

# Brent Schools Climate Action Guide



Wildflowers at Frynt Primary School, planted in partnership with LEAP London

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Artwork by Monalisa, Year 7, St Gregory's Catholic Science College



## Glossary of key terms

### **Adaptation**

Changing our behaviours and infrastructure to cope with a changing climate, which in turn makes us more resilient to climate change.

### **Biodiversity**

The variety of life in an area.

### **Carbon emissions**

Carbon that is released into the atmosphere through, for example, burning fossil fuels.

### **Carbon neutral**

Having a balance between how much carbon is released into and absorbed from the atmosphere. This can be achieved through reducing how much carbon is released into the atmosphere, and increasing absorption through increasing plant and tree cover.

### **Climate and ecological emergency**

The concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is causing global warming and climate change. We need to prevent atmospheric greenhouse gases rising to a certain level in order to avoid irreversible climate change.

### **Climate-resilient**

Making ourselves, our infrastructure and our practices less vulnerable to climate change. This means we are more able to cope with the changing climate.

### **Consumption**

Our use of resources.

### **Decarbonisation**

Reducing how much carbon is released into the atmosphere through reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, reducing energy use, changing farming practices, and carbon capture.

### **Ecosystem**

A community of living organisms that interact with each other and their environment.

### **Enhanced greenhouse effect**

Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere help to retain heat and keep the planet warm enough to sustain life. However, increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases will enhance this effect and cause the Earth to heat up.

### **Green skills**

Those needed for an environmentally sustainable society. They are in increasing demand as new technologies are developed and business and industries develop more sustainable practices.

### **Greenhouse gases**

Gases in the atmosphere which help to retain heat. They are carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and water vapour.

### **Mitigation**

Taking steps to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in order to avoid or reduce climate change.

### **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)**

Natural drainage systems that support with water flow and flood risk reduction. An example of this is replacing concrete with soil and plants to increase water infiltration.

### **Urban heat island effect**

The urban heat island (UHI) effect is when cities have higher temperatures than neighbouring rural areas. This is because of the increased levels of energy being produced by people, cars, trains and buildings. Lots of insulated buildings will also heat up the areas around them. Areas with taller buildings also trap heat, contributing to the overall temperature.



## Introduction and context

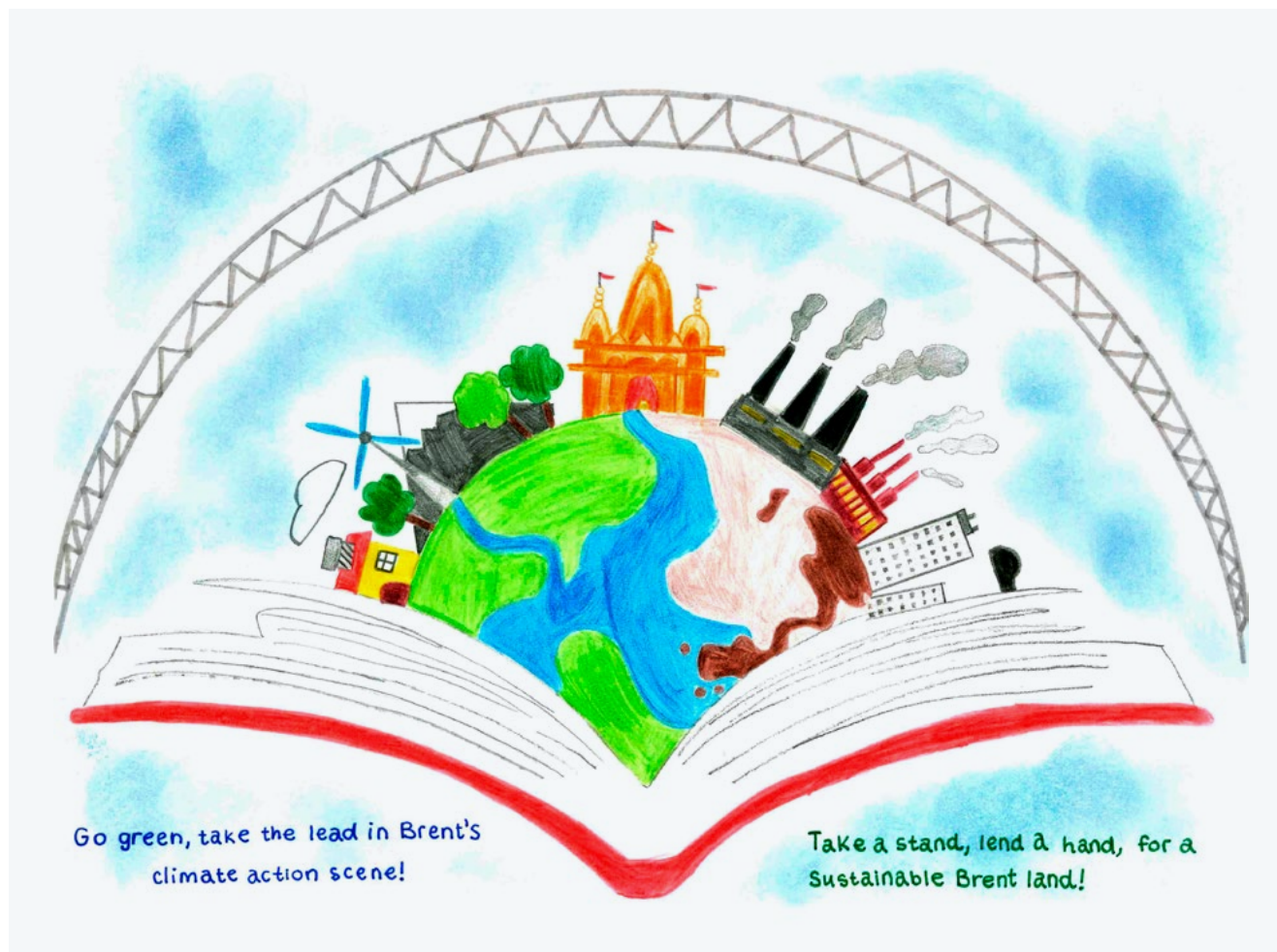
### What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide is designed to support schools with developing climate action plans and contributing to Brent's strategy for reaching carbon neutrality by 2030.

Developed in consultation with teachers across Brent, this guide is broken down into six different areas of climate action, each containing suggested activities, case studies, resources, and practical tips.

### With this guide, Brent aims to support schools in:

- Developing climate action plans
- Making climate action initiatives more manageable for busy schools
- Embedding climate education in the curriculum so that children can take climate action now and in the future
- Creating positive cultures that enable and encourage the school community to make sustainable choices
- Making school sites more green, climate-resilient, energy-efficient and sustainable



Artwork by Tiana, Year 8, Preston Manor School



# Introduction and context

## What is climate change?

Climate change is the long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns around the world. There are some natural causes of climate change, such as changes in the Sun's activity.

However, human activity is the main driver of climate change and our actions have caused this process to accelerate so much that we need to take urgent action.



Artwork by Lara, Year 8, Preston Manor School



## What causes climate change?



Human activities, such as deforestation, the use of fossil fuels for energy, and farming practices, have increased concentrations of carbon in the atmosphere.



An increase in carbon in the atmosphere means that more heat is trapped inside it. This is called the enhanced greenhouse effect.



The enhanced greenhouse effect causes the Earth's average temperature to increase. This is called global warming.



Global warming does not only lead to increased temperatures. Because the Earth is a system, a change in one place cause changes in other places. This leads to changing weather patterns across the planet.

## Introduction and context

### Why do we need to take climate action?

Our planet is facing a climate and ecological emergency. Already we are seeing serious impacts, such as [recent extreme flooding in Pakistan](#), prolonged droughts and catastrophic [wildfires in Australia](#), and increasing Arctic temperatures leading to the [shrinking of sea ice](#) cover in Greenland.

In the UK, data shows a trend of increasing temperatures, with 2023 being the [second-warmest year on record](#). Record-breaking extreme weather in the winter of 2023 caused [significant flooding](#) and the Environment Agency has urged communities to understand their flood risk as climate change increases the dangers.

It is widely agreed by climate scientists that if urgent action is not taken within the next decade to reduce emissions and limit global heating, the damage done to our climate and ecosystems will be irreversible.

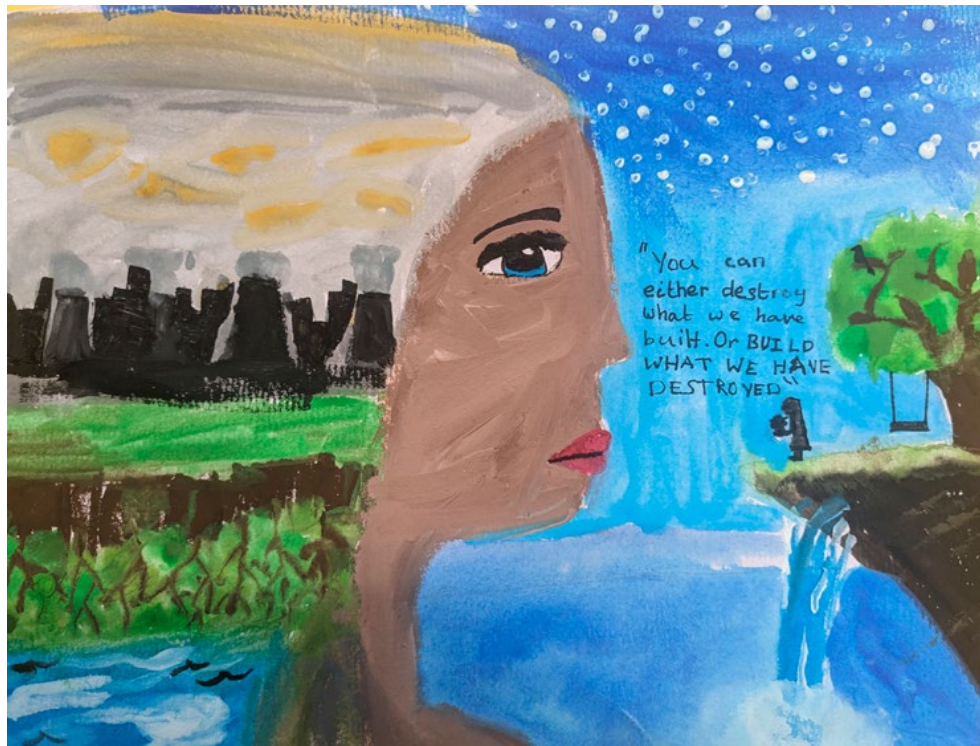
In response to this, Brent declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019, and committed to do all reasonable to aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. Brent's [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-30](#) outlines how Brent aims to make sustainable improvements across five key areas:

Consumption, waste and resources; Transport; Supporting communities; Nature and green space; and Homes, buildings and the built environment.

### What is climate justice?

Climate justice is about acknowledging and addressing how disadvantaged or vulnerable communities around the world experience greater effects of climate change, even though they have contributed fewer emissions.

If we are to tackle climate change, we must recognise that it is not just an environmental issue, but also a social issue. In our climate action work, it is important that we also address inequalities to ensure that vulnerable communities don't suffer the most.



Artwork by Deeptanshi  
Year 6, Kingsbury Green  
Primary School



## Introduction and context

### What role do schools play in tackling the climate emergency?

Schools play an important role in Brent's strategy to become carbon neutral by 2030. Schools are central to developing knowledge and understanding of the climate crisis, developing green skills, and making young people aware of opportunities in green careers.

Not only this, but schools have the power to be catalysts for change in the community through involving families in sustainability work and encouraging sustainable behaviours at home. Schools can also take steps to make their sites more sustainable through increasing energy efficiency and increasing biodiversity.

Taking climate action as a school not only makes a positive contribution to the wellbeing of our planet, but brings with it a range of benefits for your whole school community.

The DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change [Strategy for Education](#) has also set out a key initiative for all schools to have a nominated sustainability lead and a climate action plan in place by 2025. This guide will support schools with meeting these requirements and making a positive contribution to Brent's climate action strategy.

#### By taking climate action, schools can:

- **Demonstrate leadership**
- **Reduce energy costs** in the long run
- Develop and harness **young peoples' passion and enthusiasm**
- Develop **knowledge and capacity** for tackling climate change across the school community
- Develop a range of **green skills** in young people, including leadership and problem-solving
- Engage your **school community in positive projects**
- Improve **staff and student wellbeing**
- **Prevent school closures** and absence through developing climate-resilient school sites



Artwork by Khloe  
Year 8, St Gregory's Catholic Science College



# Steps to taking climate action in schools

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**Step 1** | Getting started

**Step 2** | Getting to know your context

**Step 3** | Finding inspiration

**Step 4** | Making your climate action plan

**Step 5** | Putting the plan into action

**Step 6** | Record and share your hard work



## Overview

To make climate action more manageable yet thorough, we suggest working through the stages outlined in the following table.

The following pages of this guide correspond with these stages of climate action.

Stages of climate action	What happens in each stage?
<b>Step 1: Getting started</b>	This stage is about making sure your school community is informed and prepared for taking climate action. This might involve staff training, setting up sustainability teams and committees, and signing up to useful organisations. Check pages 10-12 for more information.
<b>Step 2: Getting to know your context</b>	This stage is about understanding what your school is already doing to tackle the climate emergency, and identifying areas of improvement. This might involve doing surveys and audits to identify the school's carbon footprint, behaviours and practices, and green space. Check page 13 for more information.
<b>Step 3: Finding inspiration</b>	This stage is about finding inspiration and ideas for your own climate action initiatives. Check pages 14-35 for case studies, resources, and suggested activities.
<b>Step 4: Making your climate action plan</b>	This stage is about putting together your climate action plan! Through this, you can identify what areas you want to work on and plan out the timeline, costs, and people involved. Check page 36 for more information.
<b>Step 5: Putting the plan into action</b>	This stage is about taking steps that will support you in bringing your climate action plan to life. Check page 37 for more information.
<b>Step 6: Record and share your hard work</b>	This stage is about identifying and celebrating your progress. Check page 38 for more information.



## Step 1 | Getting started

### Ensure staff are confident about climate change and climate action

It is important that staff are knowledgeable about climate change and sustainability. Consider how you can embed and deliver training to your staff on this. There are a range of training opportunities and providers, such as [Future Learn](#), [Earth Warriors](#) and [The Carbon Literacy Project](#).

You can also look out for training opportunities from Brent Council which will run throughout the year.

### Put together a sustainability team

The sustainability team plays a crucial role in implementing the steps in this guide and overseeing the schools' efforts towards sustainability. Please see page 12 for more information on how your sustainability team might look.

### Form a student eco-committee

The student eco-committee should be central to the implementation of climate action in schools. The eco-committee should have representation of year groups across the school.

### Share with school community

Inform your school community of your plans for taking climate action. See the case studies on the next page for inspiration of how you might do this.

### Sign up to Education Nature Park and Climate Action Awards

This platform provides a range of free resources and guidance on how to put nature at the heart of education, foster meaningful connections to nature and contribute to nature recovery.



Roe Green Junior School's Eco-Warriors attending the Brent Climate Showcase in December 2023



# Step 1 | Getting started

## CASE STUDY

### Eco-Champions and Sustainability Newsletters at Kingsbury Green Primary School

To get the Eco-Champions group set up at Kingsbury Green, the Sustainability Lead created specific jobs for the students to apply for. They also decided on the budget for equipment, when to set regular meetings, and made a rough list of projects for the year. Once the eco-champions were appointed, Kingsbury Green informed their school community through emails and newsletters, and got to work on some climate action initiatives.

Their advice to other schools is to make sure you have backing from SLT and that you are as passionate as the children!

To keep parents informed, the sustainability lead sends out a termly sustainability-themed [newsletter](#), containing updates on the activities and achievements of the eco-champions. The newsletter is also an opportunity to remind parents of the importance of climate action and to share ideas to inspire others.



Sustainability Lead, Leanne, with 126 applications from pupils who wish to become Eco-Champions

## CASE STUDY

### Poster competitions at St Claudine's Catholic School for Girls

Every year, a poster competition is held to promote the benefits of cycling, scooting or walking to school for reducing air pollution. Posters are put up in displays around school as a constant reminder for students and staff.

This could be a great way to engage your school community in climate action.

## CASE STUDY

### Roe Green Junior School raise awareness in the community

In 2020, [pupils staged a climate march](#) from their school to Kingsbury High Street to help spread awareness of climate change in the local community. This idea was devised by the student councillors who felt passionately about the environmental impacts of climate change. Pupils made banners and signs reading "Save Our Planet – it's the only one that we have" and "There is no Planet B". Once they reached the high street, pupils delivered speeches, songs and raps to the community.

## CASE STUDY

### Inclusive eco-roles at The Manor School

The Manor School, a special school in Brent, has adapted their eco-committee roles to suit the needs of their students. Some students take on roles in the eco council, who help to make decisions around their sustainability work, and some students take on the role of eco-activist, who help to carry out the projects. The Manor School have found an inclusive way to make sure that their students can take part in climate action initiatives.



## Step 1 | Getting started

### Putting together a sustainability team

We think that climate action should be shared across a team which represents different parts of the school community.

Working together allows schools to share the work, utilise and develop a range of skills and knowledge, ensure all areas of the school are included, and empower children, young people and the community to take climate action.

The following table suggests a role description for each member of the team, but this can be amended to suit your own school context.

The representative in the table is indicative, and this may differ slightly depending on your school staffing.

Representative	Shared responsibilities	Specific responsibilities
<b>Student eco-committee and their lead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having a say</li> <li>● Helping to put together a climate action plan</li> <li>● Helping to spread awareness and inspire others to take action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support and lead on climate action projects</li> <li>● Represent your school</li> </ul>
<b>Caretaker/site team</b>		Support with improvements to the school site which reduce energy use, increase climate-resilience and increase green space
<b>Business manager</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support with financial decisions and planning for climate action projects</li> <li>● Stay up-to-date with new funding opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher</b>		Support with climate action as it relates to teaching and learning and the curriculum, as well as extra-curricular activities
<b>Member of SLT</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support with making big decisions and providing oversight of large-scale projects</li> <li>● Stay up-to-date with new funding opportunities</li> <li>● Monitor improvements in sustainability</li> </ul>
<b>Parent/carer</b>		Support with sustainability projects and inspire other parents/carers to take climate action
<b>Governor/trustee</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support with making big decisions and overseeing the implementation of sustainability initiatives across the school</li> <li>● Stay up-to-date with new funding opportunities</li> <li>● Monitor improvements in sustainability</li> </ul>



## Step 2 | Getting to know your context

It is important that your sustainability team knows the school context well so that your climate action plan can be as effective as possible and target the right areas.

We recommend working with your eco-committee to undertake surveys, questionnaires and audits of your school site and community.

You may already be involved in initiatives such as Eco-Schools or TfL Travel for Life, which provide schools with surveys to understand your context, which you can use to develop your climate action plan.



Artwork by Ash Tree Class, Reception, Convent of Jesus and Mary Catholic Infant School

### We suggest carrying out the following initiatives:

- **Understanding your carbon footprint:** Using Keep Britain Tidy's [Count Your Carbon tool](#), identify the school's carbon footprint and receive a breakdown by area. This will help your team identify areas of priority in your climate action plan.
  - **Understanding your energy efficiency:** Review the Recommendation Report from your Display Energy Certificate [DEC] to understand the schools' energy efficiency. You can also [sign up to Climate Friendly Schools](#) for free and access their energy audit tool.
  - **Understanding your climate and pollution risk:** Review the UK Government's [flood risk map](#) and check [pollution levels](#) around your school (and conduct a risk audit of the school site) to identify the risk of being affected by pollution and extreme weather.
  - **Understanding your waste:** Conduct a [bin audit](#) to identify how much plastic and food waste your school produces. You can also [sign up to Climate Friendly Schools](#) for free and access their Food and Consumption audit tools.
  - **Understanding your curriculum:** Conduct a curriculum audit to see where climate education and green careers feature, or could feature in the future. Use the Teach the Future [Tracked Changes Project](#) and Brighton and Hove's [Our City Our World](#) conceptual mapping tool to conduct an audit.
  - **Understanding nature on your school site:** Conduct a nature survey of the school site (see pages 19-21 for more guidance).
  - **Understanding attitudes and behaviours:** Conduct a survey among students, staff and parents to understand current behaviours and attitudes around climate action.
- Visit the [Brent website](#) to download tools to support with these initiatives.**
- If your school has applied for the Green Flag with Eco-Schools, you could use the surveys provided in the Environmental Review pack to understand your current context.



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Decarbonisation: Energy

**Decarbonisation** is all about reducing how much carbon we release into the atmosphere. In Brent, carbon emissions from energy account for 78% of all **carbon emissions** produced in the borough; this is a significant contributor to the changing climate! Homes and buildings need to become more energy efficient and be powered by renewable energy sources to reduce these emissions.

There are steps that schools can take to switch to renewable energy or improve the retrofitting of the building. Schools can also have a positive influence on energy use in the homes of their students, through promoting sustainable behaviours and raising awareness of the need to improve energy efficiency.

#### CASE STUDY

##### Solar panels at Roe Green Junior School

In 2011, Roe Green Juniors installed solar panels on the roof, making the school self-sufficient for its energy needs. The solar panels also provide an excellent learning opportunity, where pupils learn more about them in their science and geography lessons on climate change and energy.

#### Brent's objective by 2030

As many homes and buildings in the borough as possible will be more energy efficient, be powered by renewable sources and be resilient to future adverse weather events caused by climate change.

#### Schools objectives

- Increase energy efficiency of the school site
- Increase use of renewable energy sources on the school site
- Create a positive culture and influence behaviour change around reducing energy use



#### CASE STUDY

##### Switch-off campaign at Kingsbury Green Primary School

The Eco-Champions at Kingsbury Green Primary school led the Switch Off Fortnight campaign with all pupils across the school over a two-week period. This nationwide campaign takes place every November to encourage schools to switch off lights and electrical appliances when not in use. The goals for schools are to help save energy and monitor the impact of changing user behaviour on the school's energy use.

Children were monitoring electricity usage across classrooms and thought of ways to save energy and reduce energy wastage around school and at home. The school also participated in a competition led by the Pod to design a Switch Off Fortnight campaign t-shirt.



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Decarbonisation: Travel

Currently, road transport represents 22% of all carbon emissions from Brent. Moving away from private car usage and towards public transport, electric vehicles, walking and cycling will have huge positive impacts for the climate and public health.

Schools have an important role to play in encouraging and facilitating forms of travel that help to reduce carbon emissions. That's why Brent encourages all schools to sign-up to the [TfL Travel for Life](#) program (formerly STARS), which is designed to support schools with changing how their community travel to and from school. The program has a host of comprehensive steps for reducing carbon emissions through travel. Primary schools can sign up to TfL Explorers and secondary schools can sign up to TfL Pioneers.

#### Brent's objective by 2030

Petrol and diesel road journeys will have at least halved in the borough, being driven as close as possible to zero, with an accompanying increase in journeys made by residents through cycling, walking or public transport.

#### Schools objectives

- Encourage journeys taken by walking, cycling and public transport
- Create a positive culture and behaviour change around transport use

#### CASE STUDY

##### Going for gold at Brentfield Primary School

Brentfield Primary School hold Gold accreditation in TfL's Travel for Life programme. To achieve this, they make changes such as walking or using public transport for school trips, and hold special assemblies on road safety. You can read more about what our local Brent schools do to [support sustainable travel](#).



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Decarbonisation: ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Install solar panels on the roof to increase your use of renewable energy. To find out how, check the <a href="#">Energy Saving Trust Solar Panel Guide</a>	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
When it is time to replace your windows, go for energy-efficient glazing that helps to retain as much heat as possible. For more information check the <a href="#">Energy Saving Trust website</a>	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
If your school is able to, install sensors so that lights are only on as needed	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Deliver some lessons outside. This means heating, air conditioning, lights and monitors can be turned off. It's also a great way to make use of green space available and embed its use into your curriculum. For guidance check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Teach Outdoors, Education through outdoor learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A Teachers Guide to Adapting Lesson Plans for Outdoor Learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Teaching Outdoors (outdoor-learning.org)</a></li> </ul>	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Install energy-efficient alternatives when electricals need replacing – e.g. LED lightbulbs and energy-efficient printers	–	✓	–	–	–	–	–
Assess the building for drafts and make small changes to reduce heat loss. For more information check the <a href="#">Energy Saving Trust website</a>	–	–	–	–	✓	–	–
Reduce energy use with a school-based 'switch-off' campaign to encourage students and staff to turn off lights and monitors. Expand the reach of this campaign by providing information to parents/carers in your newsletters	✓	–	–	–	–	–	–
Install reflector panels behind radiators that are on external walls to prevent heat loss. Check the <a href="#">Energy Saving Trust website</a> for more information	–	–	–	–	✓	–	–



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Adaptation and resilience

Adaptation means changing our behaviours and infrastructures to cope with a changing climate, which in turn makes us more resilient. Brent is a densely populated urban borough, which puts it at greater risk from the impacts of climate change due to the urban heat island effect. Buildings across the borough are generally not built to withstand the predicted higher temperatures and levels of rainfall, and they need to adapt to ensure they can cope with more unpredictable and extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, drought, extreme cold, and flooding.

In schools, these extreme weather events can have a significant impact on student and staff wellbeing and safety, and cause building damage. Ensuring that school sites are prepared for and resilient to more extreme weather events is vital for preventing school closures and disruption to lessons and exams. Adaptation and resilience is an emerging area for many schools.

In addition to the ideas in this section, some of the ideas in the Decarbonisation: Energy section can also support with making school buildings more resilient to climate change.

#### Brent's objective by 2030

As many homes and buildings in the borough as possible will be more energy efficient, be powered by renewable sources and be resilient to future adverse weather events caused by climate change.

#### Schools objectives

- Reduce the risk of school closures and disruption to exams and lessons
- Protect staff and students from the risks of extreme weather
- Ensure school sites can cope with more extreme weather



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Adaptation and resilience: ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Install a green roof on the school building. This can help to create shade and prevent building temperatures increasing too much. Include your school community in the planting stage. Visit the <a href="#">Meristem Design website</a>	✓	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Install SuDS planters to reduce the risk of flooding. You should involve your school community during the planting and maintenance stage. Visit the <a href="#">Meristem Design website</a> to read more	✓	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Plant trees to increase shaded areas across the playground and school site. Involve the school community during the planting and maintenance stages	✓	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Install a water butt to collect rainwater for use. This reduces water costs, and reduces the amount of water flowing over concrete areas on the school site, which can help to reduce flooding	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Develop a heatwave protocol with the help of this <a href="#">NEU guide</a> to protect students and staff during high temperatures and prevent school closures. This is where you can make decisions around how the school will operate in times of extreme weather	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Add solar control film to windows to reduce the heating effect of sunlight shining through the glass. If you decide not to cover all of your windows, prioritise the ones that receive the most sunlight, such as south facing windows, or those in rooms that get the warmest. For more information check the <a href="#">Energy Saving Trust website</a>	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Support and inform parents and carers on how to make their homes more resilient to climate change. You could make this a regular newsletter feature	✓	–	–	✓	–	–	–

## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Biodiversity

A high level of biodiversity means there is a high variety of species, which is important for maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Ensuring the planet's ecosystems are healthy will support them in mitigating, and becoming more resilient to, climate change.

Increasing biodiversity can be achieved through enhancing the green spaces we already have, as well as expanding how much green space there is. School sites provide excellent opportunities for increasing biodiversity, bringing with it a wide range of benefits.

Regular access to green space can have a significant positive impact on wellbeing and provides opportunities for learning. Increasing access to green space is an important element of climate justice as children and young people in disadvantaged areas are less likely to have access to these spaces. Involving the school community in planting and maintaining green space is vital in developing important skills and knowledge, and can have a positive influence on students' sense of ownership and responsibility.

The DfE and Brent encourage all schools to sign up to the National Education Nature Park and Climate Action Awards, and follow their framework for increasing biodiversity in schools. Turn to page 21 to see this framework.

#### Brent's objective by 2030

Brent will be one of the greenest, most biodiverse and climate-resilient boroughs in London with our residents better connected to nature.

#### Schools objectives

- Increase or enhance green space on the school site or nearby
- Connect students and staff with nature
- Develop knowledge and skills relating to biodiversity and growing/gardening



Wildflowers planted by pupils at Harlesden Primary School through LEAP London's [Wilder in Brent](#) project

#### CASE STUDY

##### GRoe Green

LEAP London worked with Roe Green Junior School to repurpose an unused area of land into a garden with a wildflower meadow and edible garden. Children were involved in every step of the process, which included preparing the ground, sowing seeds for a wildflower meadow, planting for pollinators, creating a vegetable patch and providing food water and shelter for birds.

Watch LEAP's [Brent Gets Wilder video](#) to see how this project came to life!

#### CASE STUDY

##### Connecting students with their environment at St Claudine's Catholic School for Girls

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, students were encouraged to take mindful outdoor walks, writing down what they saw, felt, heard and smelt around them. Using their senses to enjoy their surroundings and make the walk more interesting, students were able to take in the beauty of the here and now and get to know their environment better.

Increasing opportunities for young people to take mindful walks in local parks and green spaces is a great way to foster connections with nature and improve wellbeing.

## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### CASE STUDY

#### Award-winning garden at St Gregory's Catholic Science College

In the garden space at St Gregory's, students enjoy growing a range of fruits and vegetables, such as apple and pear trees, raspberries, strawberries, herbs, cabbages, salad crops, tomatoes, chillies and cucumbers. The harvested food is either taken home by the students or given to families using St Greg's Pantry. All produce is grown organically and students learn how to identify and control pests and diseases, giving them an appreciation of the time and effort required to produce food.

Students feel a sense of pride and accomplishment when they harvest the fruits and vegetables. Every May, the gardening club holds a plant and produce sale to raise money for their chosen environmental charity.

The garden also has a pond which is a great way to increase biodiversity. The pond wildlife includes frogs, tadpoles, newts and plant life, which the students can identify. Students help to maintain the pond by cleaning out fallen leaves and composting them for use on their vegetable growing areas.

The garden also contains an outdoor learning environment. The space offers opportunities to learn about and engage with the natural environment, and a space to hold lessons in the fresh air. The garden is used by teachers across the curriculum.

Students have also commented on the benefits the garden brings to their wellbeing, saying that gardening makes them feel calm and peaceful.



### CASE STUDY

#### Gardening club with parents at John Keble Primary

Every week, a group of parents volunteer their time to providing a gardening club to the children.

Zara, one of the pupils who has benefited from the gardening club, said "I really enjoy gardening club. We learn about taking care of the plants and the importance of sunlight and soil. We plant the seeds ourselves (with our own shovels) and see how the plants grow over time."

Fatima, one of the volunteer parents, said "I found the sessions encouraged sensory development, social interaction and improved the wellbeing of the children."


Gardening club has fostered a connection with nature and an interest in growing plants and creating healthy dishes. This takes place in school hours so all children get the chance to participate.



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Biodiversity action plan

#### What is nature currently like in your school grounds?




- ➔ Make sure your school is signed up to [Education Nature Park](#). Through this, you will access a range of resources and join a vast network of spaces working together to boost nature in education
- ➔ Check the [Getting Started](#) package for guidance on assemblies, sharing your involvement with the school community, and engaging children in your upcoming work
- ➔ Check the [Explore your school site](#) package for guidance on how to work with children on how to survey and map nature across the school site
- ➔ Participate in the [RSPB birdwatch](#) (which takes place every January-February) to support with surveying your school site

#### What changes would your school community like to see?


- ➔ Read the case studies in this guide to get inspiration for your own projects
- ➔ Engage students in what they have found out about their school site, and what changes they want to see. You could do this using the [Points of View](#) or [Poetry](#) initiatives. Find opportunities to embed this into the existing curriculum (English/PSHCE/Geography/Science)

#### What will you plan to do?




- ➔ Incorporate plans to increase/enhance your green space in your climate action plan. Use the Education Nature Park tool [Start Planning for Nature](#)
- ➔ Look out for upcoming Brent webinars where we will share new funding opportunities which might help you decide what to focus on

#### How can you help your plan come to life?



- ➔ Attend one of Brent's bid-writing workshops for schools to support with applying for relevant funding
- ➔ Run a fundraising initiative to support with your projects
- ➔ Find opportunities to embed planting or gardening in the curriculum
- ➔ Start a gardening club so students can be involved in its maintenance

#### What impacts have you made?



- ➔ Embed a regular nature survey in your curriculum to identify any changes to biodiversity on your school grounds



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption

Due to modern consumption habits, humans are using more resources than needed and are producing large amounts of waste. Carbon emissions are produced during resource extraction and each stage of product development, including its breakdown when it becomes waste.

Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane are released into the atmosphere through the incineration or decomposition of waste. It can be difficult to measure emissions from waste, but it is predicated that in Brent, it represents four times the carbon emissions that are emitted from energy use in housing, buildings and road transport. Waste also ends up in natural

areas and waterways leading to polluted forests, oceans and rivers which have devastating impacts on wildlife and ecosystems.

As well as reducing waste, we can also make sustainable choices about what we buy, such as purchasing pre-loved items and eating less meat. Reducing how much we consume and how much waste we produce is a key part of tackling the climate and ecological emergency. This can be achieved through challenging and changing our consumerist behaviours and habits, as well as recycling, reusing and repairing. Schools have the ability to empower young people with the right knowledge and skills for reducing their waste and consumption.



Artwork by Preesha, Year 8, Kingsbury High School

#### CASE STUDY

##### Community litter pick with Kenton Schools

Students from Uxendon Manor, Mount Stewart Primary Schools, St Gregory's Catholic Science College and Bright Start Nursery School worked with Friends of Woodcock Park, local businesses and residents to do a community litter pick. Together they collected and removed 46 bags of litter from Woodcock Park. Reducing the amount of litter on the ground and in waterways is important for protecting ecosystems.

#### Brent's objective by 2030

Our communities will be living more sustainably: consuming less of the products and materials that accelerate climate change, whilst also wasting less of the world's natural resources. This behaviour shift will have helped to cut Brent's consumption emissions by two-thirds, and drive a substantive reduction of household waste produced within the borough.

#### Schools objectives

- Reduce the amount of waste produced on the school site
- Influence behaviour changes and create a positive culture around reducing waste and overconsumption of resources
- Develop knowledge around waste and resource overconsumption and how they link to the climate and ecological emergency



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Recycling

#### Ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Take part in <a href="#">The Green School Project</a> to set up a recycling hub at your school, increase recycling in the area and raise funds for your school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Change your procurement practices to ensure all paper used in school is made from recycled materials	–	✓	–	–	–	–	✓
Conduct an educational visit to a recycling plant	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Ensure that all classrooms have a recycling bin	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Recruit dedicated recycling monitors to support staff and students with recycling	✓	–	–	–	–	–	–
Encourage recycling across your community by raising awareness of how to recycle effectively at home. This could be a regular feature in your newsletter	✓	–	✓	✓	–	✓	–
Run a campaign to raise awareness about how to recycle properly in school	✓	–	✓	✓	–	–	–



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Recycling

#### CASE STUDY

##### Paper recycling at St Gregory's Catholic Science College

Around St Gregory's are posters reminding students and staff to recycle their paper, and students in Year 8 are assigned areas to help remind everyone to recycle. Paper recycling boxes are available in every room of the school and are collected weekly by the Year 8 recycling ambassadors, who empty the recycling boxes into the school's dedicated recycling skip.

A student monitors the paper skip to ensure recycling is done properly. The recycling initiatives have links to the RE curriculum, where students learn about God's creation and stewardship of the environment. Students said that the recycling scheme gives them a sense of responsibility and they enjoyed working with other students. They also feel positive about helping to reduce deforestation!





## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Plastics

#### Ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Set up your own <a href="#">eco-refill shops with Pupils Profit</a> to support parents and carers with reducing single-use plastics	✓	✓	–	✓	–	✓	✓
Work with the <a href="#">canteen to reduce single-use plastics</a> . For example, replace plastic cutlery with reusable cutlery	✓	✓	–	✓	–	–	✓
Purchase school-branded water bottles to reduce single-use plastic use	–	✓	–	✓	–	–	–
<a href="#">Review the school's procurement policy</a> to identify where single-use plastic can be reduced	–	✓	–	–	–	–	✓
Demonstrate your commitment to reducing plastic waste by declaring a ban on single-use plastics in school. Read the Case Study to see how Fryent Primary School did this	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
If you have any upcoming school events (e.g. a disco, carnival, open morning) declare this a single-use plastic-free event and take steps to ensure this. For example, avoid providing foods wrapped in plastic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Plastics

#### CASE STUDY

#### Fryent Primary School declares a plastic ban

Fryent Primary have banned single-use plastic water bottles. The Eco Warriors presented this initiative in assembly and put posters up around school to promote the ban and provide facts about plastic pollution in our oceans. The school helped to inform their school community by sharing the ban on their social media platforms.

The Eco Warriors monitor how many children bring in reusable bottles and reward the most consistent class with prizes. Although there are times when the children do bring in a single-use plastic bottle, the numbers have significantly reduced thanks to this initiative. Fryent Primary have also sold their own branded reusable bottles to help children with reducing their plastic use.



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Food

#### Ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Create and maintain an edible garden and use the vegetables in the school canteen, in food technology lessons, or provide to students to take home	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Get a compost bin to reduce the amount of food waste in landfill, and use the compost for growing plants and vegetables. You will need to consider whether this is suitable for your school context – does someone know how to maintain it, and can you prevent the compost bin being affected by pests?	–	✓	–	–	✓	–	–
Encourage students to reduce their consumption of meat by having a meat-free day(s) in the canteen	✓	✓	–	✓	–	–	✓
Develop the schools' own cookbook which focuses on sustainable recipes and reducing food waste	✓	–	✓	–	–	✓	–
Take students to <a href="#">St Raphael's Edible Garden</a> to learn more about growing food	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Run a campaign to reduce food waste. This should involve conducting assemblies to highlight the importance of reducing food waste	✓	–	✓	✓	–	–	–



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Food

#### CASE STUDY



#### Edible Garden at Sinai Jewish Primary School

At lunchtimes, small groups of children participate in gathering gardening equipment, planting seeds and nurturing the plants. The children learn both the English and Hebrew names of the different plants and the brachot (blessings) related to the fruit and vegetables. The students use large pots to grow their fruits and vegetables, demonstrating that schools do not need lots of green space to make this a success.

Students say that gardening helps them to feel happy, calm and peaceful, but also excited when they can see their hard work come to fruition during the harvest! Gardening at schools has inspired students to garden at home with parents, carers, and family members.



#### CASE STUDY

#### Fun With Food at The Manor School

At The Manor School, spare food from the canteen is re-used through the Fun With Food Programme. This is a therapeutic intervention for children who have difficulty tolerating a wide range of foods due to sensory processing difficulties and/or other elements of their special needs.



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Repair and reuse

#### Ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Create your own Student-Led Repair Shop where the school community can come to get their items repaired. Check out <a href="#">The Restart Project</a> website to find teaching resources on the importance of repair, and to find out more about starting a student-led repair shop	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	✓
Run a creative competition challenging students to make sustainable fashion designs with re-used materials. See what contestants in the <a href="#">Junk Kouture competition</a> have done for inspiration. If possible, provide a regular space and time for students to work on their designs	✓	–	✓	–	–	–	–
Run a uniform shop in school. Visit the <a href="#">Uniformd website</a> to find out how this online platform can support you in running a uniform shop	✓	✓	–	✓	–	✓	✓
Run a sewing workshop to develop students' skills and capacity for repairing and upcycling their used items. See where parents and carers could get involved. If possible, have a series of regular workshops to develop students' skills	✓	–	✓	✓	–	✓	–
Host a swap event where students can swap clothes, books, games and more. See if you can make this a regular event!	✓	–	✓	✓	–	✓	–
Run a repair and reuse campaign in school to encourage staff and students to reduce their consumption of resources	✓	–	✓	✓	–	–	–

## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Waste and consumption: Repair and reuse

#### CASE STUDY

##### Uniform shop at St Gregory's Catholic Science College

The school set up its own upcycled uniform shop which helps families to save money and reduce their carbon footprint. Every term, the student Eco Committee clears out the lost property store, returning labelled items to their owner and holding an amnesty of unlabelled items. After this, any unclaimed items of uniform are checked for damage, repaired, and washed before being resold in the school uniform shop at low prices.

The upcycled uniform shop is promoted through the school newsletter and now receives regular donations of pre-loved uniform. Uniform is available to purchase, on request, throughout the year and is given free of charge to families who are in financial hardship. The student eco-committee manages and promotes the uniform shop at the Year 7 induction evening. This initiative has been incredibly popular with parents and pupils and has raised substantial funds for St Greg's Pantry (the school food bank).



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Climate education and green skills

Climate education is vital for encouraging young people to develop respect for the natural environment, change their behaviours, make informed decisions, and feel empowered to take action. Understanding the causes and impacts of climate change and ecological damage, and how the effects are not felt evenly around the world or even across London, can motivate young people to take action and develop passion for climate justice.

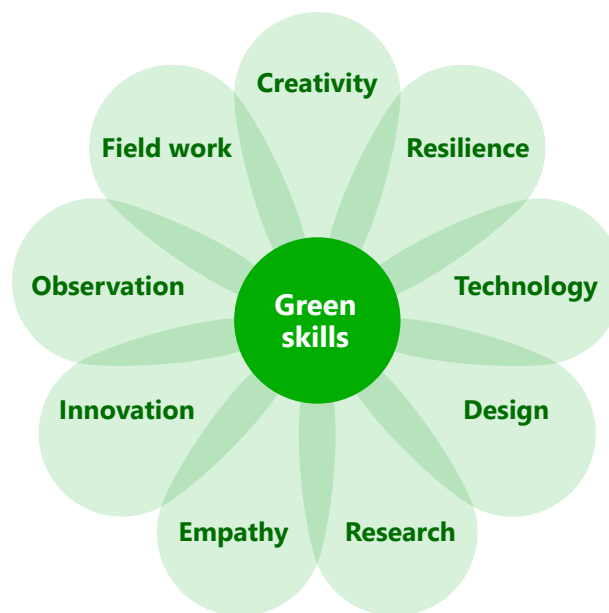
Schools play a crucial role in developing knowledge and understanding of climate change through the teaching of their curricula. Naturally, climate change features in the English National Curriculum in Science and Geography. However, experts at UCL have said that since climate change is a holistic issue which affects all areas of our lives, it [needs to be embedded across more subjects](#). Furthermore, geography is not compulsory beyond KS3 and opportunities for learning about climate change could therefore be lost if it is not embedded across other subjects.

Embedding climate education across a range of subjects can also encourage students to take creative steps towards climate action. This should not involve making changes or implementing new projects in the curriculum, but making small tweaks to your existing curriculum. For example, in their English lessons on persuasive writing, children

at Uxendon Manor Primary School wrote letters urging politicians to take climate action.

Green skills are those needed for a sustainable society, and they are in increasing demand as new technologies are developed and business and industries develop more sustainable practices. Preparing young people with the right skills is vital for supporting a more sustainable future.

#### Examples of green skills



#### Brent's objective by 2030

Everyone who lives, works or studies in Brent will have improved access to clear and understandable information on the need to tackle the climate and ecological emergency, and as many people as possible will be actively engaged in taking action to help the borough become carbon neutral by 2030.

#### Schools objectives

- Support teachers with embedding climate education in their existing curriculum
- Develop teachers' confidence in teaching about climate change
- Develop students' knowledge and skills relating to climate change
- Develop students' knowledge and skills relating to climate justice
- Empower and enable young people to take climate action



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### CASE STUDY

#### Climate education at Roe Green Juniors

Climate change is embedded within different areas of the curriculum. In Year 5 Geography, pupils develop their understanding of human and physical geography, and their place knowledge of South America, through learning about the Amazon Rainforest. Examining why the Amazon is important, pupils learn about its environmental significance on local and global scales and study the causes and impacts of deforestation. Children also learn how they can help to protect the Amazon through recycling and choosing products that do not contain palm oil.

In Year 4 Science, pupils learn about the impacts of global warming on different habitats, with a specific focus on oceans. At the end of the 22/23 academic year, pupils brought their learning to life by celebrating Oceans Day. All children and staff dressed in blue and carried out different activities such as making pop-up cards and dioramas with reused materials, and making information booklets about the impacts of pollution on marine creatures.

### CASE STUDY

#### Forest School at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Infant School

Through regular [Forest School sessions](#), children have opportunities for holistic growth through play, exploration and supported risk taking. Forest School helps to develop confidence and self-esteem, as well as Nature Connectedness, wellbeing, and outdoor confidence.

### CASE STUDY

#### Brentfield Primary visits a local community kitchen

Year 1 students visited Sufra Community Food Bank and Kitchen, a Brent-based charity working to fight poverty. Students heard how the charity works, and got to taste the locally-grown produce that is used in the kitchen. Visit the [Sufra Community Food Bank and Kitchen](#) website to see how you could conduct a school visit.

### CASE STUDY

#### Curriculum partnerships at Kingsbury Green Primary School

Through the Global Learning Programme's Connecting Classrooms initiative, Kingsbury Green Primary School partnered with a school in Pakistan to work collaboratively on projects linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. Now in their third year of partnership, the schools have helped their students become global citizens who think critically about climate change at local and international scales.

The projects completed in the partnership all connect to the curriculum. Year 2 children worked on a project linked to SDG 14 (Life Before Water) which links to their Geography topic on Oceans and Continents. After learning about the changing oceans, pupils practiced their literacy skills by writing persuasive letters to pupils in Year 1 encouraging them to reduce, reuse and recycle by refilling water bottles and recycling plastic.





## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Climate education and green skills: Ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Provide CPD on embedding sustainability in the curriculum for department leads. UCL's free course, <a href="#">Teaching for Sustainable Futures</a> , is available for teachers of primary and secondary of Geography and History. Ensure that department leads and teachers are given time to make curriculum changes and resources	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	✓
Use <a href="#">Brighton and Hove's Our City Our World tool</a> to map out conceptual development of climate and sustainability across KS1-4 curricula. Provide department leads and teachers with time to plan and embed the key concepts in their curricula	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	✓
Visit the <a href="#">Teach the Future website</a> to access the amendments they have made to the KS3/4 curriculum across a range of subjects. This may help with identifying where sustainability can feature in your curriculum	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Visit the <a href="#">Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre</a> to provide experiences of learning outside the classroom	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Sign up to <a href="#">Eco Active's Green Influencers Scheme</a> to have mentors come into school and develop the green skills of a select group of students	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Reach out to organisations offering free climate-focused workshops, such as <a href="#">Energy Garden</a> and <a href="#">Climate Ed</a>	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Save time by using ready-made lesson resources. Make sure to adapt these for the needs of your students	–	–	✓	–	–	–	–

## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Green careers

Not only do students need to be equipped with green skills and climate knowledge, they need to be made aware of the opportunities in green careers. As we move towards net zero, more workers will be needed in sectors such as renewable energy, local authorities and government, environmental research, and more.

Being aware of these sorts of jobs can inspire students and shape their aspirations. However, a [survey carried out by Speakers for Schools](#) in 2022 showed that more than half of students have not received guidance on green job options at school.

Moreover, sustainability is becoming increasingly important across all industries. Green skills will not just be important in green industries and children need to be aware of what they need for a sustainable future.

#### Brent's objective by 2030

Everyone who lives, works or studies in Brent will have improved access to clear and understandable information on the need to tackle the climate and ecological emergency, and as many people as possible will be actively engaged in taking action to help the borough become carbon neutral by 2030.

#### Schools objectives

- Develop careers curriculum to include a focus on green careers
- Empower students by increasing their knowledge and awareness of green careers
- Increase students' exposure to climate action in the real world

#### CASE STUDY

##### Love Your World assemblies in Brent

Almost 600 students across Roe Green Junior School and Kingsbury Green Primary School received inspiring assemblies from the former Head of Campaigning at the RSPB and the Climate Coalition. The assembly 'Love Your World' engaged students in discussion around climate change, its impacts, and the actions we can take for our planet.

The speaker also told students how their jobs have helped to make a positive impact on the planet. The assemblies ignited a sense of inspiration and responsibility among the children. One student said they want to help the environment, and another put some seeds in their garden to feed the birds.



## Step 3 | Finding inspiration

### Green careers: Ideas and who should help to implement them

The following table presents ideas in descending order, from those requiring more time and/or money to those requiring less.

Idea	Implemented by:						
	Student eco-committee	Business manager	Teacher	Member of SLT	Caretaker/site team	Parents/carers	Governor/trustee
Have a careers week or event dedicated to green careers. Visit the <a href="#">STEM Learning</a> website to download their Green Careers Guidance and access other resources such as a virtual careers fair. See how you could make this a yearly event	✓	–	✓	✓	–	–	✓
Support the careers lead with finding opportunities for students to visit workplaces in green industries	–	–	–	✓	–	–	–
Create career profiles that link to different areas of the curriculum. For example, when teaching about natural resources in geography, embed opportunities to learn about conservationists	–	–	✓	–	–	–	–
Invite a speaker to talk about green careers and climate action in assembly. Prepare the eco-committee with questions to ask the guest speaker	✓	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
Task students with conducting research into green careers. Use their work to create a display in school and help raise awareness of green careers even further	✓	–	✓	–	–	–	–

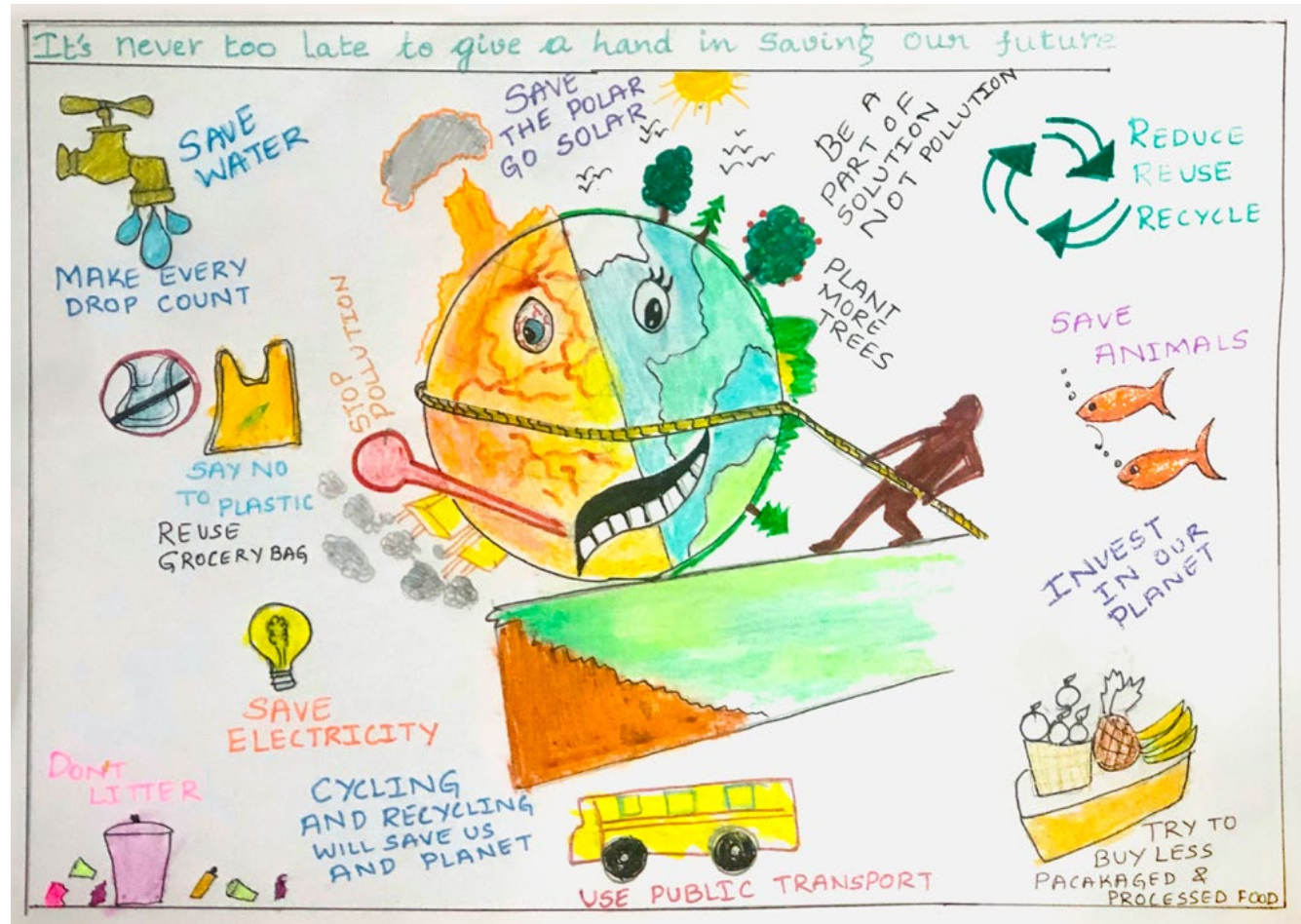


## Step 4 | Making your climate action plan

Now you have reviewed your context and read about a range of initiatives and case studies, it is time to create a climate action plan!

The climate action plan will help your school to decide what areas to prioritise, create a timeline for the work, and consider how to involve the school community at each stage.

Access the Brent Schools [Climate Action Plan Template](#) on the Brent website



Artwork by Aadya, Year 4, Sudbury Primary School



## Step 5 | Putting the plan into action

Now your climate action plan has been drafted, it is time to put the plan into action. You might feel that you need additional support or resources to support with bringing your plans to life:

- Attend one of Brent's bid-writing workshops for schools to support with applying for relevant funding
- Run fundraising initiatives to support with your projects
- Get involved in CPD opportunities to support your climate action work



Pupils from Kingsbury Green Primary School ask questions about sustainable fashion at Brent and Junk Kouture's Creating Change event in October 2023



## Step 6 | Record and share your hard work

Following your hard climate action work, it is important to identify the impact your school has made. A year after you commence your activities, we recommend:

- Re-calculating your school's carbon footprint using the Count Your Carbon tool
- Re-running surveys to identify changes to your site, curriculum, and behaviours

It is important that we celebrate the hard work of schools engaging in climate action at every opportunity.

Make sure to share your work across your newsletters and social media outlets, and inform Brent Council at [ClimateEmergency@brent.gov.uk](mailto:ClimateEmergency@brent.gov.uk) so we can also share the positive news!



The vegetable garden at Harlesden Primary School, planted in partnership with LEAP London



Published by Brent Council  
[www.brent.gov.uk](http://www.brent.gov.uk)



An easy-read version of this document will be made available on the Climate Emergency section of the council's website.

Do you need this information in another language or reading format such as Braille or large print? If so, please contact:  
[climateemergency@brent.gov.uk](mailto:climateemergency@brent.gov.uk)

