

The Sustainable Academy School Action Plan

**for The Northern Ireland
Curriculum For Primary
Schools**



A whole-school, four-year action plan—designed for Northern Ireland’s Curriculum for Early Years, Key Stage 1, and Key Stage 2—that integrates the 12 sustainability pathways from The Sustainables Academy into the primary school English curriculum. This plan is delivered through engaging, child-led activities that feature The Sustainables Academy’s friendly Earth Steward characters – including **Aqua, Cardie, Oggie, and Plasto** – as inspiring role models. All activities are aligned with key international frameworks and initiatives:

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Each topic is linked to relevant SDGs (for example, SDG 6 for water, SDG 13 for climate action, SDG 15 for life on land, etc.).
- **UNCRC:** Lessons are designed to uphold children’s rights—ensuring participation (Articles 12 & 13), a healthy environment (Articles 24 & 29), and the right to education through engaging, inclusive content.
- **Eco-Schools:** The school’s sustainability actions are monitored through the Eco-Schools Seven-Step framework, engaging both pupils and staff in continuous improvement.
- **Net Zero & Waste Initiatives:** Student-led projects support the school’s net-zero goals and effective waste management, making sustainability action tangible throughout the school estate.
- **International Days:** Key global observances (e.g. World Water Day, Earth Day, World Environment Day) provide annual focal points for celebrations and projects.
- **Student-Led Roles:** Pupils are empowered as “Earth Stewards” (for example, Recycling Ambassadors, Water Champions, Garden Guardians) to drive projects and lead initiatives.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:** Ongoing professional development and estate improvements ensure that teaching practices and physical facilities contribute to the sustainability agenda.

The plan is structured across three stages of learning in the Northern Irish Curriculum:

- **Early Years (Ages 3–5)**
- **Key Stage 1 (Ages 5–7)**
- **Key Stage 2 (Ages 7–11)**

Below is the year-by-year breakdown:

Year 1: Foundations of Sustainability

Early Years (Ages 3–5)

- **Global Water Conservation (SDG 6):**
 - **Learning:** Picture books and simple stories introduce the importance of water.
 - **Activity:** Sensory water play using water tables and sprinklers encourages tactile exploration.

- **International Day:** Celebrate Earth Day with a water-themed art project.
- **UNCRC:** Foster the right to a healthy environment (Articles 24 & 29).
- **Role Model:** Our friendly character **Aqua** helps children learn about water's value.
- **Understanding Earth Stewardship (SDG 15):**
 - **Learning:** Read-aloud sessions feature Earth Steward characters such as **Cardie**, who care for nature.
 - **Activity:** Art and craft projects—like creating nature collages—celebrate caring for our planet.
 - **UNCRC:** Encourage expression and participation (Articles 12 & 13).
- **Outdoor Learning:**
 - **Learning:** Guided short walks in the school garden or nearby park introduce children to natural elements.
 - **Activity:** “Nature Scavenger Hunts” develop observation skills and nurture wonder.
 - **Student-Led Roles:** Children choose simple helper roles (e.g. “Plant Patrol”) to care for classroom plants.

Key Stage 1 (Ages 5–7)

- **Global Water Conservation (SDG 6):**
 - **Learning:** Stories and poems explore water's journey and its importance.
 - **Activity:** Pupils create water conservation posters and engage in discussions on saving water.
 - **International Day:** Mark World Water Day with a creative project.
- **Understanding Earth Stewardship (SDG 15):**
 - **Learning:** Additional Earth Steward characters, including **Aqua** and **Cardie**, are introduced through interactive storytelling.
 - **Activity:** Role-play scenarios (for example, organising a litter pick-up) enable pupils to act out caring for the earth.
- **Outdoor Learning:**
 - **Learning:** Visits to local parks or the school garden focus on seasonal changes and local wildlife.
 - **Activity:** Pupils maintain a simple nature journal with drawings and observations.
- **Urban Development & Sustainable Transport (SDG 11 & SDG 13):**
 - **Learning:** Stories about sustainable towns, cycling, and green spaces introduce urban sustainability.
 - **Activity:** Map-making exercises where pupils design their dream sustainable town.
- **Net Zero & Waste Awareness:**
 - **Learning:** Age-appropriate discussions on recycling and energy conservation.
 - **Activity:** Launch a classroom recycling programme with roles such as “Recycling Ambassadors.”
 - **Role Model:** **Plasto** appears in stories to explain the importance of recycling and reducing waste.

- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Introductory workshops for all staff on basic sustainability concepts and the use of Earth Steward resources.
 - Implementation of simple eco-friendly practices in the school estate (e.g. water-saving measures).

Key Stage 2 (Ages 7–9)

- **Foundational Climate & Ecosystem Awareness:**
 - **Learning:** Simple case studies and stories introduce how communities adapt to change and the interdependence of species.
 - **Activity:** Pupils write short imaginative stories on local climate adaptation and participate in group discussions on biodiversity.
 - **Food, Agriculture & Aquaculture (SDG 2 & SDG 14):**
 - **Learning:** Basic concepts of sustainable food production, organic farming, and responsible aquaculture are introduced.
 - **Activity:** Initiate a school garden project where pupils observe food growth and discuss the impact of food choices.
 - **Role Model:** **Oggie** helps illustrate the benefits of organic and sustainable food practices.
 - **Student-Led Roles & Eco-Schools Introduction:**
 - **Activity:** Pupils begin to assume roles as Earth Stewards by assisting with recycling and garden care.
 - **Net Zero Focus:** Introductory discussions on energy use and simple proposals for improvements.
 - **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Early in-service training for staff on sustainability themes; begin baseline audits for energy use and waste management within the Eco-Schools framework.
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Year 2: Development of Sustainable Practices

Early Years (Ages 3–5)

- **Reinforcement & Extension:**
 - **Activity:** Extend Year 1 activities with increased complexity—more detailed water play experiments and expanded art projects featuring Earth Steward characters such as **Aqua** and **Cardie**.
 - **Outdoor Learning:** Introduce simple nature observations with a focus on recognising seasonal variations.

Key Stage 1 (Ages 5–7)

- **Deepening Global Water Conservation (SDG 6):**

- **Activity:** Pupils refine their water conservation posters and engage in group discussions on practical water-saving strategies.
- **Enhanced Earth Stewardship (SDG 15):**
 - **Activity:** More complex role-play activities, such as organising a classroom clean-up, allow pupils to further explore caring for the earth.
- **Expanded Outdoor Learning & Urban Projects:**
 - **Activity:** Pupils produce more detailed nature journal entries and enhance map-making exercises to design sustainable towns.
- **Net Zero & Waste Initiatives:**
 - **Activity:** Establish a structured classroom recycling programme with regular monitoring by student leaders.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Professional development sessions focus on integrating sustainability across subjects; systematic estate audits commence.

Key Stage 2 (Ages 7–9)

- **Climate Adaptation (SDG 13):**
 - **Learning:** Explore more detailed case studies of climate adaptation.
 - **Activity:** Pupils write longer essays or create multimedia presentations on local climate strategies.
 - **International Day:** Use World Environment Day to share refined ideas.
- **Biodiversity and Ecosystems (SDG 15):**
 - **Activity:** Group projects investigate local and global biodiversity with interactive presentations.
- **Food, Agriculture & Aquaculture:**
 - **Activity:** Extend the school garden project with practical experiments and data collection on plant growth.
- **Student-Led Roles & Eco-Schools Expansion:**
 - **Activity:** Pupils take on defined leadership roles in recycling, garden care, and energy audits.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - In-service training on advanced sustainability topics; further estate improvements are implemented.

Year 3: Expansion and Community Engagement

Early Years (Ages 3–5)

- **Creative Expression in Sustainability:**
 - **Activity:** Continue engaging activities with more opportunities for creative expression—such as sustainability-themed music, dance, and storytelling featuring characters like **Cardie** and **Aqua**.

- **Outdoor Learning:** Extend nature walks to include local wildlife spotting.

Key Stage 1 (Ages 5–7)

- **Interactive Sustainability Projects:**
 - **Activity:** Pupils lead small group projects to redesign parts of the school environment (e.g. creating mini-gardens or designated recycling corners).
- **Urban Development & Transport:**
 - **Activity:** Develop map-making projects into interactive presentations of sustainable town models.
- **Net Zero & Waste Awareness:**
 - **Activity:** Enhance recycling programmes with regular classroom challenges and rewards.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Ongoing workshops on innovative sustainability teaching methods; estate monitoring is refined via the Eco-Schools framework.

Key Stage 2 (Ages 7–9)

- **In-Depth Climate Adaptation (SDG 13):**
 - **Activity:** Pupils work on comprehensive projects investigating local climate change impacts and propose realistic adaptation strategies.
- **Advanced Biodiversity Projects (SDG 15):**
 - **Activity:** Create detailed multimedia presentations on the interdependence of species within local ecosystems.
- **Enhanced Food & Agriculture Studies:**
 - **Activity:** Expand the garden project to include research on organic practices and sustainable food production.
- **Student-Led Roles & Net Zero:**
 - **Activity:** Pupils conduct detailed audits of energy use and waste practices, proposing improvements.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Regular in-service training on emerging sustainability research and estate efficiency improvements.

Year 4: Leadership and Consolidation

Early Years (Ages 3–5)

- **Celebration and Reinforcement:**
 - **Activity:** Celebrate achievements with fun, sustainability-themed events (e.g. mini “Earth Day” festivals) and recognise the contributions of young helpers.
- **Outdoor Learning:**

- **Activity:** Maintain regular nature activities with a focus on celebrating seasonal changes.

Key Stage 1 (Ages 5–7)

- **Consolidation of Learning:**
 - **Activity:** Pupils share projects from previous years in a class exhibition and prepare simple presentations for younger peers.
- **Peer Mentoring:**
 - **Activity:** Older Key Stage 1 pupils mentor Early Years learners in sustainability activities, fostering a culture of shared responsibility.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Continued professional development emphasises mentoring and sharing best practices; further enhancements (e.g. energy-efficient systems) support net-zero targets.

Key Stage 2 (Ages 7–11)

- **Citizenship and Global Understanding (SDG 16 & SDG 17):**
 - **Learning:** Explore global cultures and sustainability practices from around the world.
 - **Activity:** Organise a “Global Sustainability Fair” where pupils share projects and exchange ideas with peers from other regions or via pen-pal programmes.
- **Waste Management (SDG 12):**
 - **Learning:** Examine effective waste reduction, recycling, and responsible consumption practices.
 - **Activity:** Lead a school-wide waste reduction campaign by designing innovative recycling and composting systems.
 - **Role Model: Plasto** features in lessons to explain the importance of reducing waste and recycling.
- **Net Zero Initiatives (SDG 13):**
 - **Learning:** In-depth study of carbon footprints and the principles of achieving net zero.
 - **Activity:** Develop and present student-led proposals to audit the school’s energy use and reduce emissions across the estate.
- **Advanced Earth Stewardship & Leadership:**
 - **Learning:** Consolidate knowledge across all sustainability pathways.
 - **Activity:** Create comprehensive projects—such as sustainable city models, climate adaptation strategies, and biodiversity conservation plans—and present these to the school community.
- **Staff Development & School Estate:**
 - Ongoing advanced professional development in sustainability leadership; additional estate improvements (e.g. further energy-efficient systems, enhanced waste management) are implemented.
- **UNCRC & Student-Led Roles:**

- Pupils assume leadership roles as “Recycling Champions”, “Climate Change Advocates”, and “Garden Guardians”, reinforcing their right to participate (Articles 12 & 13) and influence their learning environment.

International Days & Celebrations (Across All Stages)

- Key dates such as World Environment Day, the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, Global Recycling Day, and Earth Day are celebrated school-wide to showcase projects and achievements.
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Implementation and Evaluation

- **Planning & Review:**
 - Teachers, school leaders, and pupil representatives collaborate annually to plan activities and set measurable targets (e.g. improved water conservation, reduced waste, lower energy usage).
 - Regular reflection sessions—aligned with international observances—celebrate successes and enable strategic adjustments.
 - **Resources & Partnerships:**
 - Materials from The Sustainables Academy, local environmental organisations, and Eco-Schools resources support the curriculum.
 - Parents and community members are invited to engage through events and volunteer opportunities.
 - **Monitoring Impact:**
 - Pupil progress is documented through portfolios, digital projects, and reflective journals.
 - Clear links to SDG targets and UNCRC principles reinforce the school’s commitment to a sustainable, inclusive, and healthy future.
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