



The Willows Primary School Eco Policy



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Written February 2026

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1. Introduction

The DfE strategy states that “By 2025, all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan.” It also sets a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2037 across all education settings. By creating a climate action plan, your school is taking the important first step to reach this target.

As part of the DfE requirements, all school climate action plans must include at least one from these four key Action Areas:

1. **Decarbonisation:** Measuring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and working towards net zero and switching from the use of fossil fuels to carbon-free and renewable energy sources as quickly as possible. Reducing the school's carbon footprint through actions like energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable transport, and waste reduction.
2. **Adaptation and resilience:** The ability to prepare, prevent, respond to and recover from climate-related shocks and stresses, eg extreme weather and shifts in climate and weather conditions.
3. **Biodiversity:** The variety of all life on Earth and the interactions between them in the ecosystems they inhabit. Biodiversity is essential for the health of the planet and provides vital support for human survival and well-being. This could include efforts to protect and enhance nature and wildlife within the school grounds, such as creating habitats or planting trees.
4. **Climate education and green skills:** 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. Integrating climate change into the curriculum and providing staff with training.

All of the above key actions should involve the wider school community, including parents and local residents (**Engagement and Communication**)

Climate change goals rely on contributions from:

- Sustainability Lead; Mrs Rachel Mitchell
- Senior leadership team
- Teaching staff
- Operational staff; Site Manager, Lee Payne and cleaning staff, Cat Derbyshire and kitchen staff, Laraine Kelly and office staff
- The Eco Council; representatives from each Y1-Y6 class
- Pupils, parents and families
- Local residents and community groups

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2. Our Vision and Mission statement

Our core school values can be extended to incorporate our Climate Action Plan:

RESPONSIBILITY: We take responsibility for our own learning, actions and words and understand how these can affect the environment.

SELF-BELIEF: We believe that we can all make positive changes that will improve our world.

CHALLENGE: We accept the challenge of sustainability and show resilience in the endeavour to improve our planet for all living things.

CARE: We show care and consideration for our environment, as well as kindness and tolerance for everything that we share it with.

Our Eco Vision

Our school and curriculum will empower our school community to be advocates and agents of change for a more sustainable world.

Our Eco Mission

- Recognise everyone's role in the future of the world and its climate, including pupils, staff, governors, families, local residents and community groups, building a sense of mutual co-operation and working together to tackle environmental challenges
- Inspire enthusiasm to help drive positive change
- Acknowledge that we each have a personal duty to conserve and protect the environment and all living things
- Encourage everyone to be accountable; to take ownership of choices and actions and their effect on the world around them
- Establish a culture that prioritises sustainability
- Create a sense of pride in our school and local community
- Provide manageable environmental routines that will encourage a sustainable mindset that can be applied to daily life
- Ensure our community, staff and children are aware of and are prepared for extreme weather events.
- Offer a curriculum that reflects the understanding of environmental issues and promotes future sustainability
- Help children acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability that will equip them to make a positive contribution to society as responsible future citizens
- Enable pupils to share their knowledge and enthusiasm in their local communities
- Nurture and safeguard mental wellbeing by developing positive self-regulation strategies to manage eco-anxiety and give a sense of agency where anxiety stems from climate concerns
- Follow the framework of the Eco Schools Program, providing us with a structured approach to environmental education

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3. Baseline and Audit

Green Space: **Excellent**

Public Transport Accessibility: **Fair – tram/bus/train** (not close enough for parents and children, but is occasionally used by staff)

Local air quality: According to uk-air.defra.gov.uk where air pollution is described on a scale of 1-10 (1 is 'Low' and 10 is 'Very High' pollution) using the Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI), **our local area is generally 2-3.**

Flood Risk: According check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/risk# our risk is **unlikely** or **very low** from reservoirs/rivers/seas/groundwater and **low** from surface water in the current year.

Annual Environmental Review carried out by R. Mitchell and The Eco Council using the Eco Schools 10 Topics Framework (from which the prompt questions for each Climate Action Target have been taken) **Total Score 63% (80-90% for Transport, Litter, Global Citizenship / 20-30% for Energy, Marine)** See website for review document <https://www.willowstimperley.co.uk/page/?title=Eco+Council&pid=51>

4. Current Good Practice

- Established Eco Council and Eco Co-ordinator who have led half termly focuses and assemblies every year since Autumn 2019 based on The Eco Schools Program of ten topics and seven steps (Appendix 1)
- Eco schools award 2022 with distinction 2025 green flag and plaque (Appendix 2)
- Eco Code written by children 2022 and reviewed 2025 (Appendix 3)
- Single Use Plastic Policy updated 2024 (Appendix 4)
- School streets implementation (2024), We have also joined Modeshift and undertaken a travel survey
- Encouraging active travel by offering bike/scooter storage and do Bikeability for Y6
- 3 'Silly Socks, Happy Shoes' days to encourage walking to school (2020, 2022, 2025)
- Eco warrior certificates awarded by Eco Council every Celebrations assembly
- The Eco Council have run whole school competitions, including lockdown nature photography, bee awareness, hedgehog art, WWF animal conservation poster
- Extra-Curricular Clubs twice a year that have included Ray Mears, Rewilding, Gardening, Recycled Sculpture, Litter picking



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- Gardening Club with Miss Pickering throughout the year, including growing and sharing of produce with a local care home, creating a garden at Arley Hall and Tatton Flower Show (2023)
- KS1 visited local allotments (2025) met, local gardeners, identified plants, picked and then cooked veg/fruit back at school
- 3 compost bins to dispose of organic food waste
- Curriculum Development: New Literacy schemes include quality texts, many with eco themes such as, The Crown, Stella and the Seagull as well as eco themes covered in Geography, Science and R.E.
- We have had an established Recycling Area for 6 years that collects glasses and contact lenses, batteries, soft plastic, hard plastic and tins, paper, printer ink cartridges, milk carton lids and glue stick cartridges
- Currently trialling recyclable glue sticks and whiteboard pencils in order to reduce plastic waste (2025)
- Our Eco board displays our current half termly eco focus along with photos of the Eco Council, our Action plan and details of the Eco Schools Program. This is also recorded in an Eco books, which are kept in the Eco Book boxes (see below)
- Eco book boxes were established in 2023 and contain copies of eco-themed books as recommended by The Eco Council of 2024 and each class gets a box for several weeks a year. They also contain RSPB and WT magazine subscriptions
- Eco themes, assemblies and achievements are shared with parents and governors in half termly newsletter and on the eco pages of the school website
- Second hand uniform sales, redistribution of preloved uniform and Christmas jumpers are organised by the PTA
- In the past six years we have taken part in 'Switch off Fortnight' and 'The Big Plastic Count'
- Supported charities and held fundraising events including annual harvest collections for local foodbanks, annual collections for Mission Christmas, UgandaAid (2021), Kitaid (2023) Memusi Schools (2023), Sammys (2025), WWF Big Winter Wander (2025), Guide dog charity (continuous),
- Hosted visitors, including a Wildlife Photographer, a recycling representative from the local council, a parent who talked to the children about food miles as well as assemblies led by our school streets officer, a Railways representative and another from the Canal and Rivers Trust
- Sharing of school litter picking equipment with families as well as using it in the school grounds and at litter picking club
- Forging links with families and the community through local councillors, parents who donate equipment or support us with recycling and local residents re clean air and school streets
- Biannual meetings between Sustainability Lead and Eco link governor where we share achievements and Action plans
- Lights have been replaced with more energy efficient bulbs, the computer suite switches off automatically at the end of the day, Auto sensor lights and taps have been installed in some areas and we have some solar panels
- Subject leader action plans are created each year by the Sustainability Lead and are linked to the Eco Schools Program

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Appendix 1



The Willows Eco Council aims to make our school more green, clean and sustainable*. We are part of the Eco-Schools programme that guides schools on their sustainable journey, providing a simple framework to help make sustainability an integral part of school life. The Eco Council aims to meet the ten topics of Eco-Schools:

- **Energy** - To investigate types of energy we use at school and what it is used for. Then to moderate the amount used to reduce our carbon footprint.
- **Water** - To explore the problems of a 'water crisis' and other issues surrounding water supply in order to protect this important natural resource.
- **Biodiversity** - To learn about how we can care for all plants, animals and insects in the school grounds, the local area and the world as a whole.
- **School Grounds** - To ensure that the school grounds are used effectively and kept clean, enhancing where we work and play.
- **Healthy Living** - To look at our lifestyle choices, including diet, exercise, sleep, and hygiene and understand what we can do to stay both physically and mentally well.
- **Transport** - To encourage children, staff and families to investigate more environmentally-friendly ways to travel.
- **Litter** - To reduce the amount of litter both in and around school.
- **Waste** - To reduce/monitor the amount of waste from the school grounds through: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse/Repair, Recycle, Rot.
- **Marine** - To learn how we can help to protect rivers, canals, lakes and oceans.
- **Global Citizenship** - To think about fair trade and teach skills, values, attitudes and knowledge that will allow pupils to participate in a truly global society.

Each month the Eco-Council meets with Mrs Mitchell to look at ways to make The Willows a more environmentally friendly school. We will have an 'Eco focus' each month and lead a KS1 and KS2 assembly on this subject.

The Eco-Council are working hard to raise awareness of the need to look after our planet. This year we would like to achieve the Bronze Eco Award and in order to do this we will build our Eco-Council, complete an Environmental Review of our school and then create an Eco Action Plan.



***Sustainability** is ensuring that the planet and all of its resources can continue to provide a home for the humans, animals and plants that live here.

Seven Steps

- > Step 1 Eco-Committee
- > Step 2 Environmental Review
- > Step 3 Action Plan
- > Step 4 Curriculum Links
- > Step 5 Informing and Involving
- > Step 6 Monitoring and Evaluation
- > Step 7 Eco-Code
- > Green Flag Assessment

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Appendix 2



Feedback

Green Flag Award, 2025

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Award Level: Distinction

Focus topics:



Your greatest overall success:

The implementation of a school street outside your school is a wonderful initiative not only for your school community's safety but also to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion around the school. Using refillable glue sticks and whiteboard pencils instead of pens to reduce plastic waste in school is another great initiative. By modelling these behaviours, teachers show your young people that sustainability is not just a concept to be studied, but a way of life.

We also loved...

- Visiting local allotments off Lime Grove in Timperley, KS1 learnt about how plants grow and how they should look after the seeds they planted at school. We were impressed that they made a soup and crumble from the produce they picked - rhubarb, potatoes, chard, beetroot, onions, gooseberries, redcurrants, and carrots.
- We loved reading that your young people learnt about The Great Barrier Reef, which is renowned for its biodiversity and ecological significance. However, rising water temperatures, poorer water quality and pollution are contributing towards its dying. Raising awareness in your young people is the first step to tackling and mitigating the impact, so that the reef can be saved for generations to come.
- We liked reading that you extended your litter-picking to your whole school community and beyond the school gates. Your young people and families have claimed ownership of their local environment. Households throw away millions of tonnes of waste every year. A lot of waste that doesn't go to landfill or a recycling centre ends up as litter, contaminating our land, waterways and oceans, so we applaud your school community in taking action.
- 'Silly Socks and Happy Shoes Day', is a great initiative to encourage families to walk, scoot or cycle to school, helping to mitigate air pollution around the school as well as congestion - sounds like so much fun!

Next year, why not try...

Schools are busy places, and we understand the time constraints placed on teachers. Requesting help from families to assist with the gardening is a wonderful idea and we are confident that you will receive a positive result.

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Appendix 3



Appendix 4

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Single Use Plastic Policy

After consultation with the whole school, the Eco Council have drawn up this policy and shared it with all staff and children at The Willows (updated March 2024)

In order to help build a healthier future for our world we pledge to try to:

- Don't waste – use things (like whiteboard pens) until they are completely used up.
- Recycle the following plastic waste in school; pens, bottles, lids, soft plastic, including snack packets, contact lens cases/glasses and printer ink cartridges.
- Use reusable boxes instead of cling film or new plastic bags in our lunchboxes.
- Use refillable water bottles.
- Encourage our families at home to buy alternatives to plastic-wrapped products where possible.
- Take care to put our soft plastic snack packets in the recycling bin so they don't blow around our playground or go to landfill.
- Laminate as little as possible.
- Use concentrated squash and cups from the kitchen for our Christmas parties rather than ones in single use plastic bottles.
- Reuse plastic wallets – don't buy new ones.
- Use plastic waste and recycled materials for art projects.

At The Willows we will all follow the 5 **Rs** to the best of our ability:

Refuse: Say no to plastic bags, straws, takeaway cups, balloons.
Reduce: the amount of 'stuff' you use & therefore the waste you create.
Reuse/Repair: Use bags, bottles, tubs again. If things break, repair them instead of throwing away and buying new.
Recycle: What you can't refuse, reduce or reuse; recycle.
Rot: Compost all organic waste.