

COP26 School Action Pack

Teacher Notes

In November 2021, the UK Government will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (also known as Conferences of the Parties or COP26) in Glasgow. In this meeting, Heads of State and their advisors will look at the current state of the climate and discuss the actions they will take to address climate change.

In the 2015 Paris Agreement, nations agreed to act together to restrict global temperature increases to 2°C and begin efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. This year, governments will renew their commitment with more ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This resource pack will enable schools to explore the issues surrounding climate change and why COP26 is taking place. The resources can be used to empower students to speak out about their feelings surrounding climate change and its impacts as well as provide the opportunity for students to explore solutions to the issues facing the world. Students can also consider how the school community can improve the sustainability of school life.

This resource pack includes:

- **Our Climate, Our Future PowerPoint**, which introduces students to climate change and COP26.
- **Writing to Persuade Lesson Pack**, which supports students to write a letter to their MP.
- **Innovating for the Future** worksheets to support students to explore solutions to some of the big issues the world is currently facing.
- **School Promise to the Planet** template.

COP26 Our Climate, Our Future PowerPoint

The **Our Climate, Our Future PowerPoint** could be used as a year group or whole school assembly to introduce the issues related to COP26.

An assembly would be a great way to inspire students ahead of a school project to improve sustainability and to engage people in the wider community. You could follow up from the assembly by using the other resources in tutor times, or as an off-timetable day, to allow students to take ownership for a plan to address climate action in your school community.

Alternatively, the PowerPoint could be used in a science lesson or science club to discuss climate change in the context of current events, or to prepare for any of the other COP26 activities.

The concept of social justice is introduced in the **Our Climate, Our Future PowerPoint**. It is necessary to address social justice in order to slow climate change and it is important that students become familiar with the language and issues surrounding it. The slides explain that different groups of people are disproportionately affected by climate change.

Writing to Persuade Lesson Pack

In this lesson, students explore how they can make their voices heard. The lesson includes how to use rhetorical devices and the correct tone to be persuasive. A planning sheet is included to support students to write a letter to their MP, sharing their views on climate change and persuading them to take action. Students should be encouraged to discuss social justice issues in their letters.

Innovation for the Future

The **Innovating for the Future** worksheet encourages students to consider different ways that they might approach a problem that they have chosen. They will consider whether education or technology could help, if adapting practices can improve the sustainability of an action, or if they think that the government will need to create new laws or policies to address the issue. They will then develop one of those solutions further.

The **Global Problems** sheet includes a list of some current global issues that students could consider. Alternatively, they could explore a problem in the school community. You could come up with a list of things that could be made more sustainable in your own school as a class and students could work on those.

Students should be encouraged to think about any solutions they come up with from a social justice perspective.

Eco-Anxiety

It is important that students are educated about climate change. However, there is a lot of urgent and alarming messaging about this in the public domain. While covering this topic, you should be sensitive to the potential risks to the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff. It is important to balance the message that everyone can make a difference with an understanding that it is not the responsibility of the students to fix this problem. A helpful message is that people all over the world are working hard in many different ways to tackle climate change and students can be part of that journey too.

The actions that we need to make to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be framed as shaping a different approach that is in balance with nature, rather than losing things or moving backwards. Reimagining our way of living provides a window of opportunity to address inequalities and shape a world that is founded on social justice and respect for nature and each other. We want to provide students with a positive outlook on the role they can play in transitioning to a more sustainable way of living, with many opportunities for innovation, technology, exploration and creativity.

Your School and Climate Change

Schools hold a special position in lives and communities, which means that they have the power to start shaping the future. The changes that a school makes are seen by the thousands of people connected to a school community and can send ripples of positive change across society. By taking action as a school, you can engage local decision-makers, businesses and get coverage in the press.

Your school can therefore help in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss by bringing sustainability into all aspects of school life.

Taking a 'whole school approach' to sustainability means looking at the '5 Cs':

- **Culture** – how the school promotes and supports sustainable behaviour.
- **Curriculum** – how much students learn about the environment and the actions they can take to help the planet in their lessons.
- **Campus** – how the school buildings and grounds are managed to support nature and keep the school's carbon footprint low.
- **Community** – the ways in which the school can reach out and help to facilitate change in the wider community.
- **Careers** – how the school prepares students with sustainable skills for the future.

You can make changes that lower the footprint of the school. This has a much greater impact than changes you might make as an individual or at home.

By creating a 'Promise to the Planet' for your school, you can plan how your school can be a force for positive change over the years of climate action ahead. There may be some steps that can be taken straight away and some that take a long time to achieve, but the sooner you start, the sooner you can start shaping the future. A **School Promise to the Planet** template is included in the pack to support this process.

One thing that all schools can do as a first step is sign up to support the **Let's Go Zero** campaign (<https://letsgozero.org/>). By joining this campaign, your school confirms that it wants to be zero carbon by 2030, that it is taking action now to reduce its own carbon impact and that it calls for the UK Government to help all schools reach this goal by the end of the decade. If all schools in the UK brought their contribution to climate change down to zero by 2030, this would make a huge contribution to helping the UK achieve its national target.

Your school could also become a **Recycling Hub** (<https://www.terracycle.com/en-GB/about-terracycle/drop-off-locations>). By signing up to be a collection point for recycling that is not covered by kerbside pickups, your school can lower the amount of waste generated on-site while also helping the wider community to do more to cut their contribution to landfill and pollution. You can even earn money for your school or an environmental charity by collecting waste. Students can play an active role in coordinating and promoting the collection and in sorting the recycling.