



# Greener Governance

Following the DfE's strategy for environmental sustainability and climate change in education, **Megan Tate**, policy and research officer, introduces a range of organisations that offer solutions

In April 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) launched Sustainability and Climate Change: A Strategy for the Education and Children's Services Systems, giving the green light for the school sector to act on environmental sustainability. Aiming to make the UK's education sector the world leader in sustainability and climate change by 2030, the strategy outlines plans to address the curriculum, green careers, buildings and procurement, staffing and much more.

Despite this push, a common narrative we hear from governors and trustees through our Greener Governance campaign is that their schools and trusts want to do more, but, due to resource and funding constraints, they are only 'nibbling around the edges'. This is understandably frustrating, and as our chief executive covers in her Last Word (page 34), we have been raising this at every opportunity and will continue to lobby the government for more funding in this vital area.

However, there are a range of low-cost actions schools can implement which should not be underestimated as they can help to realise your climate action plan. For example, children turning off lights is influential in instilling a socially responsible culture while adding sustainability as a criteria during procurement can also be a fairly easy win.

In this article we hear from organisations that offer further accessible ways to encourage environmental sustainability in your school

or trust. They do, of course, require leadership and staff time, but that is unavoidable. We have also added more to our refreshed guidance on the range of actions that can be taken for each of the four Cs: curriculum, campus, culture and community. And we have continued to add resources to our Greener Governance campaign page.

## Blazer vision - Child Poverty Action Group UK

At Child Poverty Action Group UK we see pre-loved uniform provision as a straightforward way for schools to be more environmentally sustainable and financially inclusive. Schools need to review their uniform policies by September 2022 to ensure they are compliant with the new statutory guidance introduced by the DfE, to make uniforms more affordable for families. Included in the new guidance is a requirement for all schools to ensure that second-hand uniform is available. Establishing easy-to-access and stigma-free ways for families to get pre-loved uniform serves a dual purpose of both reducing costs for families and encouraging recycling.

Through our Cost of the School Day project we have seen some outstanding practice around pre-loved uniform provision. One school in Scotland set up a hire system for blazers with families paying £10 to hire a blazer for two years rather than needing to purchase

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A uniform rental scheme in Scotland allows families to recycle 'pre-loved' blazers after two years

them outright. After two years, when pupils leave the school, pupils return the blazer to the school to be recycled and re-used, and received a £5 deposit back. This system not only significantly reduces costs for families, but also creates a positive whole-school culture around uniform recycling.

As the hire system is available to all pupils, it lessens the stigma that sometimes exists around pre-loved uniform, and instead makes recycling an integral part of the school's approach to uniform provision.



*For more ideas on how to set up effective pre-loved uniform provision at your school lots more*

*ideas and tips are included at [cpag.org.uk/right-blazer-school-uniform-guides](http://cpag.org.uk/right-blazer-school-uniform-guides).*

## Elect wisely - Choice Voting

Many governing boards and schools hold elections. This can be electing parent-governors or electing a head pupil. These activities demand a high level of resource, including the heavy usage of technology, paper and ink, all of which have a knock-on environmental impact. As a

board, by adopting an online voting platform such as Choice Voting you can lead by example and set a culture of consideration for the environment while enjoying many other benefits.

Through Choice Voting, for example, we offer a safe and quick process to set up and launch your online elections. Online voting improves your environmental impact by eliminating paper and ink waste and reducing your carbon footprint by removing the need to post and return paper voting slips. Alongside environmental benefits there are other advantageous consequences, such as lower overall costs to run the election, lower staff time and, importantly, higher voter turnout. One school saw the response rate for a parent election rise from 15% to 97%.

As an environmentally conscious organisation ourselves, we take pride in using servers based in data centres powered by renewable energy sources. In the same token, by going virtual, governors can set an important tone that exemplifies the value placed on environmental sustainability to the whole school.

## Choice Voting

*If your school you would like to find out more about Choice Voting, please give us a call on 01202 078866, or book a no obligation demonstration by visiting our website.*

*Alternatively, you can reach us by emailing [education@choicenvoting.co.uk](mailto:education@choicenvoting.co.uk).*

## Purchasing power – the Schools Commercial Team

The Schools Commercial Team supports schools with procurement. Our aim is to support the DfE's commitment to sustainable development and the belief that it is important to prepare young people for the future. The DfE's approach is based on empowerment and the belief that schools perform better when they take responsibility for their own improvement.

We work closely with suppliers on the frameworks we approve as part of our Find a Framework online service, to try and provide as much information and support to help schools reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to the 2050 net zero emissions target.

Collectively, schools account for a quarter of UK public sector carbon emissions. Included in the range of DfE approved frameworks, school buyers have an option to request Smart Meters that provide energy data that can be used as part of the curriculum. For example, one primary school has pupil energy champions who use sensors to spot heat loss in the halls.

We have frameworks that offer heating and renewable energy technologies including ground source heating systems that reduce carbon outputs. The Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) is working with its members to identify schools with boilers that are approaching end of life.

We support the social value element of procurement: the DfE Furniture framework includes suppliers that provide



Greener Governance  
in schools and trusts

nigla National  
Governance  
Association

## Join NGA's Greener Governance pledge to:

- reduce carbon at your school or trust
- put your school or trust's contribution to environmental sustainability on the agenda
- ensure a climate action plan is developed to make this happen in 2022.

furniture made or part-made from recycled materials, consider packaging and sustainable transport plans including electric delivery vehicles and delivery routes to reduce fuel consumption.

Our new Get Help Buying for Schools' service gives access to free advice and guidance to support compliant purchasing; we also hold regular webinars that give attendees the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

*For regular updates about how we are supporting schools to make the most of non-staff spend, follow @buyingforschools on LinkedIn or sign up to follow the Buying for Schools blog.*

## Taps and toilets – Schools Water Efficiency

All schools have taps and toilets, using around 12,000 million litres of water per day, and costing more than £40m

a year. But climate change means there will be less water, and population growth means what we do have will need to go further.

At this point you may be asking, what can I do about it this as a governor or trustee? At board level you can start by adopting an environmental sustainability strategy and making water saving a priority within your climate action plan. At school level you can encourage and support your school eco-team or premises/business manager to use the Thames Water calculator to work out how and where your school is using water now and also look to build water efficiency into procurement to ensure bids prioritise water efficiency as well as energy efficiency. Your school will also be metered – looking at your water bills will give you great insight.



At one primary school, pupil energy champions use sensors to spot heat loss in the halls

## waterwise

*For other useful information visit the waterwise website*

## Conserving energy - Energy Sparks

Monitoring energy usage can greatly benefit schools and trusts – saving energy, money and creating a socially responsible culture. We at Energy Sparks are a registered charity that provides a free online energy analysis tool, energy education and a carbon reduction programme specifically designed to help schools reduce their carbon footprint and teach pupils energy saving and sustainability life skills. The unique online tool presents bespoke analysis of the energy data with suggestions of actions the school community could take to save energy and reduce the school's carbon emissions.

We have over 100 energy and sustainability education activities to support learning about climate change, investigating energy use, and taking action to reduce energy waste. The activities also have over 60 adult-led actions with supporting guidance on saving energy through changes to behaviour, heating system controls, policies, building fabric and operations. Participating schools are supported with free online training, free in-person education workshops and energy management mentoring subject to availability.

Most schools can expect to save around 10% in their first year of engagement with Energy Sparks, resulting in cost savings of at least £2,500 and eight tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> based on an average two-form entry primary school. Best performing schools have achieved savings of up to 30%, generally by reducing

school holiday, weekend and overnight heating and electricity use. Examples of savings achieved can be found in the Energy Sparks case studies at [energysparks.uk/case-studies](http://energysparks.uk/case-studies).



To join Energy Sparks visit [energysparks.uk/enrol](http://energysparks.uk/enrol)

## Walk the walk - Living Streets

We are Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. For over 20 years, we have been campaigning to enable more children to walk to school. At Living Streets, we want every child who can to walk or wheel to school on safe, unpolluted and enjoyable streets. From better health to learning independence, switching the school ride for a stride has a myriad of benefits. When more families walk, there are fewer cars on the road, helping tackle congestion, air pollution and traffic danger outside school gates.



**WOW schools see a 30% reduction in car journeys taken to the school gate and a 23% increase in walking rates**

High air pollution negatively impacts children in particular, but the walk to school can play such a big part in improving our air quality. Through our walk to school initiatives, which span from early years to secondary school, and reach well over half a million children every year, we have witnessed the benefits this simple act can bring. With our flagship walk to school challenge, WOW, children self-report how they get to primary school using the interactive WOW Travel Tracker. If they walk, wheel, cycle, scoot or park and stride, they are rewarded with a monthly collectable badge. Each year, around 190kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are averted per WOW school.

As part of a funded project, some schools can receive WOW resources for free. Find out if a school in your area is eligible.



For more information on the initiatives, [walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk](mailto:walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk)

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT TOOL

SchooliP, National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) and NGA have come together to provide schools and trusts with a free online tool to help governing boards adopt environmental sustainability as a strategic priority and

develop a climate action plan. Based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the online tool is designed to cover all aspects of school life and is organised into the 4 Cs of curriculum, campus, community and culture. It consists of a series of questions

and guidance to help schools and trusts focus their efforts on pertinent actions. To find out more about what you as a governing board can do, please see our refreshed environmental sustainability guidance at [www.nga.org.uk/greengovernance](http://www.nga.org.uk/greengovernance)