



SPENCER
SUSTAINABILITY STEERING GROUP

Environmental Sustainability Policy



SPENCER
ACADEMIES TRUST

1. Introduction

Environmental Sustainability is regarded as one of the fundamental challenges of our times. The Trust recognises that its activities have the potential for both positive and negative impacts upon the environment at local, national, and international levels. Over time and subject to available funding the Trust will seek to increase the positive impacts and to decrease the negative impacts.

The Trust is uniquely placed, as the educator of the citizens and leaders of the future and also as an employer and prominent community organisation, to foster positive environmental awareness and behaviours, through education and by example. Such behaviours will benefit its pupils and staff, the communities we serve, and enhance the reputation of the Trust.

a. Vision and Aims

- To train and support staff and pupils to become informed and empowered local and global citizens.
- To mitigate harmful and undesirable impacts upon climate, health, biodiversity, resource depletion, and environmental quality on land sea and in the air.
- To manage costs and ensure effective use of financial and material resources.
- To increase organisational resilience.
- To support legal and statutory compliance.
- To comply with central and local government environmental and climate change policy.

b. Context

The Spencer Academies Trust Environmental Sustainability Policy sets out how the Trust will respond to, amongst others:

- UK legislation to meet net zero carbon by 2050
- The Environment Act (2021)
- The DfE policy paper Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems (April 2022)
- The Climate Change Act (2008)
- The moral responsibility to prepare children and young people for the challenges and opportunities they will face – with the appropriate knowledge, skills and pastoral care.

The DfE strategy identifies the following action areas:

- Leadership, engagement, and next steps
- Action area 1: Climate education
- Action area 2: Green skills and careers
- Action area 3: Education estate and digital infrastructure
- Action area 4: Operations and supply chains

2. Leadership, engagement and next steps

To ensure that sustainability issues are embedded within the culture and operational practise of the Trust and are appropriately prioritised, Spencer Academies Trust will foster the ethos, policies, procedures, and skills to ensure that sustainability issues are managed in a thorough, professional, and effective manner.

- The Trust will establish a Sustainability Steering Group with specific terms of reference and appropriate representative membership, to support the work of the Trust Central Team and Trust Leadership at school level, to improve environmental sustainability metrics.
- Trust schools will be supported to develop and implement an Environmental Sustainability policy together with an Environmental Sustainability Action Plan and a Climate Action Plan appropriate to each school's individual circumstances.
- The Trust will seek to offer appropriate training opportunities so that Trust staff can become increasingly environmentally literate and can contribute to the improving environmental performance of the Trust and the environmental and climate literacy of pupils.
- Subject to available funding the Trust shall work towards being carbon neutral by 2030.
- Trust schools will be encouraged to join the [Let's Go Zero \(letsigozero.org\)](https://letsigozero.org) schools' campaign.
- The Trust will report its aggregated carbon emissions and energy usage under the *Streamlined Energy & Carbon Reporting (SECR)* requirement. The Trust reports using the *Greenhouse Gas (GHP) Protocol* – Corporate Standard.
 - The chosen intensity measurement ratio is total gross emissions in metric tonnes CO2e per pupil, this being the recommended ratio for the Education sector.
 - Where resources allow, individual schools will be encouraged to calculate their own emissions and energy usage data.

3. Action area 1: Climate education

Young people are eager to create a greener, sustainable world, and tackle both the causes and impact of climate change. We will empower all young people to be global citizens, through a better understanding of climate change, and a greater connection to nature.

From birth to 5 years old, the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework ensures that all children develop an understanding of the world and the natural environment. As they progress through primary and secondary school, children and young people continue to build on this knowledge through science, geography and citizenship programmes within the national curriculum. Existing GCSEs such as design and technology, food preparation and nutrition, and economics contain opportunities for students to be taught about the environmental and sustainability context of the processes and principles underlying these subjects.

World class teaching will ensure all pupils get the best possible climate education.

- The Trust will encourage and support the training of staff in order to embed the teaching of environmental sustainability issues across the curriculum, where appropriate.
- The Trust will encourage and support Trust Schools to deliver appropriate new nationally recognised qualifications as they emerge, provided that such courses are viable to deliver.
- ***Political impartiality*** - Teaching about climate change does not constitute teaching about a political issue and schools do not need to present misinformation or unsubstantiated claims to provide balance. However, in climate education there is relevant political and scientific debate about the best ways that climate change can be addressed. Debates on political and policy change need to be grounded in wider citizenship education on democracy and democratic values and topics should be handled in line with [schools' legal duties on political impartiality](#).
- The Trust will engage with the DfE annual climate literacy survey to benchmark progress in improving the climate knowledge of school leavers.

4. Action area 2: Green skills and careers

a. Green skills and careers

Practical opportunities to participate in activities to increase climate resilience, reduce carbon impact and enhance biodiversity will enable children and young people to translate knowledge into positive action to improve their local communities, their country, and the planet.

- Trust schools will be encouraged and supported to participate in the [Eco Schools \(eco-schools.org.uk\)](https://eco-schools.org.uk) programme to accredit pupil involvement in environmental sustainability issues.
- The Trust will encourage and support Trust Schools to deliver the Climate Leaders Award to pupils.
- The Trust will encourage Careers staff employed by Trust Schools to embed best practice in the delivery of careers information, advice and guidance, so young people are aware of the full range of training and careers available to them and have access to a broad range of employers and workplaces, including those in the green sectors.

b. Global Citizenship

A global citizen is someone who is aware of and understands the wider world – and their place in it. They take an active role in their community and work with others to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable, and fairer. Global citizenship is all about encouraging young people to develop the knowledge, skills, and values they need to engage with the world, and it's about the belief that we can all make a difference.

Global citizenship is also about recognising that the lifestyles we lead and the resources we consume are often dependent upon the products and services of worldwide communities. The way we derive products and services has a potentially global impact upon the people who provide them.

- Trust schools will be encouraged to incorporate education in global citizenship within the wider curriculum at an age-appropriate level.

5. Action area 3: Education estate and digital infrastructure

A green, sustainable education estate that is resilient to the impacts of climate change will normalise and inspire young people to live sustainable lives, with impact felt widely in their families and communities.

a. Energy Use

Spencer Academies Trust uses electricity, mains gas, fuel oil, and wood pellet biofuel to heat school premises and to support the various curriculum energy requirements.

- The Trust is committed to procuring “Green” electricity and, subject to available funding, expanding on-site self-generation capacity such as solar photovoltaic panels.
- The Trust will seek to reduce night time use of grid electricity by investing in battery storage technology, subject to available funding.

- The Trust is committed to investing in low energy solutions when undertaking refurbishments or new builds, subject to available funding, for example but not limited to L.E.D lighting, efficient insulation and glazing and other efficiency measures.
- Over time and subject to available funding, the Trust will seek where technically feasible to decarbonise energy requirements by moving away from fossil fuels. The Trust recognises that this is not yet possible at all sites.

b. Water

Trust properties consume water for many reasons including but not limited to teaching, toilets, catering and cleaning. Reducing the amount of mains water that the Trust consumes reduces the demand for upstream water processing and transmission and downstream foul water processing, and reduces mains water supply costs. Trust schools also buy bottled water for onwards sale.

- Water distribution and drainage systems will be maintained to ensure water quality and to minimise flood risk.
- Over time and subject to available funds, schools will be encouraged to introducing water -saving technologies to upgrade water distribution systems.
- Over time and subject to available funds, schools will be encouraged to substitute bottled water for mains supplied water and refillable water bottles.

c. School Buildings & Grounds including Biodiversity

The way the Trust develops operates and maintains its buildings and sites has a significant impact upon environmental sustainability.

The accommodation and facilities within the Trust's portfolio are required to operate in an effective and efficient manner. This shall be attained through:

- An effective planned preventative maintenance programme administered via the EVERY compliance platform,
- A strategic estates management programme for each school that identifies priority projects for investment
- Seeking to implement over time a Trust-wide common approach to the installation and operation of efficient Building Energy Management Systems
- Procuring new school buildings following a RIBA 2030 methodology
- Cleaning contractors shall be required to only use environmentally appropriate cleaning products
- Trust estates and facilities staff will seek to follow DfE [Good estate management for schools - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools) (GEMS) with respect to the latest sustainability and climate change advice.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is considered to be important and desirable. The Trusts buildings and grounds should provide a visually attractive environment inhabited by wildlife and plants, and potentially provides an important environmental teaching resource and supports mental wellbeing. The choices we make about how school grounds are used and managed affects how plants and animals can thrive.

- Schools will seek to improve the biodiversity of their sites as funds and opportunities allow.
- Schools will be encouraged to grow on site an appropriate range of fruit and vegetables that can be used in the school meals kitchens or in the classroom
- Grounds maintenance and cleaning contractors shall be required to only use environmentally appropriate products

d. Digital infrastructure

- Where technically feasible, gas and electricity meters will be “smart” to support the Trust-wide acquisition of energy usage data.
- The Trust will support Trust Schools to engage with the [Energy Sparks](#) data and teaching resource platform.
- The Trust will seek to upgrade Building Energy Management System (BEMS) technology to a single Trust-wide integrated solution, subject to available funding.

6. Action area 4: Operations and supply chains

a. Purchasing

Procurement can account for around 40% of a school’s carbon footprint. The decisions we make as a Trust can have strong positive impact.

Sustainability is not just about buying ‘green’ products; it is about minimising the negative social and economic effects of our purchasing decisions.

The Trust will support and encourage schools to:

- Ensure sustainability is part of the assessment and validation criteria for including suppliers on procurement processes, to support sustainable purchasing of products and services, including energy.
- Purchase ethically sourced and fairly traded products.
- Purchase durable and reliable products with a long lifecycle, and recyclable at end of life.
- Minimising the use of single-use disposable products.
- Support local contractors, suppliers and services, and purchase locally sourced goods.
- Drive up their sustainable practices in line with the school food standards, particularly in relation to school food contracts and their food preparation and practice, with consideration of the ingredients they use and their environmental impact.

b. Waste & Litter Management

Waste is any material or object that is no longer needed, and can take many forms, such as left-over packaging materials such as plastic wrapping and cardboard, used cleaning materials, left over materials from Art or Design Technology, food waste from catering or food teaching, used teaching resources such as photocopies or out of date text books, debris from maintenance and refurbishment, and many more. Some waste materials are hazardous, e.g. medical waste.

Spencer Academies Trust will promote a philosophy of “reduce, reuse and recycle”.

- Schools will seek a reduction in the use of paper, card, metal, plastics, food & single use packaging
- Over time and subject to available funds the schools shall seek to increase the proportion of waste that can be recycled.
- Schools will seek to find new uses for redundant resources and materials by disposing of them appropriately. Common sense will usually suggest where to start from the following hierarchy for disposal in order of priority:
 - Reuse or repurposing within the school,
 - Reuse or repurposing elsewhere within Spencer Academies Trust,
 - Sale for reuse or repurposing
 - Donation for reuse or repurposing
 - Recycling
 - Commercial waste disposal

- Hazardous waste (such as medical waste and some chemicals) shall require commercial disposal by competent specialist contractors.
- Litter shall be proactively managed through suitable waste bin provision and through education of pupils and the use of positive behaviour management systems.

c. Transport & Travel

Sustainable transportation is the capacity to support the mobility needs of a society in a manner that is the least damaging to the environment and does not impair the mobility needs of future generations. The use of fossil fuelled vehicles is a major contributor to CO₂ and particulate emissions, impacting on air quality and on health.

Decarbonizing transportation aims to reduce, mitigate, and even eliminate carbon emissions by adapting transportation infrastructures, conveyances, and operations.

- All Trust schools shall develop and implement a Travel Plan to encourage staff and pupils to travel sustainably by walking, cycling, carpooling, car sharing, and green vehicles.
- The Trust will seek to encourage the use of sustainable vehicles by seeking to provide charge points for electric vehicles, and secure cycle parking and changing facilities for staff.
- The Trust will encourage the provision of additional dry secure cycle parking for pupils.
- The Trust will encourage staff to acquire bicycles, electric assisted cycles, or hybrid or electric cars via a salary sacrifice purchase scheme.
- As school minibus leases expire or minibuses reach end of life, subject to appropriate model availability the Trust will seek to migrate the minibus fleet to hybrid or electric vehicles.
- The Trust recognises the significant educational value of overseas trips and so shall encourage schools to take up opportunities to carbon-offset such journeys when offsetting is offered by the travel provider or airline.