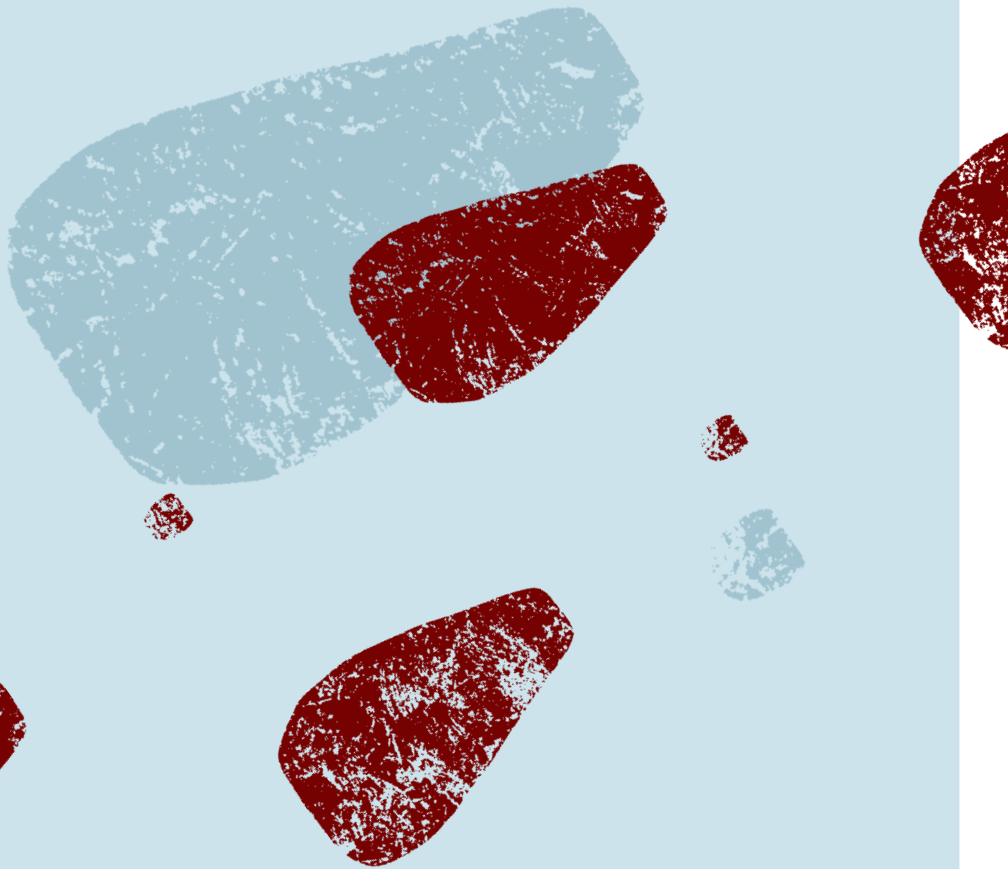


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**Inspiring leaders;  
improving children's lives**

# Leading Sustainable Schools

## Why should we?



## In brief

### **The future holds many challenges for young people**

Climate change, obesity and global poverty are clear examples. Our current model of development is placing an increasing burden on the planet. In order to secure the future of children all over the world, we need to make a decisive move towards sustainable development.

### **Young people have a high stake in the future**

Some of them may live to see the 22nd century. We don't know what that will be like, except that it will be very different from today. Some fuel reserves may be exhausted. The polar ice-caps may have melted. World population may have doubled. And much more of Africa may have become a desert. On the other hand, some people may benefit from dramatic improvements in medicine, and drive silent, emission-free cars. Amid the potential dangers are fantastic opportunities.

### **Schools have a special role to play in preparing young people for the future**

As places of learning, they can help pupils understand our impact on the planet and encourage them to weigh up the evidence themselves. As models of good practice, they can offer young people the chance to contribute to sustainable living, and demonstrate good practice to others. Empowering young people to take responsibility for their own future is not only desirable: it is a crucial feature of their education.

### **The government would like every school to be a sustainable school by 2020**

In practice this means integrating high standards of achievement and behaviour with the goals of healthy living, environmental awareness, community engagement and citizenship – many of the aspirations set forth in Every Child Matters.

## A National Framework for Sustainable Schools has been established to guide schools towards this aim

The framework comprises three interlocking parts:

### **A commitment to care**

Sustainable schools have a caring ethos – care for oneself, for each other (across cultures, distances and generations), and for the environment (far and near). Schools are already caring places, but a sustainable school extends this commitment into new areas. 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 community and in other parts of the world.

### **An integrated approach**

Sustainable schools take an integrated approach to their improvement. Sustainable development is explored through their teaching provision and approach to learning (curriculum); it is demonstrated in its values and ways of working (campus); and it is the inspiration for working with its local community (wider influence and partnerships).

### **A selection of ‘doorways’ or sustainability themes**

The doorways are entry points, or places where schools can establish or develop their sustainability practices. Each doorway draws its inspiration from a range of government policies concerning sustainable development and quality of life.

### **Sustainable schools can help build cohesion among a range of initiatives and school practices**

Sustainable development offers schools a bigger picture in which to join-up their work on a range of policies and initiatives, such as Every Child Matters, school travel planning, healthy living, extended services, citizenship and learning outside the classroom.

## Introduction

The issue of sustainability is becoming more urgent and it's clear it can only be addressed by significant changes in the way we relate to our planet and its resources.

Children who entered education in September 2007 will be leaving in 2020 and the international scientific consensus is that they will be entering into a very different world from this one: a world for which they will need new skills, knowledge and ways of living and working together.

The Sustainable Schools National Framework attempts to describe the kind of education that will enable these children to be successful, happy citizens. It outlines a whole school approach through a structure of eight doorways and three cross-cutting themes, all of which are interlinked but together provide a choice of routes in to developing sustainability.

Research by NCSL shows there is a great deal of enthusiasm for developing sustainability in schools. Indeed 98 per cent of school leaders who responded to a recent survey said they rated the DCSF's Sustainable Schools Strategy as either very important or important.

This toolkit has been designed to support school leaders using the Sustainable Schools National Framework to either begin developing sustainability or, in the case of those who have already done work in this area, build things further.

## What is a sustainable school?

The sustainable schools strategy describes a sustainable school as one that puts the principle and practice of 'care' at the heart of everything it does and aspires to do.

This includes:

- care for **oneself**
- care for **each other** (distant and near, as well as for future generations)
- care for **the environment** (from the school grounds to the planet)

As the care agenda is central to the values of any institution working with children and young people, all schools already have a starting point towards sustainability.

But there are other common characteristics displayed by sustainable schools which those at the start of developing sustainability should seek to emulate. For example, they are optimistic and outward looking; they articulate and share their vision with the whole school community; they have strong student voice and they have excellent links with both the local and global community.

School leaders who develop sustainability within their schools do so with passion and conviction, underpinned by personal values. There is a philosophical and for many, a spiritual dimension to engaging with sustainability.

An NCSL research project in 2007 commissioned with WWF, the Institute of Education (London), the University of Reading and Education Direct studied a number of schools to investigate the skills and qualities required by school leaders to develop sustainability. It identified ten key leadership characteristics of sustainable schools:

### **Setting the vision**

Sustainable schools have a really strong sense of moral purpose created by a shared vision which is understood and articulated by the whole school community. Sustainability underpins the ethos and aims of these schools and has a prominent place in school prospectuses, school improvement plans and websites.

### **Engaging others**

The policy context gives impetus for the development of sustainable leadership, but this needs to be a whole-school approach and everyone's responsibility. Sustainable schools recognise that in order to drive this agenda forward, all members of the school community must be involved, especially pupils, parents and governors. These schools have high levels of parental involvement and most of them work closely with governors on issues of sustainability.

### **Communicating and interpreting**

Sustainable development has a broad interpretation. Sustainable schools talk not only about understanding and protecting the environment, but also about healthy and safe lifestyles, respect for diversity and tolerance of difference, encouraging participation, social inclusion and interaction with the local community. Leaders are clear about their own understanding and how it relates to the purpose of the school. As a result, they put time and effort into communicating effectively and persuading others to get on board, giving sustainability a high profile in the school.

### **Distributing leadership**

Sustainable schools see distributed leadership as essential and an underlying principle of sustainability. Empowering others to take a lead is key to embedding this work and to their personal development. In some schools individual members of staff are given leading roles to develop sustainability, with the support of the senior management team.

### **Promoting student voice and leadership**

There is a really strong student voice in sustainable schools. In some cases the students are driving this agenda forward with the support of staff. There are active school councils, some of whom have specific budget responsibilities for sustainability. Caring for and improving their environment is important to them.

### **Focusing on learning**

Sustainable leadership has a strong, explicit focus on learning for everyone. These leaders model this by being visibly engaged in their own learning. Sustainable schools are using sustainability to deliver the curriculum in ways which are relevant and real. They also offer CPD for staff at all levels to continue their professional and personal development in this area.

### **Resource provider**

Sustainable schools demonstrate their commitment to this work by allocating additional resources, both time and money, to support the development of sustainability. In many cases additional funds are secured from outside the school, either through government grants or from the local community, including business. The research showed that financial constraints were seen as the greatest barrier to implementation of more sustainable practice by 60 per cent of respondents, but by addressing sustainability of the school campus, including use of energy, water and procurement of resources, schools can actually produce real budget savings. Sustainable school leaders also ensure that time for collaboration among staff for effective planning and for CPD is made available, indicating the value the school gives to this agenda.

### **Innovator/risk taker**

Sustainable schools are looking for new ways of working both as institutions of learning and in the way they relate to the external world. Successful leaders are prepared to try out new ideas and to enable others to innovate as well. They establish a supportive culture in which staff and students feel trusted and that it is safe to take risks, to ask difficult questions and to work in different ways. These may be new learning approaches, new curricula, new relationships with the wider community including global links and many others. This leads to personal and professional growth for all members of the school community, and sometimes new sources of funding.

### **Looking outward – beyond the school**

Many successful schools have excellent teaching and learning practice leading to high student attainment but they see themselves as self contained entities. The key difference between these schools and sustainable schools is the outward facing nature of the sustainable schools. Leadership in sustainable schools is seeking ways in which the school can reach out to the local community and to the global community. These schools are aware of their place in the social and physical context within which they operate and see this as a resource for learning. They look for opportunities to bring members of the wider community into the school to enhance the learning experience of both the students and the community. The school leaders also share their practice by engaging with other schools and professional development networks.

### **Connectors – Every Child Matters**

Leaders of sustainable schools see connections between all the aspects of school life and beyond. They recognise that sustainability is a broad agenda that includes the environmental, social, economic and governance aspects of schools. Understanding this ‘bigger picture’ enables them to use sustainability as a vehicle to deliver Every Child Matters, focusing not only on raising standards of achievement, but also on the broader well-being agenda including health, safety, engagement and participation and an economically viable and sustainable future. Consequently, in those schools where sustainability has been developed, it is not an add-on to their delivery of the five Every Child Matters outcomes, or something extra that they engage in, but it sits at the heart of the school, underpinning the whole school ethos and culture. Typically these schools are involved in many initiatives such as extended schools, healthy schools, global citizenship, SEAL and see these as all linked to build the big picture and to develop fully rounded students, able to be active citizens in the local and global community.

## **Enlivening and enriching the curriculum**

Learning is central to sustainable schools for all members of the school community, students and staff alike, demonstrating that learning is valued and is a life-long process.

Schools are using sustainability to deliver the national curriculum in ways that are relevant and real to students, empowering children and young people through action-centred learning.

School leaders interviewed by NCSL were united in their enthusiasm for the way sustainability had enabled them to reinvigorate their curriculum, with much of the energy and ideas coming from pupils.

They said sustainability was creating a raft of new opportunities to engage children and young people in new and exciting ways: to make learning fun!

“The young people in the college are starting to realise that ‘it’s our world, our future, and we can become involved and influence the future’.”

“It’s fantastic to be creating that exciting, dynamic school where children are happy to be there. A couple of years ago our kids wouldn’t have been able to identify 20 common garden birds or what grows in hedgerows – they can now.”

“It’s about allowing students to take things forward and not giving them something to do in the classroom that has to be collected in an hour later.”

“Children are naturally engaged and interested. It’s a great opportunity to chisel away attitudes. We have a Gambia group that gets together and has made houses. We have visitors coming in and talking to children each year. It’s great to get these people together and working together. Sustainability is a perfect vehicle because children love it. It leads to greater empowerment of children.”

## Raising attainment

There is growing anecdotal evidence that enlivenment and enrichment of the curriculum through sustainability is leading to higher levels of attainment or value-added progress.

Measuring such impact is difficult, not least because the full benefit of changed attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours may not show until later in life. However, many school leaders are starting to collect evidence of the way sustainability is strengthening their school and having a positive effect on all aspects of learning.

These schools use the DCSF Sustainable Schools Self-Assessment Tool (S3) to record details of their work on sustainability, which they then include in their Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) for Ofsted inspections.

Inclusion of such information is not compulsory, but Ofsted inspectors are becoming increasingly interested in sustainability and the effect it is having on care and guidance, welfare and the whole school community. As a result, many schools that have highlighted good work have been commended for it in inspection reports.

‘Pupils benefit from an outstanding curriculum, with exceptionally good provision to study and participate in ecologically sound practices. There are strong links to different schools in other parts of the world, which widen pupils’ experiences.’  
Ofsted Nov 2005, Hagbourne CE Primary School, Oxfordshire

‘Crispin is an outstanding school. The staff, students and parents think so and the inspection team agrees. A unique feature is its superb education for sustainable development.’ Ofsted Nov 2006, Crispin School, Somerset

‘They [pupils] make a magnificent contribution to the environment and to the care of the animals on the school farm. Teams of pupils work together very effectively to save energy and recycle waste and water. Pupils demonstrate initiative and responsibility organising a range of charitable activities. Their good basic skills and understanding about the environment ensure they are well prepared for the future.’ Ofsted June 2007, Edwalton Primary School, Nottingham

## The doorways - why these?

### Food and drink

- Recent research shows that 19 per cent of boys and 18 per cent of girls aged two to 15 years are overweight or obese. Poor diet contributes significantly to this problem.
- Children need to develop good eating habits in order to protect themselves against diet-related diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, which currently costs the NHS an estimated £4 billion a year.
- Access to drinking water is essential for good health and proper hydration is essential for learning.

### Energy and water

- Schools are responsible for around 15 per cent of all UK public sector carbon emissions, approximately half of which is through use of energy.
- UK schools spend £70 million a year on water provision and treatment. A carefully managed school can half the water used by an equivalent poorly managed school.

### Travel and traffic

- Department of Transport figures for 2006 reveal that during term time 16 per cent of cars on the road in urban areas between 8.00am and 9.00am are on school runs, reaching a peak of 23 per cent at 8.45am. Road accidents account for a quarter of all deaths of school-age children. Increased levels of traffic increase the risk for children and young people not travelling to school by car.
- The percentage of primary school children walking to school has declined over the last 20 years from 67 per cent to 49 per cent and for secondary-age pupils from 52 per cent to 44 per cent. Reduced levels of physical activity are contributing to the problem of rising obesity among young people.

### Purchasing and waste

- Schools participating in Waste Watch's Schools *Waste Action Club*, Global Action Plan's *Action at Schools* and Eco-schools waste programme have on average reduced their land-fill waste by 47 per cent.
- Many schools that have moved away from local authority procurement services have been able to form buying consortia, in some cases benefiting both from increased value-for-money and improved sustainability.

## **Buildings and grounds**

- Building Schools for the Future (BSF) projects must meet a minimum of 'very good' in the BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards for design and construction, which include sustainability aspects.
- Higher capital costs may be recovered in energy savings and other benefits, such as more flexible structures providing enhanced learning opportunities and better health for pupils and staff.
- School grounds provide pupils with opportunities for improved physical exercise and learning about the natural world, as well as space for growing food and many other possible educational and recreational experiences.

## **Inclusion and participation**

- A recent survey by Defra of young people's attitudes to climate change showed 84 per cent thought schools should be addressing this issue but only 8 per cent actually thought their school was doing anything.
- Enhancing opportunities for all pupils to participate in decision-making contributes to creating a sustainable school and sustainable community. This develops pupils' ability to become active citizens and to achieve the ECM outcome of 'making a positive contribution'.

## **Local well-being**

- Increasingly the education system is focusing on the role of the community in educational success. School improvement and community regeneration are both important in meeting the ECM outcomes of staying safe and achieving economic well-being. Extended schools provide many examples of practices which build bridges between schools and their local community.
- NCSL is working with schools who are developing public value beyond the school gates to understand the opportunities and challenges of working in this way. Research shows that working in this way with the community has many benefits including the setting up of community working parties and consultation groups; the provision of learning opportunities for the wider community; the engagement of the community as tutors and mentors in extended learning programmes; the tackling of misconceptions and building of trust; and through remodelling, the school employing more local people and thus investing in the economic regeneration of a local area. For further details of this work go to [www.ncsl.org.uk](http://www.ncsl.org.uk).

## **Global dimension**

- We are linked to people throughout the globe by new communications technologies, shared cultural experiences, trade and resource dependency. Now more than ever before children and young people need to understand their role as global citizens.

## Cross-cutting themes and the bigger picture

The three cross-cutting themes enable the eight doorways to be considered in a more integrated manner. They are :

- Campus – about buildings and grounds.
- Curriculum – about teaching and learning.
- Community – about working with people outside the school.

Work on each doorway should be developed through these three themes, enabling a deeper and broader understanding of sustainability to be created in the school and the wider community.

Successful sustainable school leaders have the ability to see this bigger interconnected picture, taking a strategic approach to the way they build a whole school plan for sustainability.

## Every Child Matters

The Sustainable Schools agenda places the child at the centre of its concerns for a healthy, just and sustainable society. It paints a picture of the kind of place and the kind of school culture where each learner can be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being – all within the earth's environmental limits. These are the key outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM). Therefore a focus on sustainability and the delivery of the ECM five outcomes are integrated. Successful sustainable schools say they use sustainability as a vehicle for delivering ECM and as such work to embed it throughout the whole curriculum.

To remind themselves how the eight doorways of education for sustainable development link with the five key outcomes of ECM, staff at Bishop Stopford School, Kettering, drew the following chart.

<b>Five outcomes of Every Child Matters</b>	<b>Eight doorways of National Framework</b>
<p><b>Be Healthy</b></p> <p>Children and young people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physically healthy</li> <li>• mentally and emotionally healthy</li> <li>• live healthy lifestyles.</li> </ul>	<p>Food and drink</p> <p>Travel and traffic</p> <p>Local well-being</p> <p>Buildings and grounds</p> <p>Inclusion and participation</p>
<p><b>Stay Safe</b></p> <p>Children and young people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• safe from accidental injury and death</li> <li>• safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school</li> <li>• have stability and are cared for.</li> </ul>	<p>Travel and traffic</p> <p>Buildings and grounds</p> <p>Local well-being</p> <p>Inclusion and participation</p>
<p><b>Enjoy and Achieve</b></p> <p>Children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attend and enjoy school</li> <li>• achieve personal and social</li> <li>• development and enjoy recreation</li> <li>• achieve and stretch national educational standards at secondary school.</li> </ul>	<p>Buildings and grounds</p> <p>Local well-being</p> <p>Inclusion and participation</p>
<p><b>Make a Positive Contribution</b></p> <p>Children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engage in decision making and support the community and environment</li> <li>• develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate</li> <li>• develop self confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges</li> <li>• develop enterprising behaviour.</li> </ul>	<p>Buildings and grounds</p> <p>Energy and water</p> <p>Local well-being</p> <p>Global dimension</p> <p>Travel and traffic</p> <p>Purchasing and waste</p> <p>Inclusion and participation</p>
<p><b>Achieve Economic Well-Being</b></p> <p>Children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are ready for employment</li> <li>• live in decent homes and sustainable communities</li> <li>• have access to transport and material goods</li> <li>• live in households free from low income.</li> </ul>	<p>Buildings and grounds</p> <p>Travel and traffic</p> <p>Energy and Water</p> <p>Purchasing and waste</p> <p>Local well-being</p> <p>Inclusion and participation</p> <p>Global dimension</p>

## And finally

The Sustainable Schools National Framework provides a structure and guidance for work on sustainability that schools can adapt to suit their own needs and circumstances.

Far from being 'just another initiative' it provides a way of seeing how many of the other school initiatives and priorities can be co-ordinated so that they support each other and a greater overall benefit is achieved, with less duplication of effort and of resources.

Schools that take this approach find sustainability resonates with their underlying values and enables these to be more clearly demonstrated by practical actions. In this way, sustainability provides the moral purpose and ethos of the school.

**The framework is not a checklist of targets.**

## **And if you still thinking ‘why should we?’, here is Laura’s story...**

One of the first things Anne Lakey did on being appointed head teacher of Durham Community Business College (DCBC) in September 2001 was interview all of Year 9, in small groups.

She will never forget the way one student introduced herself. “My name’s Laura,” she said. “I’m very bad. Will you help me to be good?”

Laura was an attractive, confident and articulate 13-year-old. She was also cheeky and defiant. She truanted, came in late to school, didn’t do her homework and was at serious risk of exclusion.

Closer inspection of her student profile revealed she was probably the most able student in her year group, but had apparently grown bored of school aged 7 or 8 and was now performing at well below her capability.

She was also a caring sister to several younger siblings who she looked after at the end of the school day. In fact one of the reasons she was often late for classes was that she dropped her younger brother off at primary school on the way.

When asked what prompted her to want to ‘be good’, she said it was because her GCSE options were looming and she felt she had already blown her chances. A relative had left her money to help her through university. “I did want to read law and be a barrister,” she said, but I’ve no chance now have I?”

The head and the student made a deal. Laura would be on time, do her homework and improve her behaviour, in return for which Anne would support her and coach her in leadership skills.

“Laura had some very sound ideas and sensible opinions that she felt no-one was listening to,” said Anne. “She was right. The very adult way she expressed herself was seen as cheeky and was turning staff off what she was saying.

“Once she realised she could be more powerful in changing the system from the inside than the outside, she began to turn the corner on anti conformity.”

Laura was given a place on the student council and became increasingly involved in DCBC's work on sustainability.

Over the course of two years she helped raise around £4.5m for the school, accompanying Anne on countless fundraising events which the two fronted together. This led to her being awarded the school's Head Teacher Award for commitment to the school and the local community.

A local construction firm also offered her on-the-job training under the Fit for Employment programme. By the time she emerged from Year 11, she had become such an asset that the company offered her a full-time job as a quantity surveyor.

Laura however chose a different path. After attaining 13 GCSE's graded C or above, she went on to college where she thrived and achieved four good A level passes. In September 2006, she was accepted to Bristol University to read law.

Anne said: "I have no doubt that Laura will become one of the best barristers in the country. Through her work on sustainability and with the student council Laura learned valuable social and economic lessons. She gained confidence and became re-engaged with the education system. I will never forget the transformation she went through.

"If you want to engage young people, they have to feel the school is their school. You have to give them a voice and give them confidence to use it. Education for sustainable development is a wonderful vehicle for doing this.

"If you don't make young people feel good about themselves, they will become disaffected. We must never underestimate our power to change lives."

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