

(7) ACTION on Education



Saving Creation
Diocese of Leeds

As former US President, Barak Obama, stated, *“There’s one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent threat of a changing climate”*. It is important that schools play their part in educating the generations of the future about this threat, its causes and the action that is required to limit its impact. This will produce adults of the future who have the knowledge to make the choices required to safeguard our planet. Even before then, better-informed children can educate their parents and encourage to families making changes now.

The government’s National Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy for Education states that, *“All children should learn about nature, the causes and impacts of climate change, and the importance of sustainability.”* How schools go about this, however, will be their choice. This action sheet aims to simply signpost to resources that will help school do this well.

ACTION 1 → Introducing **CLIMATE AS A CURRICULUM DRIVER**

Much work has been done over recent years developing curriculum. This has involved key knowledge in each subject has been identified and the development of this knowledge being carefully shaped. However, many schools have also identified key curriculum drivers that run across different subjects. These drivers are often principles or perspectives that impact learning across all or most subjects, bringing enhanced cohesiveness and greater depth to the curriculum. For example, some schools have identified Equality & Diversity as a curriculum driver. They use this as a principle to guide the planning of content across all subjects.

Climate change & sustainability can be a powerful driver across your curriculum. It can tap into pupils’ awareness of the issue and concern about the future to provide additional lens and motivation for their learning. It can shape the teaching of a range of content from within the national curriculum, bringing issues and possible solutions to the fore. It is only possible in this document to do a brief survey of what this can look like, but it is hoped that this is enough to get you started on reviewing and developing your own curriculum. This action is specifically focused on content that is already within the curriculum. Action 2 will look at Climate Change and Sustainability as a multi-subject unit of work on its own.

ACTION 2 → **INTEGRATE CLIMATE EDUCATION INTO YOUR CURRICULUM**

This could seem like a massive job. Schools might particularly be put off if they have spent a great deal of time and effort reviewing, refreshing or renewing their curriculum in recent years. However, because of the work of Leeds Development Education Centre, this aim is far more achievable than might be initially anticipated.



The Leeds DEC ‘Climate Curriculum’ is a free and comprehensive framework of learning about climate change for primary and secondary that can integrate with your established curriculum. It has been developed in conjunction with schools and with extensive input from academics at the University of Leeds. Its learning objectives are designed to be delivered in a cross-curricular way through other curriculum subjects. As such it is highly flexible, but can support schools to ensure that pupils develop the core essentials of what they need to know, as well as the critical

awareness that can enable them to take on the challenge of climate change and the hope that such success is possible.

There are 8 key areas covered within the curriculum, with core knowledge and terminology identified for each:

- Scientific background
- Urgency of need for climate action
- Impacts of climate change
- Responses to Climate Change
- Consumption and climate justice
- Possible futures
- Mindsets and futures
- Feelings and behaviours

Alongside the framework there is a toolkit which contains lessons and other teaching resources. There is also a guide that gives an overview of the project and explains how it can be implemented. This a resource that is **free** to schools. The Leeds DEC Curriculum can be obtained by contacting sarah@leedsdec.org.uk

ACTION 3 → **ACCESS RESOURCES FOR TEACHING CLIMATE CHANGE**

There are a plethora of excellent resources to support the teaching of climate change available online. Below are just a few of the places that where these can be found:



ACTION 4 → **TEACH SKILLS**

Educating pupils about climate change is not just about giving them knowledge about the issue. The education they receive should help them take action to minimise climate change. This will include giving pupils the practical skills to live more climate friendly lifestyles. Here are just some of the skills which could be included:

- Cooking – Cooking from raw ingredients reduces packaging, processing and waste. If using seasonal produce it can reduce the impact of farming methods and food miles. Not only this, but it is often the cheaper and healthier option.
- Gardening – Being able to grow some of your own food reduces food miles and packaging. It increases biodiversity in gardens and it is also very good for mental health.
- Sewing – Having the skills to mend, alter or even clothes increases the life of those clothes and reduces waste.
- DIY – Having some practical DIY skills enables repairs and improvements to be made around the house, improve the efficiency of the home. It can also enable people to mend some items instead of replacing them, thus reducing waste.
- Cycling – Being able to cycle provides an alternative to car journeys. In addition, having the skills to properly maintain a bike can help you do this safely, all year round.

ACTION 5 **TRAIN STAFF**

All schools know that learning is only as good as the teaching that inspires it. To have effective education about climate change, it is important to ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to achieve this.

LEEDS DEC 'Teach Climate Change': Alongside their Climate Curriculum, Leeds DEC have also produce a free training course for staff to increase teacher confidence in teaching about climate change. It is made up of a series of 9 modules. There is an online version of the course, but it is most effectively done face to face as a whole staff. This enables questions to be asked and ensures that everyone gets the key messages needed to address this subject effectively.

Further information about the training or the curriculum can be found on the website and can be training can be booked by contacting Leeds DEC on sarah@leedsdec.org.uk or 0113 2359137.

Carbon Literacy Project – [Carbon Literacy for Education](#): The Carbon Literacy Toolkit for Education contains a range of tools, courses and materials needed for delivering a day's worth of Carbon Literacy training to staff and students in educational institutions. These materials have been developed by the education sector for the education sector and are designed for flexible delivery. The day's worth of learning is suitable for online, in-person or hybrid delivery and can be segmented into smaller sessions. The materials educate staff, students and leadership about the climate crisis, whilst illustrating how they can all take significant actions within their roles to reduce carbon emissions, translating the learning into carbon-reducing action.

ACTION 6 **Guarding against ECO-ANXIETY**

Eco-anxiety is now a recognised phenomena among young people and adults. It is defined as distress relating to climate and environmental matters. In studies, its prevalence in children and young people is consistently high. It is therefore important that any education that we do around climate change and climate action is done in a way that is sensitive to this. However, there are strategies that can be put in place to ensure that pupils can learn about these issues in a way that is not detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing.

- Adopt a balanced approach – climate change is an important issues with potentially very significant impacts on our lives and our world. It is important, however, that we communicate this in a way that is balanced, not sensationalist. Finding the right balance will be determined by various factors, including the age and make-up of the group.
- Knowledge is power – There is a great deal of mis-information and misconceptions about climate change. This can be both in the direction of minimising its effects (or even its validity) and, alternatively, in focusing on the most extreme potential impacts. What is more useful to pupils and adults is accurate information which enables them to draw correct and reasonable conclusions about the issues and the need for action.
- Develop critical thinking – This is not only important for climate education but is useful across the whole sweep of learning. Pupils need to develop the skills to engage with complex issues, understanding the different perspectives present and drawing effective conclusions from this.
- A solution focused approach – A focus solely on the problems posed by climate change, especially on a global scale, will only be dispiriting and disengaging, potentially raising anxiety. It is important that, within our learning, we also communicate that there are actions that can and are being taken to mitigate the impacts of climate change. A focus also on the many innovative solutions that are being developed to address these issues can lead to a sense of hope and encouragement, which is more likely to enthuse and lead to engagement in action.
- Empower pupils – Whilst dealing with the global nature of climate change is an important part of climate education, pupils need to be empowered to take action and feel that they can make a difference. To do this, pupils need to be helped in recognising and identifying the factors local to them, in the school and home, that contribute to these global problems. They can then be encouraged to identify practical steps they can take or can encourage others to take to make a difference. The act of monitoring these factors and, hopefully, seeing beneficial improvements over time fosters positive activism and a sense of agency.