

Sustainable development and sustainable schools

The future holds many challenges for young people, and they have a high stake in it. Indeed, 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, emissions-free cars. Amid the potential dangers are fantastic opportunities and prizes.

Schools have a special role to play in securing the future for young people: they can prepare young people for a lifetime of learning and sustainable living, helping them be part of the solution to the world's big challenges, rather than part of the problem. Schools are important too because they have the potential to be the hearts of their communities, demonstrating sustainable practices in a way that will inspire parents and carers, businesses and others to take similar action.

The Government has recognised this in stating its desire for all schools to become models of sustainable development for their communities - in the UK sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*. But we know schools will need a lot of cooperation and support from a host of people and organisations to achieve this, and to train the gaze of young people in the direction of a sustainable future.

You're reading this document because you have a part to play - large or small - in helping schools meet this challenge.



Sustainable development and its benefits

So what does sustainable development mean? Well, it's a lot more than recycling bottles or giving to charity. It's about finding ways to improve people's quality of life without damaging the environment or storing up problems for the future, or transferring them to other parts of the world.

It's also an issue of strategic school improvement. The case studies in the consultation show that it contributes to achievement-raising, behaviour improvement, and cost savings, as well as providing means to engage, staff, parents and the wider community in the life of the school.

What is a sustainable school?

A sustainable school is guided by the principle of care: for oneself, care for each other (across cultures, distances and time) and care for the environment (far and near).

Care breeds responsibility. Schools that involve pupils in the design of playing areas experience reduced incidents of bad behaviour, including bullying and vandalism. Little is wasted in a sustainable school. Surplus items are recycled, composted or donated. Health is taken seriously. Quality food and drink are sourced from local suppliers where possible, and pupils are encouraged to come to school by foot or bike. Diversity in the community is celebrated. Everyone is respected and valued.

Our approach to sustainable schools

The Government has set out its UK sustainable development strategy. The Department for Education and Skills has produced a sustainable development action plan that responds to this; embedding sustainable development in schools is a key strand of that plan.

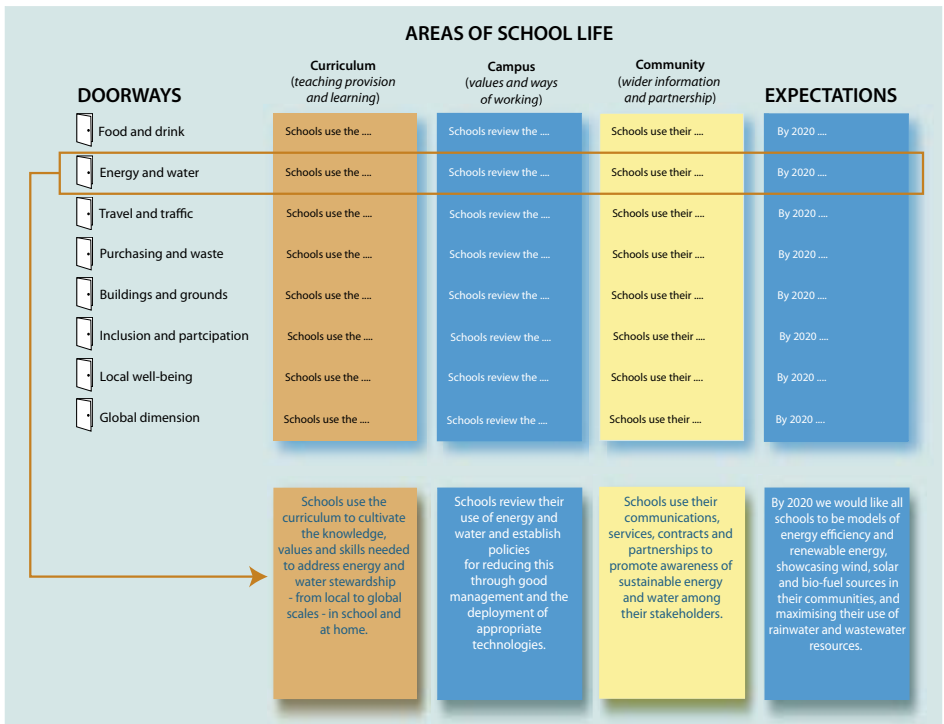
Many schools are already some way down the path to sustainable development - even if they're not calling it that. For example, many schools are working to improve the food they offer, encouraging healthy ways to travel to school, and looking at how they can use energy and water more efficiently.

In developing this consultation, we've tried to find a way for schools to draw together all of these activities, link them to other agendas, and highlight the opportunities for school improvement. For example, core to Every Child Matters is the principle that every child should have the opportunity to positively shape society, and their own future. By embedding sustainable development in school life, schools can help children grasp that opportunity.

The framework explained

The framework asks schools to consider how they can extend their commitment to sustainable development through eight key areas - or 'doorways'. The doorways are just different ways of approaching the task of building a sustainable school. They all interconnect, providing different openings onto a set of common challenges. Each can be taken forward through the major areas of school life - the curriculum, campus and community.

A national framework for sustainable schools



Areas of school life

- **Curriculum - teaching provision and learning:** Sustainable development can stimulate curriculum and teaching innovation through focusing on issues that matter to young people and using practical activities in the school's buildings, grounds and local area.
- **Campus - values and ways of working:** The whole school can be a medium for acquiring positive, sustainable habits. For example, better catering means better pupil health, concentration and learning outcomes. Greener travel means safer, fitter, more alert pupils. Efficiently managed school buildings mean lower energy and water bills.
- **Community - wider influence and partnerships:** Through contact with parents and carers, suppliers and local organisations, schools can advance an extensive well-being agenda among local people. Sustainable schools are not only beacons of public-spirited behaviour; they are efficient, high-performing institutions, respected by the communities they serve.



The doorways

Doorway 1: Food and drink

By 2020 we would like...

...all schools to be models of healthy, local and sustainable food and drink produced or prepared on site (where possible), with strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare, and with increased opportunity to involve local suppliers.

How one school is tackling the challenge ...

Pupil behaviour, self-esteem and diet have improved at **St Matthew's Primary School in Belfast** through a fruit cooperative scheme that sources from local traders. Children buy fruit at the school each morning, and profits from sales are put into pupil savings accounts managed by a local credit union. The profits have also allowed the school to buy water units that provide chilled, filtered water to pupils throughout the day, and each child has a reusable plastic bottle to carry their water.



Doorway 2: Energy and water

By 2020 we would like...

...all schools to be models of energy efficiency and renewable energy, showcasing wind, solar and bio-fuel sources in their communities, and maximising their use of rainwater and wastewater resources.

How one school is tackling the challenge ...

Cassop Primary School in County Durham has reduced its energy bills by a third thanks to the wind turbine installed in the school grounds in partnership with Durham County Council and Northern Electric. Low-energy light bulbs are in use throughout the school and elected pupils, known as Energy Monitors, graph and analyse the school's energy and water use to identify efficiency savings.



Doorway 3: Travel and traffic



By 2020 we would like...

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

How one school is tackling the challenge ...

At **Kesgrave High School in Suffolk**, a clever mix of travel initiatives makes it easy for pupils to reduce their environmental impact, and to keep fit. Safer routes to school, a separate entrance for walkers and cyclists and designated cycle parking mean that 75% of its pupils choose to walk or cycle to school.



Doorway 4: Purchasing and waste



By 2020 we would like...

...all schools to be models of resource efficiency, using low impact goods that minimise (or eliminate) disposable packaging from local suppliers with high environmental and ethical standards, and recycling, repairing and reusing as much as possible.

How one school is tackling the challenge ...

Pupils at **Culcheth High School in Cheshire** have become 'Winners or Binners' in a waste-minimisation education programme led by Groundwork. Pupils visit a landfill site, incinerating plant or recycling centre to understand the volume of waste produced in their local area and its impact on the environment. What they learn is taken back to core subjects. In Literacy, pupils write reports on their trips to the sites, or instructions on how to recycle. In D&T they make recycled paper for posters that raise awareness of recycling and waste reduction around the school.



Doorway 5: Buildings and grounds

By 2020 we would like...

...all schools to be regarded as living, learning places where pupils see what a sustainable lifestyle means through their involvement in the improvement of school buildings, grounds and the natural environment.



How one school is tackling the challenge ...

The Eco Working Party at **Thomas Tallis School in London** has had a major impact on the school environment. When an audit identified the need to improve the school concourse, pupils created a cottage garden with flowers and herbs, with the herbs being used in recipes during food technology. The pupils are now contributing to a travel plan that will allow the school to expand its facilities for walking and cycling, encouraging healthier travel choices and providing a further avenue for exploring environmental issues across the curriculum.



Doorway 6: Inclusion and participation

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 and creative expression.



How one school is tackling the challenge ...

Pupils at **Glebe School in Kent** are finding that motivation and encouragement grow in their school grounds. The pupils, who have moderate learning difficulties, are putting the geography curriculum to practical use by tending an organic fruit, vegetable and flower garden and learning about organic production and food miles. Pupils sell their produce at the local farmers' market, building bridges with farmers, stallholders and market staff, gaining valuable skills in organising and running the stall - and the satisfaction of serving returning customers.



Doorway 7: Local well-being

By 2020 we would like...

...all schools to be models of good corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with active support for the well-being of the local community and environment.



How one school is tackling the challenge ...

Sustainable development principles have moved from the classroom to the community at **Bowbridge Primary School in Nottinghamshire**.

Extended services like a parenting class which focuses on cooking draw the link between healthy eating and children's achievement, and connect with what children learn about food in school. Similar initiatives exist to support energy and water efficiency.



Doorway 8: Global dimension

By 2020 we would like...

...all schools to be models of good global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with active support for the well-being of the global environment and community.



How one school is tackling the challenge ...

Placing a global dimension in the curriculum at **Alderbrook Primary School in London** has made learning more interesting and relevant, and has helped pupils appreciate each others' cultural backgrounds. By linking with a school in Ghana, pupils have developed an understanding of the problems faced by farmers in developing countries, and an appreciation of the value of fair trade.

While Alderbrook pupils grow carrots, beans and tomatoes, their peers in Ghana grow plantain, cassava and gourds, sparking a discussion about seasonal changes, climate and vegetation in different parts of the world.



What is Government doing to help?

We recognise that schools and their stakeholders will need support to develop as models of sustainable development. So this consultation will be followed by a year of action from the DfES, during which we'll develop and launch a variety of tools that will help schools and their stakeholders translate their enthusiasm and growing knowledge into action. Some of the tools that will be launched throughout the year include:

- **The framework** - a clear statement of expectations across eight sustainability themes, with pointers on how to achieve them
- **The sustainable schools web service** - a place for schools and those working with them to share best practice, with links to organisations and networks that can provide support across all eight themes
- **A self-evaluation tool** - for schools to assess their level of progress and next steps across each of the eight themes, structured around Ofsted's self-evaluation headings.

And of course we'll make sure our work is joined-up with other Government departments and initiatives - like funding for microgeneration schemes in schools like wind turbines and solar panels, and the huge investment being made in school buildings between now and 2020.

How we can all support sustainable schools

Many people and organisations are interested in promoting sustainable development - and sustainable schools. From pupils to local government and governors, everyone has a role to play. Our joint task is to tap into the enthusiasm for sustainable development evident in many parts of the education world, turning a challenge that may seem overwhelming at times into a force for innovation and improvement in schools.

What you can do now

We believe that if stakeholders work together, schools can receive the encouragement and support necessary to reach the 2020 expectations set out in this paper. We'd like to know how you think you can play a part. The easiest way to respond is via our consultations web site at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations

Here you will find the full consultation paper, together with an online response form. If you prefer, you can download the response form and send it to us by post or email as follows:

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Responses should be sent by **1 September 2006**.

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The sustainable schools consultation is climate neutral. Working with Climate Care, we have offset the CO₂ emissions arising from all printing and distribution, consultation events, and response routes. The money used to offset these will go towards sustainable energy projects, like the production of energy efficient cooking stoves for schools in India.

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Copies of this publication can also be obtained from:

DfES Publications

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Annesley

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Please quote ref: 0481-2006DOC-EN

PPSLS/SSTUDIO/0406/23

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