



Girls' Learning Trust

CLIMATE AND CARBON ACTION PLAN

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1. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This Climate and Carbon Action Plan is informed by, and aligned to, the following key national and sector frameworks:

- The Department for Education (DfE) Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for Education (2022), which sets out the national ambition for the education sector to achieve net zero by 2050 and to embed climate education across the curriculum.
- The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended), which establishes the UK's legally binding commitment to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- The Greening Government Commitments, which set expectations for public sector bodies to reduce environmental impact, including emissions, waste and water use.
- The DfE School Estate Decarbonisation Guidance, including expectations relating to heat decarbonisation planning, energy efficiency and low-carbon capital investment.
- The DfE Sustainability Leadership and Climate Action Planning Guidance for Schools and Trusts.
- Relevant Local Authority climate and environment strategies, including flood risk, air quality and biodiversity action planning.

While academy trusts are not currently subject to statutory carbon reporting, the Girls' Learning Trust recognises a strong moral, educational and civic responsibility to act in line with national climate objectives and emerging public sector best practice.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

At the Girls' Learning Trust (GLT), we recognise our responsibility to provide an excellent education while preparing our students for the world they will inherit. Aligned with our Strategy and Operating Model and our purpose to transform lives through girls' education, we are committed to playing our part in addressing the climate emergency and embedding sustainability into the daily life of our schools.

Our vision is to be a climate-responsible Trust where sustainability is lived and learned every day, and where our students are equipped to thrive in a net zero future. Our mission is to reduce our carbon emissions, integrate sustainability into teaching and operations, and lead by example in the way we manage our estate, our resources and our influence.

This Climate and Carbon Action Plan sets out how we aim to reduce our environmental impact, embed sustainable practice across Trust activities, and strengthen our resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. It brings together immediate, practical actions — such as improving energy efficiency, reducing waste and encouraging active travel — with longer-term commitments to a more sustainable estate, curriculum, culture and set of behaviours.

We are committed to aligning with national net zero ambitions, the Department for Education's climate change and sustainability strategy, and relevant local authority guidance, while ensuring that our approach is rooted in GLT values and the specific context of our schools.

3. AIMS AND SCOPE

This plan aims to:

- Reduce the Trust’s carbon emissions in a structured and measurable way.
- Embed sustainability into key decision-making processes, including estates, procurement, finance and curriculum design.
- Build resilience to climate-related risks such as heat, flooding and extreme weather.
- Support staff and students to develop the knowledge, skills and habits required for sustainable living.

The plan applies to all schools within the Girls’ Learning Trust and to all central Trust operations. It covers both operational practice (how we run our buildings and services) and educational practice (what and how we embed sustainability into our curriculum), recognising that students learn as much from what they see around them as from what they are taught explicitly.

The plan will be reviewed annually, with progress reported to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) and the Trust Board.

4. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

To provide clear strategic leadership and ensure coordinated delivery, the Trust has established a formal Trust-wide Sustainability Forum, bringing together both educational and operational expertise. This reflects the Trust’s commitment to embedding climate responsibility within core governance and operational structures rather than treating it as a discrete initiative.

The Forum is co-chaired by the Chief Infrastructure Officer and a Headteacher, ensuring strong alignment between strategic estates leadership and school-level educational leadership. Membership comprises:

- Teaching staff representatives from each school.
- Operational colleagues from the premises, estates and IT teams.
- Identified Sustainability Leads from each school, who act as the local lead for implementation and engagement.

Each school will develop and maintain a **local Climate and Sustainability Action Plan**, aligned to this Trust-wide framework but tailored to its specific estate, curriculum priorities and community context. These local plans will set out school-specific actions, timescales and responsibilities, and will be reviewed annually through Local Governing Bodies as part of the normal governance cycle.

The Sustainability Forum is responsible for:

- Overseeing the development and delivery of both the Trust-wide Action Plan and the school-level action plans.
- Monitoring progress against agreed actions, milestones and key performance indicators at both Trust and school level.
- Sharing effective practice and resources across the Trust to drive consistency while respecting local context.
- Providing advice and assurance to the Executive Leadership Team and the Trust Board on priorities, risks, impact and emerging opportunities.

This governance structure ensures that climate and sustainability work is embedded as a strategic Trust priority, fully integrated into teaching, learning, estates management and operational decision-

making, and subject to the same standards of accountability and oversight as all other core areas of Trust activity, while also ensuring clear ownership and delivery at individual school level.

5. THEMES, RATIONALES AND ACTIONS

The Climate and Carbon Action Plan is structured around five integrated domains which together reflect the full breadth of the Trust's climate responsibilities:

- *Decarbonisation*: reducing carbon emissions from energy, water, waste, transport and capital development.
- *Resilience*: adapting the estate and our systems to cope with heat, flooding and extreme weather.
- *Environment and Biodiversity*: enhancing our grounds and green infrastructure for wellbeing, learning and climate resilience.
- *Curriculum*: ensuring students receive knowledge-rich, high-quality climate and sustainability education.
- *Culture*: embedding sustainable behaviours and integrating climate considerations into governance, procurement and partnerships.

Across each domain, the Trust has identified:

- Clear rationales, grounded in environmental, educational and financial need.
- Quick wins, representing low-cost or rapidly deployable actions for the next 12 months.
- Longer-term strategies, aligned to capital planning, workforce development and system change.

These actions are deliberately phased to balance ambition with deliverability, recognising the financial and operational context of schools while maintaining a clear trajectory towards net zero and climate resilience.

The table below sets out the full integrated action framework for the Trust:

Action Planning

Domain / Theme	Rationale	Quick Wins	Longer-Term Strategies
Decarbonisation			
Energy & Decarbonisation	The Trust estate is a high energy consumer with significant scope for reduction. National Net Zero targets and DfE standards require rapid emission cuts.	LED upgrades, switch-off campaigns, door closers, PIR sensors, repairs to existing PVs, baseline energy data.	Heat decarbonisation plan delivery, PV and battery feasibility, energy management systems.
Water Management	Climate pressure on water resources means efficiency is both an environmental and financial priority.	Fit aerators and cistern bags, toilet refurbishments, student awareness campaigns.	Smart metering, rainwater harvesting, baseline water consumption data.
Waste & Circular Economy	Schools generate large waste volumes. Reduction, reuse and recycling cut carbon and cost.	Waste audits to Sustainability Forum, recycling campaigns, removal of single-use plastics in catering.	Trust-wide waste strategy, reduction targets, recycling contract review, circular economy approaches to IT and furniture.
Buildings & Capital Development	Capital investment must mitigate carbon impact and be future-proofed over the asset lifecycle.	Sustainability criteria embedded in all project briefs.	Whole-life carbon assessments aligned to DfE Net Zero standards.
Finance & Investment	Financial planning must actively enable sustainability ambitions.	Ring-fence energy savings into a green initiatives fund.	Ethical investment policy, whole-life costing training, green funding exploration.
Procurement	Procurement decisions shape long-term Trust-wide carbon impact.	Sustainability clauses in Procurement Policy, review of top spend categories, use of green framework agreements.	Whole-life costing adopted, supplier engagement, Trust-wide sustainable procurement framework.
Transport & Travel	Staff and student travel is a major Scope 3 emission source and a health opportunity.	Trust-wide travel survey, promotion of active travel, cycle-to-work scheme.	Bike rack investment, Trust Travel Plan, EV charging feasibility, EV minibuss pilot.
Resilience			

Climate Resilience and Risk	The Trust must adapt to heat, flooding and extreme weather to ensure safety, continuity and asset protection.	Update Trust Risk Register to include climate and weather risks.	Full climate resilience review, CIMPP update, climate-responsive estates strategy.
Environment and Biodiversity			
Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure	External environments enhance wellbeing, learning and climate resilience while restoring biodiversity.	Tree and wildflower planting, grounds audit, biodiversity-aware contracts, cessation of pesticide use.	Trust Biodiversity Plan, LA and wildlife trust partnerships, designated biodiversity areas, sustained student and community engagement.
Curriculum			
Curriculum & Learning	Climate literacy underpins long-term sustainable behaviour and cultural change.	Mapping of sustainability coverage in existing schemes of work.	Trust-wide sustainability curriculum framework, targeted CPD, curriculum and estates integration.
Culture			
Behaviour & Culture Change	Sustainable impact depends on consistent everyday behaviour across schools and roles.	Sustainability Forum, school sustainability champions, “small steps” campaign, student council engagement.	Sustainability embedded in CPD, induction and Trust values, long-term staff and student behaviour programmes.
Monitoring, Reporting & Governance	Transparent accountability is essential to embed and sustain impact.	CIO-led Sustainability Forum, core KPIs agreed for energy, water and waste, ELT, LGB and Board reporting routes.	Annual Trust carbon footprint, Trust-level data integration, climate embedded in Board KPI dashboard.
Contracted Works & Partnerships	Supplier alignment amplifies Trust-wide carbon reduction.	Sustainability commitments required in all new contracts.	Green Contractor Charter, climate KPIs in contract monitoring, joint supplier action planning.

6. CONSIDERATION OF COST VS IMPACT

The Trust will take a balanced, proportionate and long-term approach to investment in climate and sustainability. Decisions will not be driven solely by short-term affordability, but by a wider assessment of educational value, environmental benefit, financial resilience and risk reduction. Sustainability will be treated as a strategic investment in the future of the Trust and its students, rather than as a discretionary operational cost.

In assessing the relative cost and impact of actions within this Plan, the Trust will consider:

- The scale of environmental benefit and contribution to carbon reduction.
- The educational and cultural value for students and staff.
- Long-term financial implications, including whole-life asset costs and energy savings.
- Deliverability within existing staff capacity and operational structures.
- Alignment with GLT and school values, public accountability and regulatory expectations.

Where capital or infrastructure investment is required, the Trust will adopt a whole-life costing approach. This means considering not only installation costs, but also future maintenance, energy use, replacement cycles and exposure to future regulatory or energy-price pressures. The Trust will avoid short-term savings that create long-term financial, environmental or compliance risks.

Delivery will be phased and proportionate. Foundational actions such as data baselining, behaviour change, procurement reform and governance embedding will be prioritised early, as these create the conditions for sustainable capital investment in later years. The Trust will retain flexibility to adapt the pace and sequencing of investment as funding, technology and national policy continue to evolve.

Climate action is also viewed as a core element of risk management. Investment in decarbonisation and resilience will reduce exposure to rising energy costs, climate-related disruption and unplanned estate liabilities, and will strengthen long-term asset protection and business continuity.

In parallel, the Trust will actively pursue external funding and partnership opportunities where these align with GLT priorities and capacity. This will include national and regional decarbonisation schemes, grant funding, supplier partnerships and Trust-wide procurement opportunities that support value for money.

Finally, the Trust recognises that the value of this work extends beyond finance and carbon metrics alone. Embedding sustainability delivers wider benefits including improved student climate literacy, positive culture and engagement among staff and students, enhanced public confidence, and a visible commitment to future generations. These wider outcomes form a central part of the Trust's assessment of impact.