CLIMATE AMBASSADORS

In association with EAUC, STEM Learning and the University of Reading

What is climate change adaptation and why do we need it?

Climate change is resulting in a more variable climate with **more weather extremes** like high temperatures (heat waves), heavy rainfall, wind storms, as well as other hazards, for example associated with rising sea-levels.

Adaptation refers to action taken, or behaviour change, **to protect ourselves and our environment** from impacts of climate change like these.

Even with action to decarbonise our activities we will likely still need to adjust to either more frequent extreme weather or events that are more extreme than we have experienced in the past. **Thinking about the risks** an education setting currently experiences or might experience in the future and what action could be taken to minimise these risks is an important part of a climate action plan.

What are examples of climate risks in education settings?

- Some schools have reported that concentration levels of children had been affected as a result of high temperatures.
- A survey of teachers found that 90% had taken action to reduce classroom temperature.
- 10,710 schools in England are exposed to a significant chance of flood (mainly from surface water)
- This could increase up to 15,030 by the 2050s if global temperatures increase by 2°C.

Source: 3rd UK Climate Change Risk Assessment

What questions can you ask settings?

It is important to think about your setting's current situation as well as thinking about what the future might look like. Some of the questions you might consider asking:

- Have you undertaken an assessment of climate and weather risks?
- Have you experienced the effects of extreme weather in the past e.g. high temperatures in summer, flooding of buildings or grounds?
- What aspects of school life have been or could be affected by these hazards? What damages were incurred?
- Who are the important people in the setting with responsibilities for preparing for and responding to these events?
- Do you have any vulnerable staff or students that could be at greater risk?
- Is there any important infrastructure that you need to ensure remains operational, or is high cost e.g. IT equipment, boiler, laboratory or other specialist equipment?
- Do you have any existing plans for action in the event of a heat wave or flood?
- Do you know where can you find out what your local climate might look like in the future and how these extreme events might change?

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Adaptation Actions

It is important to remember that adaptation includes a wide range of actions that is not necessarily confined to changes to buildings and estates. Settings should consider '*what adaptations can be made in terms of:*

- *physical measures,*
- *operations,*
- *and raised awareness to reduce risks?*'

Source: C Gallimore / *New Green Hall School*

Examples of adaptation include implementing measures to shade buildings or to provide ventilation (*physical*), ensuring gutters and drains are regularly cleared (*operational*), or incorporating adaptation in the curriculum (*awareness*). Some adaptation options provide **co-benefits**, addressing multiple climate hazards and providing additional benefits. For example, creating a **rain garden** not only helps reduce flood risk by creating a **sustainable drainage system** (SuDS) but can also promote cooling, create a habitat for wildlife, and provide many opportunities for learning across the curriculum.

Helpful resources

To find out what the future climate might be like in your area:

- The Met Office have produced a series of '**city and heat packs**' to provide non-technical summaries of future climates. Settings **could** look up their nearest city to find out about their future climate. Or settings can enter their postcode in this 'What will climate change look like near me?' tool.

To check current and future risks:

- You can check current long-term flood risk and view a surface water flood risk map – all you need is a postcode.
- Get a map of current flood zones for your setting – again, all you need is a postcode.
- The Climate Just map tool provides maps of flooding and heat risk and vulnerable populations.

Information on climate risks and adaptation:

- The Climate Change Committee have a factsheet on climate change adaptation aimed at children and young people.
- Guidance on conducting the first stage of a climate change risk assessment using a Local Climate Impacts Profile.
- Accessible guidance on adaptation for schools and early years settings is provided in the GLA Schools Adaptation Guidance Report and examples in the higher education sector.

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