

'They will soar on wings like eagles ...'

Isaiah 40:31

collaborate | enrich | trust | innovate | aspire | nurture



Aquila The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

Date adopted by Trust Board: May 2025

Date of Review: May 2026

Date of next Review: May 2027

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1.0	13.05.2025	A Snelling	Creation of strategy and action plan
1.1	13.04.2026	A Snelling	Change of net zero milestones, plan refinement and duplication removal

Contents

Vision.....	3
Aims and Objectives.....	3
Roles and Responsibilities.....	4
Monitoring and Evaluation	4
Climate Action Plan.....	6

Vision

Aquila is committed to creating a sustainable future for our schools, where environmental management, social responsibility, and growth work in harmony. Guided by our core values of Collaborate, Aspire, Innovate, Enrich, Trust, and Nurture, we aim to embed sustainability across every aspect of school life. Through collaboration, we will engage our schools and communities to share ideas and resources. By aspiring to the highest standards, we will ensure that our practices continually improve. We will innovate to find creative solutions to environmental challenges and enrich our pupils learning by fostering an understanding of sustainability. With trust at the heart of our relationships, we will nurture a culture of care, responsibility, and respect for the planet, ensuring that sustainability becomes a central focus in shaping the futures of our schools and pupils.

Aims and Objectives

This policy will focus on the following four DFE key areas:

1. **Decarbonisation** - strategies to reduce carbon emissions through energy efficiency, sustainable transportation and renewal energy initiatives

Core Goals:

- **Reduce Carbon Emissions:** Decrease the carbon footprint of our school buildings, operations, and activities.
 - **Promote Energy Efficiency:** Implement energy-saving initiatives and educate students and staff on energy conservation.
 - **Sustainable Resources:** Use sustainable materials, reduce waste, and promote recycling across the school.
 - **Engage the Community:** Foster a culture of sustainability among students, staff, and parents.
2. **Biodiversity** – nurture pupils understanding of nature and the environment by enhancing school grounds, while fostering and understanding the importance of diverse ecosystems and wildlife conservation.

Core Goals:

- **Enhance Biodiversity:** Create environments on school grounds that support a variety of species.
 - **Educational Integration:** Incorporate biodiversity education into the curriculum to increase awareness and engagement.
 - **Promote Student Involvement:** Engage students actively in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
 - **Community Engagement:** Encourage collaboration with local wildlife organisations and the wider community.
3. **Adaption and resilience** – ensuring our school infrastructure and practices are prepared for the impacts of climate change, promoting both environmental and emotional resilience among pupils and staff

Core Goals:

- **Prepare for Climate Change Impacts:** Implement strategies to make the school environment resilient to climate-related events (e.g., extreme weather, flooding, temperature fluctuations).
- **Foster a Resilient Community:** Equip students and staff with the knowledge and skills to adapt to and thrive in changing environmental conditions.
- **Promote Mental and Emotional Resilience:** Support students and staff in developing coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety related to environmental challenges.
- **Enhance Environmental Adaptation:** Create spaces and systems that are adaptable to future climate scenarios and that mitigate potential negative impacts.

4. **Climate education and green careers goals** – integrate climate change and sustainability into our curriculum to deepen pupils understanding.

Core Goals:

1. **Climate Change Education:** Provide students with a foundational understanding of climate change, its impacts, and solutions.
2. **Inspire Green Careers:** Introduce students to the wide range of green careers and pathways in sustainability, environmental science, and conservation.
3. **Promote Action:** Encourage students to take meaningful action in their daily lives and school activities to reduce their environmental impact.
4. **Engage the Wider Community:** Create partnerships with local green businesses, environmental organizations, and community groups to support climate education and inspire future careers.

These interconnected areas will form the basis of our Climate Action Plan. The plan seeks to empower pupils, employees, and the community to actively contribute to a more sustainable, adaptable, and climate-resilient future.

Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation of this sustainability policy and action plan requires clear accountability and active participation across the trust. The following outlines the responsibilities to ensure the integration of sustainability principles into daily operations and strategic planning.

Trust Board: Strategic oversight of sustainability goals and compliance

CEO and Head of Estates: Integration of sustainability into strategic planning and operations

Headteachers and School Sustainability Leads: Implementation of sustainability action plan at school level

Employees and Pupils: Active participation in sustainability efforts.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Policy and Climate Action plan will be reviewed annually with a report produced to share with stakeholders on the successes and challenges.

The trust will aim to reduce our carbon footprint inline with DFE key milestones and requirements 50% by 2032, 75% by 2037 and 100% by 2050.

Ongoing monitoring will include:

Decarbonisation

- Regularly monitor energy usage, waste generation, and transportation emissions.
- Conduct surveys with students and staff to assess engagement and knowledge on sustainability.
- Measure the impact of implemented initiatives (e.g., reduction in carbon emissions, energy savings).

Biodiversity

- Biodiversity Audits: Conduct annual biodiversity audits to assess the variety of species on school grounds.
- Student Feedback: Gather feedback from students on the impact of biodiversity programs and their level of engagement.
- Monitoring Wildlife: Track the health of wildlife populations (e.g., bird counts, plant growth, pollinator activity) throughout the year.

- Review and Adjust: Evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan every year and make improvements based on feedback and data.

Adaption and resilience

- Annual Resilience Review: Conduct an annual review of the school's adaptation strategies, assessing their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.
- Feedback from Students and Staff: Regularly collect feedback from students, teachers, and parents on how well the school is adapting to environmental challenges and the support being provided.
- Track Climate-Related Incidents: Keep a record of climate-related incidents (e.g., flooding, heatwaves) and review how the school responded to improve future planning.
- Update Action Plan: Regularly update the action plan based on feedback and lessons learned, ensuring continuous improvement.

Climate education and green careers goals

- Surveys and Feedback: Collect feedback from students, staff, and parents to assess the impact of climate education and green careers initiatives. Use surveys to gauge knowledge of climate change and interest in green careers.
- Track Student Involvement: Monitor the number of students participating in sustainability projects, career days, or local environmental initiatives.
- Review Curriculum Integration: Regularly review the curriculum to ensure that climate change education is embedded effectively across subjects.
- Report Progress: Provide an annual report to the school community outlining successes, challenges, and future goals for climate education and green career initiatives.
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Climate Action Plan

Decarbonisation – Low Carbon School Operations:

Goal	Action	Steps	Timeline	Resources	Risks & Barriers	Equity & Inclusion Considerations
Reduce carbon emissions	Energy efficiency and renewable energy	1. Whole school energy audit 2. LED lighting and sensors 3. Smart heating controls 4. Insulation upgrades where feasible 5. Renewal energy supplier / solar feasibility 6. Staff and pupil behaviour campaigns	Audit: 0-3 months Upgrades: 6-12 months Ongoing review	Eco schools Count Your Carbon Energy Walkabout Guide	Budget constraints; building limitations	Ensure comfortable learning environments for all pupils, including temperature sensitive and SEND pupils
Reduce waste emissions	Waste reduction and recycling	1. Consistent recycling 2. Composting food and garden waste 3. Zero waste events policy 4. Student recycling monitors 5. Waste audits	0-6 months setup Ongoing	Eco Schools Local council services	Contamination of waste streams	Clear signage using symbols and visuals to support pupils with additional needs
Reduce food footprint	Sustainable food practices	1. Local and seasonal purchasing 2. Increased plant based 3. Portion control strategies 4. Waste free lunch campaigns	Within 6 months Ongoing	Aquila Kitchen Strategy	Cost pressures; menu acceptance	Ensure culturally inclusive menu choices and access to free school meals
Reduce transport emissions	Sustainable travel	1. Walk/cycle campaigns 2. Bike and scooter storage 3. Public transport 4. Car sharing schemes 5. Incentives	Campaign launch: 3 months Ongoing	Modeshift STARS	Limited infrastructure; distance	Recognise that not all families can travel sustainably due to location or disability

Biodiversity and School Grounds

Goal	Action	Steps	Timeline	Resources	Risks & Barriers	Equity & Inclusion Considerations
Increase biodiversity	Biodiverse grounds	1. Native planting and wildflower areas 2. Bird, bat and insect habitats 3. Reduced mowing areas 4. Tree planting 5. Chemical free maintenance	6-12 months Seasonal upkeep	Local Wildlife Trust RHS Schools	Maintenance capacity	Ensure outdoor spaces are accessible and inclusive for pupils with mobility needs
Outdoor learning	School gardens and habitats	1. Vegetable and herb gardens 2. Compost use 3. Curriculum linked activities 4. Wildlife study zones	6 months Ongoing	RHS Schools Gardening	Vandalism; upkeep	Provide structured participation so all pupils engage, not only volunteers
Monitoring biodiversity	Student monitoring	1. Species surveys 2. Seasonal monitoring 3. Citizen science projects 4. Data used in lessons	Ongoing	Big Schools Birdwatch iRecord	Data consistency	Group based roles enable participation regardless of confidence or ability

Adaptation and Resilience

Goal	Action	Steps	Timeline	Resources	Risks & Barriers	Equity & Inclusion Considerations
Climate resilience	Adapt school infrastructure	1. Flood risk assessment 2. Improved drainage 3. Rainwater harvesting 4. Shade and cooling areas 5. Sustainable building materials	6-12 months Annual review	Local authority guidance	Capital funding limitations	Proritise areas used by vulnerable pupils (EYFS, SEND spaces)
Water security	Water conservation	1. Low flow fixtures 2. Rainwater for gardens 3. Drought resistant planting 4. Usage monitoring 5. Water education	6 months Ongoing	Waterwise	Behavior change	Use inclusive messaging – avoid plaing responsibility solely on pupils
Emotional resilience	Wellbeing and mental health	1. Mindfulness practices 2. Climate anxiety support 3. Outdoor learning 4. Peer support networks 5. Trauma informed staff training	Initial 3-6 months Ongoing	NHS MHSTs	Staff capacity	Ensure support is culturally sensitive and accessible to all pupils

Climate Education & Green Careers

Goal	Action	Steps	Timeline	Resources	Risks & Barriers	Equity & Inclusion Considerations
Climate literacy	Curriculum integration	1. Curriculum review 2. Climate topics in Science, Geography, PSHE 3. Dedicated climate units 4. Case studies	Begin 3-6 months Ongoing	National Curriculum	Curriculum overload	Climate education framed positively to avoid anxiety
Action based learning	Student climate action	1. Sustainability projects 2. Eco schools green flag 3. Climate action days 4. Student led campaigns	Ongoing	Eco Schools	Engagement fatigue	Opportunities for leadership across diverse pupil groups
Green careers	Careers education	1. Green careers days 2. Visits and speakers 3. Research projects	6-12 months Ongoing	STEM Ambassadors	Limited local employers	Challenge stereotypes; highlight accessible career pathways

Leadership, Community & Governance

Goal	Action	Steps	Timeline	Resources	Risks & Barriers	Equity & Inclusion Considerations
Whole trust leadership	Sustainability governance	1. Appoint Sustainability Coordinator 2. Student Eco Teams 3. Termly reviews 4. Annual reporting	Immediate Ongoing	Eco Schools	Capacity and turnover	Student voice represents whole school community
Community engagement	Partnership and outreach	1. Parent workshops 2. Local partnerships 3. Community events 4. Shared communications	Start within 3-6 months Ongoing	Local council and NGOs	Engagement variability	Flexible engagement methods for working families