



Rethinking Curriculum

Climate change and sustainability evaluation framework

Delivering an expansive and inspiring curriculum for all

This evaluation framework has been developed by the Chartered College of Teaching as part of the Rethinking Curriculum project, funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust. It is one of a series of evaluation frameworks that have been shared as part of our Rethinking Curriculum toolkits.

The framework captures some of the key ideas explored in the Rethinking Curriculum **climate change education and sustainability** toolkit and offers some key ideas for you to evaluate your school's curriculum practice on this theme. These ideas are drawn from research and evidence and from our work with schools, and include input from leading experts.

The ideas explored are not intended to provide a definitive approach to curriculum development on this theme. There may be gaps or omissions and this should be viewed as a work in progress, which we will aim to develop further as the evidence base continues to evolve. You are encouraged to consider this framework alongside the [climate change education and sustainability toolkit](#), and to undertake your own reading and research to build your understanding of the key ideas discussed prior to implementing changes in your context.

This evaluation framework has been developed by Jenna Crittenden.



Chartered College
of Teaching

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Part 1: Building a climate change education and sustainability culture

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

Your evaluation
(1–6)

- ✓ Staff at all levels are supported to build their expertise in relation to climate change and sustainability; staff understand the term 'sustainability and climate change education' and leaders have established a shared language that is understood by all.
- ✓ The training needs of all educators have been identified and acted upon and leaders have used this to mitigate climate anxiety.
- ✓ Leaders and teachers strive to establish a conscious culture of actions around sustainability and climate change education; this culture is reflected in and supported by the learning environment, through enrichment activities, events and community engagement, and is regularly evaluated to ensure impact.
- ✓ The whole school community models behaviours and actions that support climate change education and working towards a sustainable future. This moves beyond knowledge acquisition towards actions.
- ✓ Alongside a whole-school culture, time and resources have been protected in order to develop and deliver the DfE climate action plan. This is reviewed by leaders, including governors/trustees, to ensure both operational and strategic delivery.

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

There is little or no shared understanding of climate change and sustainability education, and this leads to misunderstanding, avoidance or climate anxiety from staff.

The actions taken are superficial and, as a result, pupils, staff and the wider community make little measurable impact and do not value the resources required to effectively deliver education in this area.

Policy does not move beyond providing the knowledge outlined in the National Curriculum, and holistic planning for operational and strategic development is not seen as a priority.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do our values and vision outline climate change and sustainability education as a priority and how is this seen in the culture of our school?
2. What do we as leaders mean when we use the term 'climate change and sustainability education' and to what extent is this understanding shared by all staff?
3. How have we developed a shared language and understanding around climate change and sustainability education and how do we know that this is understood across the school community?
4. What CPD or other support is in place to build staff expertise in relation to climate change and sustainability and how adequate is this for our staff team?
5. How do we model behaviours and actions to our school community in relation to climate change and sustainability education?



Part 2: Building climate change and sustainability education into the curriculum

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

- ✓ The development of climate change and sustainability education is not only delivered through science and geography knowledge from the National Curriculum but is also taught explicitly to pupils as knowledge and actions as part of a well-planned citizenship education integrated across the formal curriculum, beginning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continuing over the entirety of the school journey.
- ✓ Teachers utilise a range of pedagogical skills to support the development of climate change and sustainability understanding. For example:
 - explicit teaching of knowledge about climate change processes in geography and science
 - using questions and/or prompts to scaffold pupils' thinking and support them in expressing more complex ideas and solutions to the current challenges in climate change
 - providing opportunities for debate, discussion and challenge, ensuring impartiality and building both sides of the argument equally, using substantiated evidence to challenge misinformation and the notion of 'greenwashing'.
- ✓ Although teachers may be guided by the whole-school vision for climate change and sustainability education, teachers have a degree of agency over their pedagogical choices and may adapt their approach to suit a particular subject area and/or respond to the needs of particular pupils or timely global current affairs and events.
- ✓ The shared language and understanding of curriculum and climate change terms is used throughout the curriculum and has been curated from research-informed sources to ensure validity.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do we have a clear picture of how climate change and sustainability education fits into our formal curriculum? How do we build in progression, from when pupils start to when they leave us?
2. How do we (or how do we plan to) build staff understanding and expertise around climate change and sustainability education?
3. Do we have a good understanding of our strengths and/or barriers and any work to be done in relation to building climate change and sustainability into the curriculum?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Climate change and sustainability are taught discretely as subject knowledge in geography and science only, rather than being part of the curriculum as a whole.

Opportunities to discuss actions are avoided due to concerns of 'inciting activism'.

Staff do not perceive development of climate change and sustainability education as being an important driver of academic performance, and this is all that is valued.

Due to the accountability culture, climate change and sustainability education is not seen as the role of the school and staff are not supported to develop their curriculum to include this.

Staff anxiety over the nature of the negative direction of climate change makes them avoid this for pupils' wellbeing.

Staff are not confident in their own understanding of the complex nature of climate change and sustainability education and do not feel equipped to teach their students effectively or with factual knowledge. They avoid teaching it so as not to misinform or share unsubstantiated claims.



Part 3: Key considerations for successful implementation

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

- ✓ Leaders clearly set out the vision and values that are to inform the school's work around climate change and sustainability education and the wider curriculum, ensuring that these are understood by all.
- ✓ Leaders ensure that sufficient time, resources and supporting structures are in place to enable staff to deliver the climate change and sustainability curriculum effectively.
- ✓ Leaders draw on research and evidence to inform curriculum development work relating to climate change and sustainability; they gather data from their context to evaluate existing practice and consider how they will evaluate the impact of implementing a new approach beyond subject knowledge acquisition.
- ✓ Implementation and development of climate change and sustainability approaches is a collaborative process, characterised by iterative cycles of development, meaningful professional learning, shared problem-solving and ongoing review.
- ✓ There is an identified sustainability leader who leads upon and champions the work around the climate action plan; this leader, along with middle leaders (where appropriate), has clarity around their role and is well positioned to support colleagues and help to drive the curriculum forward.
- ✓ Teachers are supported to build their expertise so that they develop strong subject/pedagogical content knowledge, have a deep understanding of effective pedagogical approaches and are able to combine these with knowledge of the school curriculum, pupils' needs and the wider context, in order to plan and implement the curriculum effectively.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Is your school ready to implement curriculum development activity in this area? Have you already evaluated existing practice using the full Rethinking Curriculum evaluation framework to ensure a strong foundation for this work?
2. Do you have a clear plan for implementation? How will you involve staff in this process?
3. Is there existing capacity and/or how will you create capacity for this work? Is there anything that you will need to de-implement to enable this to happen?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Leaders and/or staff find it difficult to articulate vision/goals/values.

Implementation may be rushed or not well thought-through.

There is a lack of resources/time to support development of curriculum.

Curriculum changes are implemented wholesale without sufficient consideration of context, school needs and/or capacity.

School leaders do not systematically seek staff input into curriculum development and, as a result, there may be a disconnect between the intended and enacted curriculum.

Curriculum changes are seen as a 'quick fix', with new ideas introduced with limited further development or impact evaluation.

Teachers implement new approaches too quickly, without a clear rationale or understanding of how they fit into the school context, ultimately resulting in a lack of impact on pupil learning.