



## **Sustainability Policy Statement**

*‘To encourage learners to become change agents who have the knowledge, means, willingness and courage to take transformative action for sustainable development, learning institutions need, themselves, to be transformed. The entire learning institution needs to be aligned with sustainable development principles, so that learning content and its pedagogies are reinforced by the way facilities are managed and how decisions are made within the institution. This whole-institution approach to ESD calls for learning environments where learners learn what they live and live what they learn.’* UNESCO-Education for sustainable development: A roadmap.

All public service bodies are required under the Climate Action Plan to adhere to the Public Service Climate Action Mandate – and to develop Climate Action Roadmaps setting out how they will deliver on their energy efficiency and emission reduction targets.

Schools now have a separate Climate Action Mandate under which they are required to adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement. The School Sector Climate Action Mandate can be read in full here: [gov.ie - School Sector Climate Action Mandate \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

The second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030 also informs the content of the following Sustainability Policy Statement template.

ESD aims to ensure that “by 2030, all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”. (Sustainable Development Goal 4.7)

The following has been prepared as part of the School Sector Climate Action Mandate, and in keeping with the principles and themes of ESD to 2030, and has been accepted by the Board of Management of our school.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement (“the Statement”) is to outline how our school promotes sustainability and climate action, through our actions and

activities. Sustainability can be defined as the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future.

## Scope

Sustainability is a community issue and applies to all students, teachers and employees of our school. Parents and guardians should note, and where possible, promote, the Statement. The Board of Management of the school will ensure that decisions made in respect of the school align with the Statement.

## Vision, mission and values

**Our school mission:** “Carlow Educate Together is a National School funded by the Department of Education and Skills. It is also a member of the Educate Together organisation and therefore follows and supports its ethos.

As a school, we strive everyday to have a happy, safe school for everybody. By cherishing differences, respecting ourselves and others and living the ethos of Educate Together, we support each other to become the best we can be at school and in life.”

### Our School vision, values and goals:

These are the commitments to children, parents/guardians and staff in our school community:

#### Children

- Children will have a happy, safe environment for learning. SDG 4, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 16.
- We will foster the development of children’s interests, abilities and personalities. SDG 4

#### Parents/Guardians

- We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children and value their involvement in the education of their child. SDG 4
- Parents & Guardians will experience an engaged and motivated staff. SDG 4
- There will be good communication between home and school.
- There will be an encouraging atmosphere for parents to become involved in the life of the school. SDG 4

#### Staff

- There will be respect and regard for the staff’s professional role. SDG 16
- There will be support and encouragement for ongoing training and professional development. SDG 4

- They will have a working environment that reflects the needs of their role.  
SDG 8

## 1. Whole School Approach to Sustainability

At Carlow Educate Together, we are committed to fostering a culture of sustainability that permeates all aspects of our school life. Our whole school approach involves:

- **Integration Across Curriculum:** Sustainability principles i.e. SDGs are integrated into our curriculum across all subjects to ensure that students understand and engage with sustainability issues in a meaningful way.
- **Leadership:** A Sustainability Committee comprising staff, students and parents oversees and guides our sustainability initiatives. The committee ensures that sustainability is a key consideration in decision-making processes.
- **Whole School Participation:** We encourage active participation from all members of the school community, including students, staff, parents, and local community members, in sustainability projects and initiatives.
- **Self-Evaluation:** Our school carries out regular self-evaluation of our teaching practices in the area of sustainable development. This is completed by the sustainability committee.
- **ISSN:** Our school is a member of the Irish Schools Sustainability Network ([www.ISSN.ie](http://www.ISSN.ie))
- **ESD:** Our school keeps up to date with developments in ESD including by being registered for the quarterly ESD Newsletter  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a1d6e-education-for-sustainable-development-newsletter/>

## 2. Environmental Sustainability

Our commitment to environmental sustainability includes:

- **Energy Conservation:** Implementing energy-saving measures such as using energy-efficient lighting, promoting the use of natural light, and encouraging the conservation of electricity and heating.
- **Waste Reduction:** Minimising waste through recycling programs, composting organic waste, and reducing single-use plastics. We will work to educate students on proper waste segregation and the importance of reducing waste.
- **Resource Management:** Promoting the use of sustainable resources, such as eco-friendly materials in school supplies and prioritising the use of digital resources to reduce paper consumption.

- **Green Spaces:** Enhancing our school's green spaces by maintaining gardens, planting trees, and encouraging biodiversity.
- **Green Schools Programme:** Our school supports the Green Schools Programme.
  - Our school was awarded a Green Flag award in 2011 but with the advent of a new school building, decided to dedicate our environmental goals to biodiversity and outdoor education. These goals have been reached culminating in winning the National Nature Heroes Award in 2024.
  - Our school is now ready to continue working towards achieving the Green Flag awards. Our school has a Green Team comprising staff and students whose role is to lead on peer to peer education on environmental issues.
- Our school engages with SEAI Education & Youth Programme's curriculum linked energy Resources, pupil Workshops and teacher CPD- Erin Savage AP2
- [Schools | Community Energy | SEAI](https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/)<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/schools/> Our school engages with the [SEAI Energy in Education](#) resources and energy management tools in order to monitor and report energy consumption- Erin Savage and Solomon Roller.
- Our school engages with Global Village in the area of sustainable development. Global Village provides CPD for our staff. Our school currently has two teachers studying ESD in Irish Universities. Clare Keohane M.Ed in ESD MIU Limerick, Susanne Keating ESD certificate Maynooth University.
- Our school has comprehensive and cohesive recycling practices in place and uses recycled and recyclable materials whenever possible. We work with the School Food Company moving towards zero single use plastic and 100% of food waste composted.
- Our school has comprehensive practices in place in respect of water conservation, waste, food waste, single use plastics and energy conservation.
- Our school resources are procured and utilised taking into consideration their impact on the environment. (e.g.circular economy).
- Our school environment clearly displays information on sustainability and sustainable practices in prominent and accessible places.
- Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment.
- Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning. Our school has an outdoor garden and three outdoor classrooms. Our school facilitates CPD in Outdoor Education and has an Outdoor Education/Sustainability team.
- Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity. We won the national Biodiversity in schools competition, Nature Hero Award 2024.

- Our school promotes sustainable transport including where possible, walking and cycling to school. We partake in Bike Week each year including a 'bike-bus' safe cycle route.
- Our school engages with the Safe Routes to School programme: <https://greenschoolsireland.org/saferoutestoschool/>
- Our school engages with programmes that support and promote Environmental education e.g. Global Village, ISSN, Picker Pals, [Educationforsustainability.ie](https://www.educationforsustainability.ie), BurrenBeo, and Heritage for Schools.

### 3. Social Sustainability

Social sustainability focuses on the well-being and inclusion of all members of our school community. We are committed to:

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensuring that all students have equal access to educational resources and opportunities, regardless of their background. We strive to create a welcoming environment for students of all cultures, abilities, and needs. Our school ethos recognises the importance of and is sensitive to issues surrounding gender equity. (Learn Together curriculum).
- **Community Engagement:** Our students are provided with opportunities to develop and use their skills to participate in the solving of community problems at local level. Building strong connections with the local community through partnerships, outreach programs, and volunteer opportunities. We encourage students to participate in community service and environmental stewardship activities. (Examples include: Local links with Tyndall College, Elderflower Community Garden, Tullow St. pedestrian project 2024 and Save Strawhall woods 2023).
- Our school ethos strives to prepare students for life as citizens of a global community.
- Our school engages with Global Citizenship Education programmes such as WorldWise Global Schools <https://www.worldwiseschools.ie>, <https://educationforsustainability.ie> and other programmes working in this area. CPD for staff- currently studying M.Ed with specialism in Global Citizenship Education.
- **Health and Well-being:** Promoting physical and mental well-being through healthy eating initiatives, physical activity programs, and supportive pastoral care. Care team, Active-school committee winner of active school flag. -Teresa Farrell & Laura Walsh.
- The needs of all students in recognition of differentiated physical or learning abilities, are taken into consideration and accommodated.-Teresa Farrell & Laura Walsh.
- All school staff are provided with the training in the area of conflict resolution, in order to support and affect positive student behaviour. Restorative Practice training 2023-ongoing -Emer Bryden

## 4. Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability ensures that our school operates efficiently and responsibly. Our approach includes:

- **Budget Management:** Implementing cost-effective measures to manage the school budget while investing in sustainable practices that provide long-term benefits. Students are provided with opportunities to learn small business skills. Example: Junior Entrepreneur programme and mini-company programmes. -6th class
- **Resource Efficiency:** Making informed decisions about procurement to ensure that resources are used efficiently and sustainably. We aim to support local businesses and ethical suppliers. A non-competitive ethos of co-operation and sharing of resources is modelled in our school's allocation of its resources. Students are involved in the decision-making process on resource allocation within our school. The student council is also involved in decision making when purchasing new equipment and resources. -Eimear Cody Morrissey
- **Cost Savings:** Identifying opportunities for cost savings through sustainability initiatives, such as reducing energy consumption and minimizing waste. Our school's fund-raising activities reflect and actively demonstrate ethical and sustainable principles. Our school educates on, and promotes the principles of, a circular economy -Susanne Keating, Erin Savage AP2, Gillian O'Sullivan AP2
- **Learning Environment:** Our school buildings, outdoor learning spaces and gardens are maintained to a high standard, with best practice in the area of sustainability in mind. This includes sourcing environmentally friendly paint, 'No-Spray School' sourcing sustainable materials etc. Solomon Roller -Caretaker

## 5. Cultural Sustainability

Cultural sustainability celebrates and preserves our diverse cultural heritage while fostering an appreciation for global cultures. Our practices include:

- **Cultural Awareness:** Incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into our curriculum and school activities to promote global awareness and respect for different cultures. Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement, and encourages the community's involvement with the school.
- **Celebration of Diversity:** Hosting events and activities that celebrate various cultural traditions and encourage students to share their cultural heritage with the school community. Our school ethos aims to foster students' self-esteem, along with a mutual regard and respect for fellow students, and positive social interaction and relationships. Our school ethos, in tandem with the curriculum, strives to prepare students for life in an increasingly multicultural society. Our

school has an active role in supporting cultural diversity both within the school itself, and in the wider school community. (Examples include International food/culture day, Traveller pride day St. Catherine's education centre Carlow).

- **Preservation of Local Heritage:** Engaging with local history and traditions to maintain a connection with our cultural roots and promote understanding of local heritage. We invite in Heritage for Schools specialists and have CPD sessions and workshops using on-staff expertise.

## 6. Teacher and Student Competence

Developing the competence of both teachers and students in sustainability is crucial for the success of our initiatives. Our strategies include:

- **Professional Development:** Providing our teachers with training and resources to integrate sustainability into their teaching practices effectively. This includes workshops, seminars, and access to up-to-date information on sustainability issues. Our Teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD.
- **Student Empowerment:** Encouraging students to take an active role in sustainability efforts through student-led projects, biodiversity-clubs, and leadership opportunities on our various committees. We value student voice in shaping our sustainability initiatives. Our students are encouraged and supported to participate in peer to peer learning activities. Our students are encouraged and supported to undertake action oriented projects [e.g. Save Strawhall woods or other such initiatives. Our school has a Student Council/ Sustainability Committee/ Green Team who are involved in decision making. Our schools are involved in project based learning around real-life problems in the local community.
- **Agency and Responsibility:** Promoting a sense of responsibility among students and staff by involving them in decision-making processes related to sustainability. Students are encouraged to propose ideas and participate in the implementation of sustainability projects.
- **Evaluation and Feedback:** Regularly assessing the effectiveness of our sustainability policies and practices through feedback from students, staff, and the wider community. This process helps us continuously improve and adapt our strategies.

## Goals

Our school will aim to achieve a Green Flag for Water by 2025. We aim to develop student competence through workshops and lessons based on the sustainable development goals we identified this need through the school self-evaluation process.

## Implementation and review

This Statement was implemented on September 16th 2024. To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed every two years.

By adhering to this Sustainability Policy, Carlow Educate Together aims to create a supportive and dynamic learning environment where sustainability is embedded in all aspects of school life.

Policy Ratified on: \_\_\_\_\_

By:

Review Date: September 2026