

CLIMATE EDUCATION READINESS CHECKLIST

Is Your School Aligned with Current UK Policy Expectations?

A leadership diagnostic tool for senior leaders, governors and trust boards across England, Wales and Scotland.

Designed to assess whole-school readiness for climate and sustainability education in line with national policy direction.

How to Use This Tool

This checklist is designed to be completed by senior leadership teams or trust boards.

- Tick only statements that are consistently true across the school – not aspirational intentions.
- Each statement = 1 point.
- Maximum score = 20.

Total score: ___ / 20

SECTION 1

Leadership & Strategic Alignment

Strong climate education begins with clarity, accountability and shared responsibility.

- ☐ A named Sustainability or Climate Lead is identified at senior level (aligned with DfE expectations in England)
- ☐ A Climate Action Plan or whole-school sustainability strategy is in place and actively used
- ☐ Climate education is referenced in school development plans and policy documents
- ☐ Responsibility is shared across leadership, staff and governors/trustees
- ☐ Leaders can clearly articulate why climate education matters within the school's values and vision

Section subtotal: ___ / 5

SECTION 2

Emotional Safety, Agency & Inclusion

Climate education must be psychologically safe, developmentally appropriate and empowering.

- ☐ Climate-related emotions are acknowledged and supported constructively
- ☐ Practice is inclusive and accessible, including consideration of SEND and diverse needs
- ☐ Pupils are given meaningful opportunities for agency and collective action
- ☐ Staff feel confident facilitating climate conversations without fear-based framing
- ☐ Approaches are emotionally attuned and age-appropriate

Section subtotal: ___ / 5

SECTION 3

Curriculum & Coherence

Climate education is most effective when it is integrated, progressive and systemic.

- ☐ Climate learning is embedded across subjects and key stages
- ☐ Staff share a common language and understanding of climate learning goals
- ☐ Clear progression exists from early years through to senior phases
- ☐ Climate education is not confined to themed weeks or isolated initiatives
- ☐ Learning for Sustainability (Scotland) or equivalent cross-curricular principles inform curriculum planning

Section subtotal: ____ / 5

SECTION 4

Practice & Culture

Intent must translate into lived culture.

- ☐ Regular outdoor or experiential learning is embedded
- ☐ Climate education is visible in school culture, routines and decision-making
- ☐ The Climate Action Plan is treated as a living document – reviewed and reported
- ☐ Pupil voice informs environmental and sustainability decisions
- ☐ Professional development in climate education is planned and ongoing

Section subtotal: ____ / 5

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

16–20 points: Strong structural foundations are in place. The next step is deepening coherence, evidencing impact and embedding long-term sustainability.

14–15 points: Clear intent is visible. Strengthening whole-school systems, staff confidence and progression will support long-term implementation.

0–13 points: Climate education may currently rely on isolated initiatives or individual champions. Without systemic alignment, implementation risk remains high as policy expectations increase.

Why This Matters

Across the UK:

- In England, the Department for Education’s Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy encourages schools to appoint a sustainability lead and develop a climate action plan.
- In Wales, the Curriculum for Wales embeds sustainability and ethical citizenship across Areas of Learning and Experience.
- In Scotland, Learning for Sustainability is embedded within Curriculum for Excellence and leadership standards.
- Policy direction is clear: climate and sustainability education is becoming a leadership responsibility, not a themed initiative.

Next Step

If this checklist highlighted areas of uncertainty or inconsistency, the question is not “Are we doing enough activity?”

It is:

“Do we have a coherent whole-school framework?”

The Practitioner Manual for Climate Education supports leadership teams to:

- Align policy, curriculum and school culture
- Strengthen emotional safety and staff confidence
- Embed climate education systemically, not episodically
- Build long-term credibility and resilience

If your score highlights gaps in coherence, confidence or progression, practices for KS 1 - KS 4, the solution is not another initiative - it is a clear whole-school framework.

Climate Education Becomes Difficult When:

- Responsibility sits with one enthusiastic staff member
- Curriculum links are unclear or fragmented
- Climate topics are introduced without emotional containment
- Policy expectations exist, but practical guidance is missing

This checklist helps identify areas where schools may want to strengthen their approach.

If You Want a Practical Implementation Guide

The Climate Education Practitioner Manual was written to support schools moving from policy expectations to thoughtful practice.

It includes:

- A whole-school framework for climate education
- Guidance on avoiding eco-anxiety and fear-based messaging
- Curriculum integration across Key Stages 1-4
- Leadership and implementation guidance
- Practical examples schools can adapt

[VIEW THE CLIMATE EDUCATION PRACTITIONER MANUAL](#)

