

Best Practice Guidance

Guidance on teaching about Environment and Sustainability

Context

Since the 1970s public awareness of, and concern for, the environment has grown and deepened. Since 2017, countries, regions, cities, towns and institutions (including many universities) have declared environmental and/or [climate emergencies](#). Many young people across the world have taken part in protests criticising the lack of urgency in addressing climate change [through education](#) by other means. Although substantial steps have been taken to address problems such as air and water pollution, the thinning of the ozone layer and acid rain, we still have a long way to go and we find ourselves faced with a series of [‘wicked’](#) problems such as biodiversity loss and climate change. These problems contribute to growing concerns around mental health and physical wellbeing which are manifested in youth in the [UK and elsewhere](#). The problems will never be solved as such but their impact will be mitigated through interdisciplinary approaches. Science plays a key role in addressing environmental challenges and contributing to the development of a world that is more sustainable than it is at present.

The position of the ASE

All students are entitled to be supported to develop their environmental literacy throughout their time in school;

Science education has a key role in promoting better understanding of environmental issues and in empowering students to develop the skills and competences required to contribute to protecting and improving the environment for humans and other organisms;

Science teacher education provides many opportunities to address issues of environmental literacy and sustainability;

Science education in out-of-school settings provides unique opportunities to develop environmental literacy and to promote sustainable lifestyles.

Best practice should seek to include

- An acknowledgement that environmental issues can only be effectively addressed using interdisciplinary whole school approaches.

- Up-to date science knowledge for these complex issues.
- Using sustainability practices in schools as well as simply teaching about them.
- Reference to the global dimension to these issues.
- Opportunities to use out-of-the classroom resources.

Useful links to resources to support best practice:

Education Scotland provide support for Scottish teachers [here](#). Estyn provides inspection guidance for teachers in Wales [here](#)

The [Royal Society](#) has produced a good summary of climate science evidence, that fits the scientific consensus on these issues.

The global dimension to these issues is important and should incorporate international initiatives such as the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

[The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom](#) provide curriculum links, resources and a Quality Badge scheme for providers.

The National Association for Environmental Education's [reports](#) illustrate how the curriculum provides opportunities for schools, teachers and children to explore a range of the world's most serious issues.

There are a number of other non-profit organisations that also provide support for teachers: [Educateglobal](#) is a programme to support teachers in schools and is in use across the UK for example [here](#)

The goal of [SEEd](#) is to broaden and deepen the practice of education for sustainability and environmental education.

The '[Beacons Guides to Climate Change](#)' offer a concise and up to date summary of the facts and arguments about this critically important subject. These guides are available free for personal and educational use.

The WWF provides a [Footprint calculator](#) to raise awareness that, as a society, our existing lifestyles are unsustainable

[Urban Science](#). This is an EU project and the UK partners 'Wild Awake' lead the consortium from six European countries. It is delivering a means to teach pupils how science can develop solutions for sustainable cities, motivating them to view the positive benefits of science to the urban environment.