

CLIMATE AMBASSADORS

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

Decarbonisation

Education settings should aim to reduce emissions and support students to be part of the transition to net zero.

Decarbonisation- human actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. carbon dioxide) from human activity.

In 2015, 196 Parties adopted [The Paris Agreement](#), a legally binding international treaty on climate change with the overarching goal to “hold global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

To reach the goals of The Paris Agreement, the UK has set a [target to reach Net Zero](#) by 2050. [Net Zero](#) “means cutting carbon emissions to a small amount of residual emissions that can be absorbed and durably stored by nature and other carbon dioxide removal measures, leaving zero in the atmosphere.”

Where do greenhouse gas emissions come from in an education setting?

- **Scope 1-** emissions from sources that an education setting owns or controls directly. Examples: school facilities and owned vehicles.
- **Scope 2-** emissions that an education setting causes indirectly when the energy it purchases and uses is produced. Examples: purchased electricity, heating and cooling.
- **Scope 3-** emissions that education settings are indirectly responsible for. Examples: student and staff travel, purchased good and services, capital goods, waste, investments, use and processing of sold products, and data storage and digital servers.

Multi-academy trusts are expected to include emissions from scopes 1 & 2 within ESG reporting. [More information here.](#)

What questions can you ask settings?

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

1. What are the total carbon emissions of the education settings operations?
2. How efficient are the education settings buildings?
3. How could the education setting retrofit their estate and improve energy efficiency?
4. Could the education setting reduce their waste and encourage reuse and recycling?
5. Does the education setting adopt sustainable procurement practices?
6. Does the education setting have food bins or compost their food waste on site?
7. Does the education setting have a travel plan which encourages staff and students to take zero and lower emission forms of travel to and from the setting?

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Key action areas

The areas in which education settings typically emit carbon can be broken down into four key areas. Decarbonisation includes a wide range of actions, not just confined to scopes 1 and 2.

Energy and utilities

Typically accounts for around 23% of emissions in education settings. This includes carbon emissions connected to the production and use of energy, waste collection and disposal, and water use. Key actions: using renewable energy, insulating buildings, turning heating down, improving energy efficiency and reducing waste.

Transport

Typically accounts for around 33% of emissions in education settings. This includes fuel-use in school vehicles, emissions associated with school trips and staff and student commuting. Key actions: campaigns which incentivise and encourage the use of walking and wheeling, public transport and lift sharing.

Purchasing

Typically accounts for around 36% of emissions in education settings. Manufacturing of products creates carbon emissions and schools use a wide range of products in high quantities. It is important to understand purchasing habits and the environmental impact of the products and companies these are sourced from. Key actions: buying locally, working with climate-minded suppliers and fostering reuse.

Food

Typically accounts for around 8% of emissions in education settings. Producing food creates carbon emissions, and each type of food has a different carbon footprint. It is also important to consider where the food is sourced from. Key actions: introducing plant-based meals, purchasing seasonal and local produce and reducing food waste.

Helpful resources

- [Count Your Carbon](#) is the nation's first free, full scope carbon emissions tool built for, and in collaboration with, education settings. It helps generate a bespoke carbon footprint and tailored report on how to reduce carbon emissions in a setting.
- Most education settings should have a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) for their buildings which rate the energy performance of a building (A-G). An advisory report accompanies the DEC and contains recommendations for improving the energy performance of the building. [You can find an energy certificate here.](#)
- A waste audit is a great way to understand what waste you produce and could be avoiding. Visit [Plastic Free July for more information](#) on conducting a waste audit.
- Develop and implement a travel plan with the [help of Modeshift STARS](#). The scheme encourages schools to increase levels of sustainable and active travel in order to improve the health and well-being of children and young people.

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