

Waltham Forest's Climate Action Commitments to Schools and Colleges

In Waltham Forest we are working in partnership with our schools, colleges, and early years settings along with their contractors to deliver sustainable but rapid and meaningful responses to the climate emergency. We will do this in a way that complements other key priorities like tackling the challenge of childhood obesity and building on the relevant key messages from Waltham Forests Big Youth Conversation, 2021.

The climate team in Waltham Forest is working closely with flagship schools to act on and showcase our locally identified priorities. We are communicating our long-term aspirations for climate conscious schools and demonstrating what steps schools are already putting in place to secure buy-in from the Leaders in our educational institutions, both Headteachers and Governors.

This document sets out London Borough of Waltham Forest's commitments to support schools to reduce the climate and environmental impact of their operations, to meet Net Zero by 2030 and to provide quality climate and environmental learning.

These commitments are made with consideration of the policies published in [Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems](#) by the Department of Education in April 2022. This includes, by 2025 'all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan (to include curricular and extra-curricular activity, procurement, adaptation and decarbonisation plans).'



1) Whole school approach - Leadership and Governance

Waltham Forest advocates for a whole school approach to addressing climate change that supports the learning and growth of the students, staff and wider school community.

We are doing this by:

- supporting the [National Governance Association \(NGA\) Greener Governance Campaign](#) and advise all schools to sign up to the Greener Governance Pledge which includes creating a Climate Action Plan that covers the areas of curriculum, campus, community and culture.

- recommending that every school signs up to the Waltham Forest Schools & Colleges Climate Charter which demonstrates a commitment to appointing an eco-lead Governor who will support Senior Leaders at the school, and oversee the delivery of the action plan which covers carbon emission reduction, adaptation and biodiversity.

Waltham Forest schools will be supported by the Climate Action and School Estates teams to produce a 3 – 5 year climate action plan which is tailored to the school.



2) Climate learning and teaching

Waltham Forest is committed to quality climate change education underpinning everything in the school's climate emergency response.

We are doing this by:

- supporting the [Teach the Future Education Bill](#), a youth led campaign which aligns with the work we aspire to in the borough in terms of our work with schools and young people.
- offering free training to all teachers applying climate knowledge, skills and building confidence.
- developing The Hive into a centre for climate learning and action which fosters understanding about and connection to the natural world.
 - This supports the forthcoming National Education Nature Parks initiative
- supporting schools to sign up to [Energy Sparks](#), an online energy analysis tool and energy education programme designed to help schools reduce their electricity and gas usage.



3) Education buildings and grounds

Waltham Forest is committed to delivering a Schools Estate Climate Change response to increase energy efficiency through a fabric first approach, reducing water consumption and making buildings & grounds resilient to flood risk and heatwaves.

We are doing this by:

- publicly supporting the [Let's Go Zero campaign](#) for zero carbon schools run by Ashden and recommending all Waltham Forest schools and colleges sign up.
- offering maintained schools a fully funded decarbonisation survey to enable schools to factor energy efficiency in their asset management planning.
 - survey work will be offered to schools starting in 2023/2024, with support from the schools capital team beyond this date to implement energy efficiency and adaptation measures.
- advising schools to have Thames Water smarter schools' visits – free retrofitting for schools to reduce their water use.
- providing practical support, training and climate action guidance to the school premises and business management.
- encouraging all schools to protect and increase biodiversity through environmental initiatives which are built upon through a Food Growing Plan and/or a Schools Climate Action Plan.
- influencing the Government to mandate academy trusts and independent schools to have decarbonisation surveys, set carbon reduction targets and consider climate risk management.



4) Green skills and careers

Waltham Forest is committed to climate learning in schools, colleges and adult learning that teaches the skills and knowledge required for careers in sustainability.

We are doing this by:

- developing climate leadership training opportunities for KS4 + which includes highlighting green jobs.
- working with the Green Business Network and Employment, Business and Skills department to provide support for routes into local, green jobs.
- integrating connections between subjects, skills and jobs in lessons at The Hive and Climate Outreach sessions at schools and colleges.



5) Supply chains and sustainable consumption

Waltham Forest is committed to reducing the climate and ecological impact of schools' operations and consumption with a focus on catering.

We are doing this by:

- supporting calls to remove the need for mandatory servings of meat, fish, and dairy as part of the Government review of the School Food Standards.
- delivering a joint Climate Emergency, Public Health and Education led programme to immediately improve the sustainability and positive health impact of meals in schools. For this to be a success it will engage with all schools in Waltham Forest and their Catering providers. Key outcomes will be a borough wide.
 - a) 20% increase in plant-based menu options in schools
 - b) the corresponding significant decrease in meat consumption in schools

- c) increase in take up of school meals by pupils in Waltham Forest schools
- d) Programme of compliance with food standards in all schools in the borough
- e) move away from sugary drinks to the promotion of water as the drink of choice at school
- f) work with Waltham Forest College to ensure that our caterers of the future have the climate emergency and sustainability as part of their course and professional development
- g) work with early adopters to introduce more 'meat free days' and develop case studies to showcase
- working with schools to move swiftly but sustainably to remove single use plastics in catering provision in all schools. We will not simply replace single use plastics with other single use materials e.g., tetra packs or cans or non-recyclable options such as compositable packaging.¹ Key outcomes will be borough wide.
 - a) programme to promote replacing single use plastic water bottles in Secondary schools and Colleges and shift towards readily available, free drinking water by December 2023
 - b) programme to eliminate the use of single use plastic in other menu items in all schools where sustainable alternatives are available by December 2023
 - c) programme to ensure food and dry recycling service is available free of charge to all schools

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¹ This is in line with the DfE strategy to 'eradicate single-use plastics and encourage the use of reusable and recyclable materials in schools and encourage all other education settings to match this target' by 2025 (p.11)