

Implementing a sustainability and climate change strategy



Alastair Gittner discusses an article by Leigh Hoath and Heena Dave that came out earlier in the year in response to the now published DfE *Sustainability and Climate Change* education policy document. It raises questions about the role of science teachers in delivering this strategy and asks us to consider how prepared we are to do this increasingly important task.

Article summary

The Hoath and Dave article comes from the March 2022 issue of *SSR*, published slightly before publication of the final version of the DfE's *Sustainability and Climate Change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems* document (DfE, 2022), which in turn was part of the COP26 conference in November 2021. Hoath and Dave begin with the position that surveys show teachers are supportive of their role in teaching about climate change but that this produces challenges in terms of training and time within the curriculum.

Starting by discussing the need for shared language and the challenge of ensuring good subject knowledge for teachers in all phases, it then considers the purpose of climate change education and whether there is consensus on this across the community.

It recognises the complexity of the topic and the difficulty of teaching a perpetually changing body of evidence. It cites the 'bicycle model' of climate change education to represent the interlinked and constantly moving nature of the topic. It raises the issue of context and content and suggests that in the UK (at the time of writing) there is a need to look more widely for the effects of climate change and that this can be valuable though challenging.

While a good case can be made for the role of the science curriculum and science teachers in meeting this challenge, there is discussion of its place within the wider school. With the required urgency of action to ameliorate the effects of climate change, science teachers have an important role, but this must be shared by teachers and others within schools.

Full article

Hoath, L. and Dave, H. (2022) Implementing a sustainability and climate change strategy. *School Science Review*, **103**(384), 72–75. Available to ASE members at: www.ase.org.uk/system/files/SSR_March_2022_072-075_Hoath.pdf.

The article should be read in conjunction with the DfE policy paper (DfE, 2022).

Questions to support reflection and discussion

The paper itself has several questions that are useful to consider, but these further points can support discussions and reflection for you and your colleagues:

- Before reading this article, what was your understanding of the purpose of climate and sustainability education?
- How has your thinking about the purpose of climate and sustainability education changed?
- How useful is the bicycle model of climate education for: (a) teachers, (b) learners?
- What challenges does teaching about climate raise for you and your colleagues in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogical subject knowledge?
- How do you feel the challenges of teaching climate change have changed since the article was written?
- The DfE policy strategy discusses engaging with young people who:
 - are passionate about the natural world;
 - want to do their best to protect it;
 - can influence their wider communities.
 How can you help the young people in your school meet these aspirations?
- How does climate change and sustainability education link to your curriculum?

References

DfE (2022) *Sustainability and Climate Change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems*. www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems

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