Dr Louise Edgington)
- Earthwatch Europe (Megan Evans)
- EAUC (Charlotte Bonner)
- Eden Project (Sam Kendall)
- Field Studies Council (Jo Harris)
- Generation C (Ivor Tucker)
- Geographical Association (Steve Brace)
- Global Action Plan (Dr Morgan Phillips)
- Green Schools Project (Henry Greenwood)
- Herts Sustainability Leads Network (Catherine Tallis)
- Learning through Landscapes (Carley Sefton)
- Liverpool Hope University (Professor Philip Bamber)
- Ministry of Eco Education (Paul Turner)
- Morecombe Bay Curriculum (Carys Nelkon, Bethan Garrett)
- National Association for Environmental Education (Dr Paul Vare)
- Natural History Museum (Lauren Hyams)
- Project Earth (Becky Parker)
- Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) (Kirsty Dabbs)
- Royal Geographical Society (Simon Pinfield)
- Royal Meteorological Society (Sylvia Knight)
- SOS-UK (Jamie Agombar & Hannah Fitzpatrick)
- Sustainability Managers for Schools CIC (Natalie Bayliss)
- The Eco Attractions Group (Amy Blake)
- ThoughtBox Education (Rachel Musson)
- TIDE Community (Sean Mcquaid)
- Trust for Sustainable Living (Kirsty Shakespeare)
- Twinkl Educational Publishing (Kat Oakes)
- UCL Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Education (Alison Kitson)
- University of Reading (Dawn Aggas, Gemma Bailey, Fiona Blair, Prof. Andrew Charlton-Perez, Dr Sarah Marston, Dylan Parkes, Dr Jo Anna Reed Johnson)

## Individuals

- Clive Belgeonne (DECSY (Development Education Centre, South Yorkshire))
- Dr Elle Young (Climate Ambassadors/Newcastle University)
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- James Rae (University of St Andrews)
- Katie Eberstein (Brighton and Hove Council)
- Katie Parsons (Loughborough University)
- Kit Marie Rackley (Climate Ambassadors/University of East Anglia/National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers)
- Matthew Knight (The Tree Council)
- Prof Leigh Hoath (Leeds Trinity University)
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- Stephen Frampton MBE (SS4FE)
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