

National Framework for Sustainable Schools

The eight doorways



Food and drink



Opportunity

An unhealthy diet contributes to obesity and poor pupil concentration. Healthy, ethically sourced food can offer nutritional benefits while protecting the environment and supporting local producers and suppliers.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be model suppliers of healthy, local and sustainable food and drink, showing strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare in their food and drink provision, and maximising their use of local suppliers.

Energy and water



Opportunity

Rising demand for energy and water is storing up problems for future generations. Energy and water conservation can tackle this problem while saving the school money.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy use and water conservation, showcasing efforts such as wind and solar energy, and rainwater harvesting, to pupils and the whole community.

Travel and traffic



Opportunity

Rising vehicle use adds to congestion, road accidents and pollution, including carbon emissions. Car-sharing and public transportation help to ease these concerns, while walking and cycling also boost fitness and well-being.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of sustainable travel, where vehicles are used only when absolutely necessary and where there are exemplary facilities for healthier, less polluting or less dangerous modes of transport.

Purchasing and waste



Opportunity

Waste, and the throw-away culture that encourages it, can be addressed through sustainable consumption. Schools can reduce costs and support markets for ethical goods and services at the same time.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of sustainable procurement, using goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards from local sources where practicable, and increasing value for money by reusing, repairing and recycling as many goods as possible.

Local well-being



Opportunity

With their central locations, facilities and extensive networks, schools can act as hubs of learning and change in their communities. Problems on their doorstep offer relevant and engaging opportunities for pupils to learn, and a means of strengthening local relationships.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of good corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.

Global dimension



Opportunity

Growing interdependence between countries changes the way we view the world, including our own culture. Schools can respond by developing a responsible, international outlook among their pupils, based on an appreciation of the impact of their personal values and behaviours on global challenges.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of good global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.

Buildings and grounds



Opportunity

The design and management of the school estate affects its environmental performance, and its ability to help pupils learn sustainable living. A well-designed and cared-for estate provides a rich resource for learning and play – not only about the environment but more widely – benefiting pupils' well-being and behaviour.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all school buildings – old and new – to make visible use of sustainable design features and to chose green building technologies, furnishings and equipment as opportunities arise. Through their grounds, we would like all schools to enable pupils to learn about the natural world and sustainable living, for example through food growing and biodiversity conservation.

Inclusion and participation



Opportunity

Schools can promote community cohesion by providing an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere that values everyone's participation and contributions. They can challenge prejudice and injustice in all its forms.

Recommendation (by 2020)

We would like all schools to be models of social inclusion, enabling all pupils to participate fully in school life while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures and creative expression.

What is sustainable development?

Sustainable development is a way of thinking about how we organise our lives and work – including our education system – so that we don't destroy our most precious resource, the planet.

From over-fishing to global warming, our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet, which cannot be sustained. Things which were once taken for granted such as a secure supply of energy or a stable climate do not look so permanent now.

We need to help people in all parts of the world to find solutions that improve their quality of life without storing up problems for the future, or impacting unfairly on other people's lives. Sustainable development means much more than recycling bottles or giving money to charity. It is about thinking and working in a profoundly different way.

Why do we need sustainable schools?

Here are three important reasons:

New skills and behaviours

Children need new skills if they are to become part of the solution to challenges like climate change, not part of the problem. Listening, expressing points of view, weighing evidence, cooperating, thinking critically, tackling real problems, participating in decisions, making informed choices – these are the skills cultivated by sustainable schools.

School efficiency and improvement

It is quite clear that sustainable schools are efficient schools that consume less energy, water and materials, and produce less waste – a win-win between efficiency and sustainability. They are also effective schools that recognise the power of sustainability issues to motivate pupils, engage them in learning, and boost their achievement, behaviour and well-being.

Sustainable communities

As places of learning, schools can demonstrate good practices to pupils, staff, parents, governors, suppliers and other schools, and engage them in activities that create positive change in communities. It is difficult to envisage a sustainable community without a sustainable school at its heart.