



CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES



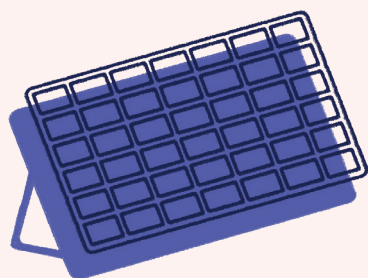
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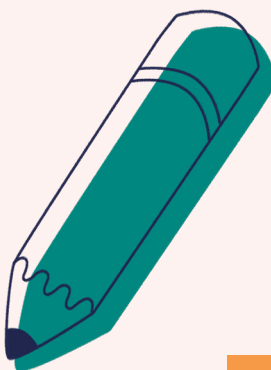
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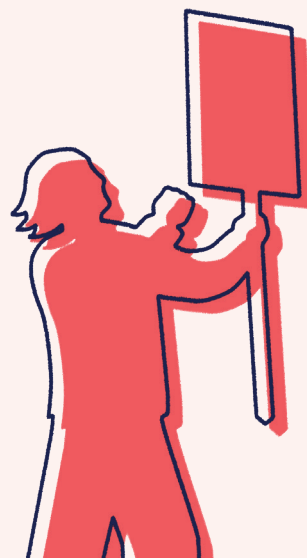


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Schools and colleges play an important role in empowering students to take their next steps into the world. They can also help shape climate-positive behaviour among staff and students.

The wave of school strikers across the planet fighting for climate action has dramatically underlined the need for educational institutions at all levels to do their bit to avoid climate breakdown.

But knowing where to start can feel like a minefield. That's why we've pulled together a Climate Action Plan with 50 top tips for schools and colleges. It includes climate-friendly measures that institutions can take around things like transport and food.

Note: some of the tips may work for all levels of education, while others may only apply to schools or colleges.

1 Declare a climate emergency



Declaring a climate emergency shows that you recognise the seriousness of the climate crisis and indicates your commitment to do all you can to be climate friendly. It also sets the scene to ask for the urgent action we need from local and national decision-makers. There are resources online to help you get started, including from the National Education Union.

Case study: Workington school becomes first in the UK to declare climate emergency

"The student-led eco-energy group took their proposal to declare an emergency to the governing body after they became aware of just how large the problem is, which the school governors decided to support. Eddie McCurrie, 17, from Ravenglass, said: "We explained what it means to actually declare a climate emergency which is that we put the environment at the front of all the decisions that we make in school."

The eco-group have introduced litter pick-ups around the school as well as encouraging students to recycle their single use plastics and refill their water bottles."



**JOIN THE CONVERSATION
#CLIMATECLASS**

TRANSPORT

Transport is a major source of toxic air pollution and is the sector with the most carbon emissions in the UK. Air pollution causes and worsens an array of health issues and disproportionately impacts the health of children – it can even impair lung development. Reducing transport emissions won't just benefit the planet, it'll benefit the health of future generations.

Reducing car use and encouraging students and staff to walk, cycle or take public transport should be at the heart of your approach to improving your school or college's transport needs.

2 School survey



A survey can help you understand how staff and students travel, as well as helping you tailor your approach to the needs of your school or college. For example, are you in a rural town where public transport isn't adequate? If so, your approach could focus on encouraging families to carpool together and offering easier routes to walk and cycle.

3 Support cycling



Ensure there's adequate, secure bike storage for students and staff so they can cycle to school with confidence.

4 Act on idling



Despite engine exhaust being terrible for the planet and our lungs, enforcing anti-idling at the school gates can be tricky. To get the message out, put up posters outside the school, leaflet at pick-up and drop-off with the help of nominated eco-champions and ask students to take leaflets home. To get started, download our A5 anti-idling leaflet.

Case study: New City College, Hackney and Tower Hamlets

Students from two college campuses in East London both measured the air quality in the local area and found that it was at dangerous levels of air pollution. They decided to do something about it and spoke to local people and collected signatures for petitions asking for their local councils to take action.

Hackney students took their petition directly to their Deputy Mayor, and after a couple of negotiation meetings, the Deputy Mayor came to the college and committed to a range of measures in front of an assembly of young people. She promised to carry out a study to find out what was causing poor air outside the college, plant more trees and work with the college to have cycle training to help more young people cycle to college.

Tower Hamlets students launched their petition and ran an action in their college canteen which enabled them to get enough signatures for it to be heard at a full council meeting. The meeting was attended by over 40 Councillors and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets. Not only did they demonstrate the support they had for the petition asks, but they were able to emphasise why Air Quality was such an important issue to them, reflecting on personal stories about living in the Borough. A follow up negotiation was then arranged with the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Air Quality, to discuss how Tower Hamlets Council could take it forward.

5 See if a School Streets programme is right for you



School Streets is an initiative where restricted vehicle access is put in place on school roads at drop-off and pick-up. Areas that have introduced it have seen a dramatic change in how students travel to school, as well as improved air quality.

6**Carpool**

Include parents and students who rely on cars by encouraging carpooling. Bring together families for a breakfast or evening social so that they can meet and connect with others who take similar routes to school.

7**Greener school trips**

When using coaches, try to combine school trips. Where possible, walk or use public transport.

8**Use days of action to kick-start green behaviour**

Get the school or college behind key events such as Walk to School Week, and host competitions. It's a good time to appeal to students' competitive side and get them comfortable with greener behaviours.



ENERGY AND BUILDINGS

“Our educational buildings are more than safe spaces for us to learn, they are themselves an education resource. It is a scandal that so many of our nurseries, schools, college and university buildings are powered by fossil fuels, have no or hardly any renewables, are poorly insulated, have inefficient and outdated lighting and controls, an absence of sufficient natural light”

- Teach the Future campaign.

9 Join the Teach the Future call for net-zero buildings



Call on the government to ensure that all new educational buildings that are at least 50% funded by public money are net zero from 2022, and that all state-funded educational buildings are retrofitted to be net zero by 2030.

10 Install a smart meter



The best way to start using energy efficiently is to understand how much you use, and when and where you use it the most. Smart meters can give you the data you need to track your energy usage and review the impact of any greener measures you bring in.

11 Power the school with green energy



Switch to greener energy suppliers. Ecotricity and Good Energy both offer 100% renewable electricity and are fossil fuel and nuclear free. They also oppose fracking!

12 Turn off monitors



This is a simple step that can easily be forgotten by the best of us. You can task eco-champions (both staff and students) to double check monitors are off and put reminder posters in ICT suites and classrooms. Get creative with posters to increase your chances of getting students and staff to act.

13 Insulate



A poorly insulated building could be allowing energy to escape from multiple areas, meaning unnecessary energy loss and higher energy bills. Conduct a review of how well insulated buildings are and take simple steps, like draughtproofing windows and doors to keep as much heat in as possible.

14 Eco-heating



Schools and colleges should look at their capacity to move to eco-friendly heating as it's a great way to save energy and costs in the long term. A heat pump is an option worth exploring. Rather than making the inside colder by transferring the heat outside (like a fridge) it does the opposite, extracting heat from the environment outside and pumping it into the building. It's an effective method of eco-heating, although set-up is currently quite costly.

15 Solar power



Explore whether options like solar thermal heating or solar PV panels would be suitable for helping heat or power your building. In the past, government has offered green grants so it's worth checking if any financial help is available.

NATURE

The climate crisis is having a devastating impact on nature, but nature itself can help us create a more climate-friendly future. Trees, for example, remove the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, as well as being home to many species. Nature offers great co-benefits too, such as improving wellbeing and cleaning the air we breathe.

16 Understand the nature around you



Start spotting things like birds and trees on the premises and work your way out to local parks or green spaces. You may be surprised what you find close by when you start paying attention

17 Get connected with community nature initiatives



Immerse students in nature and green spaces through nature initiatives. This is particularly important for schools and colleges in urban areas. Great programmes such as Wild in the City are aimed at getting Black, Asian and minority ethnic students (who typically have less access to green space) out in nature and learning new skills.

18 Bring the green to you



The Woodland Trust offers great resources to help you understand how many trees we need and where to plant them. It also has tree-planting packs with advice on how to look after your trees and a scheme that gives away free trees each year to schools.

You could also plant hedges around the perimeters. Hedges don't just green the building, they help reduce levels of air pollution, provide cooling and reduce noise.

19 Visit nature on school trips



Organise a trip that includes time spent in nature or among wildlife. From a city farm to a nature reserve, there are multiple options that get students outdoors, widening their understanding and reaping the benefits of nature.

20 Don't forget about nature indoors



Task the students with growing and caring for their own indoor plants – they can grow plants for the classroom that clean the air we breathe, like rubber plants, peace lilies and Chinese evergreens.



FOOD

Food production causes **14.5%** of global carbon emissions, mostly from meat and dairy, so it's an important sector for taking action.

21 To start, evaluate the food served

☐

at canteen lunches cafes to inform a strategy that focuses on less and better meat consumption.

22 Introduce meat-free Mondays

☐

Pick one day a week for the canteen to go **meat-free**. It makes for an easier transition to consuming less meat and can give kitchen staff more time to understand what meat-free cooking entails.

23 Explain why

☐

It's important to explain the reasons for **eating less meat and dairy**. Use spaces such as assemblies, newsletters and news boards to get the message out.

24 Make food tech classes meat-free

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If you run food technology classes, why not run a **vegetarian or vegan theme**? It can help students get practical experience in making simple meat-free meals which they can copy at home.

25 Influence food suppliers

☐

You can join the public caterers that serve **millions of meals in schools, colleges, and universities**, who've already vowed to cut the amount of meat they serve by 20% as part of their #20percentlessmeat pledge. And you can ask suppliers to provide fresh and seasonal produce to help you avoid even more emissions.

26 Survey students

☐

Surveys are a great way to understand how students and staff feel about the transition to **eating less meat and dairy**. They can give you insight into personal choices and indicate whether there's an appetite for the school to take bigger steps to deal with its food emissions.

Case Study: Kale Yeah!

Friends of the Earth teamed up with the University of Portsmouth to reward students for eating less meat. "Buy 6 veggie or vegan options and get a free meal" – that's the deal being rolled out in the university's cafes. And it comes complete with an electronic loyalty card that won't get lost in the wash.

Students can choose between a eaty or non-meaty free meal – they don't have to go veggie to benefit. That's what makes Kale Yeah! different from schemes at other universities, such as Westminster or Staffordshire. It was important to appeal to meat eaters because the majority of students eat meat most days.



STATIONERY SUPPLIES

A chunk of emissions comes from day-to-day purchasing choices, including stationery supplies, so it's worth seeing how you can make positive changes in this area.

21 Carry out a classroom audit ☐

to determine how many supplies are being used and what you actually need. This should help you adjust your orders to avoid waste.

22 Plan and buy supplies in bulk ☐

Bulk buying supplies should reduce packaging and save on emissions from delivery.

23 Choose a green supplier ☐

Suppliers such as Paper Round will help you create a circular economy by supplying you with high-quality recycled supplies and transforming your waste into future stationery.

24 Remember to collect unused supplies ☐

Round up pens, staplers, highlighters and other supplies from classroom cupboards and desks to restock the main stationery cupboard.

25 Reduce usage ☐

Use the audit (tip 27) to make an estimate of how much paper (or another supply) each student uses and hold a class competition to see who can cut down most.



PLASTIC WASTE

Did you know that only 9% of plastic has ever been recycled in the world?

32 Sort the fountains

☐

Ensure there are clean and working water fountains for students to use.

33 Reusable water bottles

☐

It's easy to get through a lot of plastic water bottles, especially in summer. Encourage students to refill plastic bottles and, if possible, get their own reusable water bottle to avoid plastic waste.

34 Incentivise reusable coffee cups and containers

☐

These curb day-to-day plastic use, so do what you can to encourage students to use them. For example, offer students who use a reusable container a lunch discount or add a small tariff on single-use cups and containers. You can use any money raised to support plastic-free initiatives.

35 Litter collections

☐

Organise litter collections at the school to collect waste to recycle and avoid it ending up in landfill.

36 Plastic-free challenge

☐

Holding a plastic-free competition, for example who can go the longest without single-use plastic, is a great way to raise awareness of plastic pollution. Heat up the competition with a leader board and a prize for whoever wins.

37 Phase out single-use plastic

☐

Hold a quick survey to understand where single-use plastic is most used on site, and then go from there. For example, replace sachet sauce with sauce dispensers or swap disposable cutlery for washable ones. But remember that some people may still need to use single plastic straws, so keep a small supply available.

38 Can you start a plastic-free tuck shop?

☐

Plastic-free stalls and shops can stock anything from shampoo for refills to plastic-free snacks and drinks. They can inspire sustainable behaviour, raise money for plastic-free initiatives and be run by eco-champions. If a regular stall isn't an option, why not organise a pop-up shop to coincide with a plastic-free competition.

39 Upgrade your recycling

☐

Once you've tried to reduce and reuse as much plastic as possible, use a waste service such as Paper Round, which can help you recycle many more items (including food waste).

Case study: University of Birmingham, Eco to go Cups and boxes

The university introduced Eco to go Cup with staggering results, in just 3 months they sold out of the 5000 cups bought, which meant reusable cups made up 33% of the hot drinks bought (35,083 purchases).

The Eco to go boxes are made from sturdy, recyclable polypropylene and can be reused extensively. Students and staff purchase Eco box for £4 and are responsible for cleaning and returning the box to the food outlets. A free meal is offered if the student chooses to hand the box back to the university at the end of the year.

Key takeaways:

- 33% of hot drink takeouts are now in reusable to go cups
- A charge of 10p is added to purchases if using a disposable cup
- £17,404 has been saved by introducing reusable takeaway containers.



MORE ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

40 The power of assemblies



Assemblies are a wonderful opportunity to introduce new subjects and issues to students and promote the impact of the work you're doing. Make the assembly as interesting as possible by inviting a guest speaker or a local decision-maker to talk.

41 Film screening



Why not hold a film screening of a popular documentary such as David Attenborough's "Climate Change – The Facts". Compelling documentaries have a good way of showing just how vast and deep the crisis is and can often inspire students to act.

42 Become an eco-school



If your school is in England, you can join nearly 19,000 eco-schools. The Eco-Schools programme is led by pupils and involves hands-on learning that gets the whole school and the wider community involved in exciting environmental projects.

43 Support the school strikes



Greta Thunberg held the first school strike alone outside the Swedish parliament in 2018. Since then, she's inspired a movement of millions of young people across the world who are deeply concerned with what the climate crisis is doing to their world and their future. Schools should support the school strikers and their calls for climate justice, and shouldn't fine them, as this can impact students from poorer families, preventing their participation in future climate strikes.

You can help by organising a group of students to join the local school strike. Art classes can be used to get creative with posters for the demonstrations.

44 Support the Teach the Future campaign



Teach the Future is a youth-led campaign demanding education reform. It found that while only 4% of students feel they know a lot about climate change, 68% want to learn more about the environment. And 75% of teachers feel they haven't been adequately trained to educate students about climate change.

The campaign's demands include:

- A government-commissioned review into how the English education system is preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
- Teacher training on the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
- Inclusion of the climate emergency and ecological crisis in all subject areas.
- Funding for youth-led initiatives on climate.
- Net zero school buildings.

45 Engage local decision-makers



You can engage local decision-makers to advocate for more action from councils and government.

- Write to your local decision-makers as an individual or as a representative of the school or college. Alternatively, you can team up with other schools to show a united desire for change.
- Invite your MP to the school or college to meet your eco committee, or parents, guardians and carers. This lets you have a conversation about what they're doing to address the climate crisis, and ensure actions align with what's necessary.
- Go to a public council meeting (advertised on the council website) or your local MP's weekly surgery. Take some students with you and make sure you've prepped some questions. It may even help to practice mock conversations beforehand.

Case Study: Nottingham College students work with their council to improve recycling communications

Six Nottingham College students from the My World My Home project had an impact on Nottingham City Council's recycling communications through their strategic engagement with decision-makers this year. After the student team heard from their community that confusion about recycling and unclear communication was one of the biggest environmental concerns, they decided to campaign for improved recycling communications across Nottingham.

The team attended their local council surgery to present their campaign aims and spoke to the city's Mayor, who happened to be there! They then joined a roundtable discussion with the city's environment lead and waste management team to discuss their ideas about making communications more available and inclusive to the communities of Nottingham. One outcome was the team's ongoing collaboration with the city council's recycling communications team to create new Instagram content encouraging residents to lessen plastic usage and communicating what they can and can't recycle.

46 Bank ethically

Move the school or college bank account to an ethical bank such as Triodos Bank to ensure your money doesn't support investment in fossil fuels. Triodos Bank uses banking to build a community dedicated to achieving positive change. They also invest in socially and environmentally beneficial projects. So, your money will help slow climate change, create jobs and drive green industries.

47 Green the curriculum

There are simple ways to connect the climate emergency to the existing curriculum. For example, conduct a class outside and monitor biodiversity, then use the data in maths lessons. Air pollution can fit into science lessons well by exploring toxic gases and their impact on our health. If you're teaching KS2, use our Clean Air Schools Pack to get your lessons going. English classes provide a space for students to practice letter writing to decision-makers, while the climate emergency can also be a theme for creative writing, poems and art classes.

48 International solidarity

The climate crisis disproportionately affects poorer communities in the Global South, and it's these same communities that are leading action to address the crisis. It's therefore important that our campaigning works to show solidarity with their struggles. Ask the students to do some online research and share the stories they find with the rest of the class or school – they could start with Friends of the Earth International's roundup of stories from our sister groups across the world. If you want to do more, you could explore twinning with an overseas school to understand how schools around the world are impacted and campaigning on the climate crisis.

49 Monitor your impact



As you begin to make changes, it's important to monitor their impact. Data from service providers or meters can help you measure the emissions and waste you've avoided. Surveying students and staff can give insights into how their behaviour has changed and any resulting benefits to their wellbeing. Collecting data can tell you what's worked well and what hasn't, and help you tailor your strategy to focus on the most important areas.

50 Let the students lead the way



Every now and again, we're contacted by pioneering classes and students who've launched their own climate initiatives, from art displays to fundraising efforts. **Host an ideas session with your class or school community to source your own approach to taking climate action.**

