

**THE FEDERATION OF ST
JOSEPH'S R.C. JUNIOR,
INFANT AND NURSERY
SCHOOLS**



SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Approved by:	Full Governing Board
Last reviewed on:	September 2020
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BACKGROUND

Environmental awareness and sustainability have arguably been part of Government policy, Church policy and our school's ethos for many years. Indeed, the apocryphal story of Adam and Eve revolves around our role as “guardians” of the environment and the clear consequences when we fall short of these ideals.

The Federation of St Joseph's Catholic Junior, Infant and Nursery Schools (“the School”) has made significant progress on sustainability over the past academic year but without an overall policy document to guide and drive comprehensive action - as well as monitor the achievement of goals - across the school.

This new policy therefore sets out, for the first time, the School's sustainability policy with a focus on premises and our consumption of resources.

Sustainability is a continuous process of ensuring the wise use of all resources within a framework in which environmental, social, and economic factors are integrated and balanced.


We consider a suitable definition for sustainability for the School as being:

To meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Our school has always been involved with the welfare of the community it serves and over recent years has recognised the importance of environmental issues. The issues around climate change affect the whole curriculum. Students need to understand the issues from educational and social perspectives in the interests of everyone's future.

AIMS

Our overall aim is to pursue a coherent, consistent, and achievable policy on sustainability issues throughout the school. In doing so, we aim to educate students, staff, parents and carers about the importance of good sustainability practices to the benefit of the planet and each of us.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to highlight, however, that despite our best intentions to be as “clean and green” as a school, we operate under several important constraints:

- **Funding:** We have a duty to provide a high-quality education for our pupils within our limited funding and so the priority must always be on teaching & learning. Any expenditure to support sustainability shall be subject to the same “value for money” and cost-benefit analysis (on an overall ‘life-of-project’ basis, taking into account any ongoing maintenance required) as other items of expenditure and not given special priority. We should be especially mindful if a sustainability action creates an additional burden for families who may already be struggling.
- **Health & Safety:** Science has given us many tools, materials and techniques that simplify and make our lives safer and more convenient. Unfortunately, some of these also have harmful effects on the environment (e.g. single-use plastics). We should be mindful of the negative externalities that our buying choices create, and look for ways to minimise them, but where it involves a trade-off against our pupil and staff's health and safety, we should be especially careful.
- **Time:** Every sustainability initiative has a monetary cost as well as cost in time, which is the more valuable and limited resource. We must guard against redirection of already scarce human resource to personal “vanity” projects or those with limited value to our pupils, i.e. we are a busy primary school not an extension of staff's back garden, nor are we an allotment, or a wildlife reserve. The same applies to volunteer labour and support from our families – if we are lucky enough to get this support, we should set clear expectations as regards any ongoing support by the School so that they are not disappointed later.
- **Responsibility:** in as much as we are supported by our Governing Board and should be responsive to feedback from our wider community, ultimate operational responsibility lies with Senior Leadership Team (“SLT”). All sustainability initiatives must go through SLT who shall consider the overall needs of the school in their deliberations. However, SLT decision is final.

Appendix A outlines the key actions that have been taken since September 2019 as well as discussing other initiatives which have been considered but ultimately rejected.

OBJECTIVES

Our objectives, under this policy, are to:

- Engage students and staff in a wide understanding of the impact of our individual actions on the environment locally, nationally and internationally;
- Promote high standards of care for our school, the local community and the wider world;
- Encourage behavioural changes, increase participation and communication across all users;
- Minimise the adverse impacts of our school on the environment; and
- Develop a responsible use of energy throughout the school, improving energy efficiency and giving preference to renewable energy when possible.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

The following areas have been identified as the key focus areas for our sustainability plan.

- **Energy** – Moving to renewable or lower-carbon sources of electricity (e.g. solar, wind, bio-mass and nuclear). Gas remains the most carbon-efficient source of heating and cooking available and while it is not a renewable resource (at least not in our lifetime), to the extent we can access UK / North Sea gas versus LNG or piped gas from Europe, it would be preferable.
- **Paper / Stationery / Consumables** – Reducing our printing, photocopying and other consumables use and therefore waste through use of modern technology (visualisers, emails, texts, and online platforms and cloud storage) in our communication, administration and record-keeping procedures as well as recycling paper and packaging where we can.
- **Plastics** – Reducing use of single-use and non-recyclable plastic, particularly in packaging applications. Certain exemptions should apply for health & safety and hygiene reasons but broadly we should look for lower or zero-waste alternatives.

- **Consumption and Waste** – Encouraging and providing the means for recycling of materials as well as an overall drive to reduce unnecessary disposal of items which can be re-used within the school or community (e.g. Electronics). Food waste is also an important area which is related to being efficient with our ordering of supplies, how we prepare and distribute meals but ultimately, comes down to delivering excellent tasting meals to minimise waste / scraps. Water waste is another area where despite the current prioritization of handwashing and cleanliness, we should still look for ways to reduce water consumption / waste (e.g. fixing leaking taps) or even consider alternative uses, e.g. using “grey-water” from sinks to water gardens. Lastly, there are clear environmental (lower resources required to produce, lower emissions) and health benefits (lower cholesterol, lower toxins, higher fibre) from adopting a plant-based diet. A growing proportion of society is also making a conscious and moral decision to turn away from consuming meat. As a school we should support pupils who make this choice by making sure there is a suitable, tasty and plentiful vegetarian choice in the school dinner menu.
- **Transport** – How our pupils and staff travel to and from school, as well as on trips, and what we consume or throw away during those trips. Exploring ways to change travel habits (and improve fitness levels) to steer people towards walking, cycling or public transport, instead of private cars. This should also apply to our suppliers and contractors, including remote or virtual meetings instead of physical meetings.
- **Premises** – Maintaining our buildings and equipment to a satisfactory standard such that we are as energy-efficient as we can be through appropriate use of insulation and heating (e.g. keeping boilers well maintained and on appropriate settings for time and temperature), as well as reducing any negative environmental impacts due our choice of cleaning techniques and cleaning products. This extends to our cleaning contractors, as well as building contractors and other suppliers. While we recognise that certain processes (e.g. building works) by their nature create waste and may use potentially harmful chemicals to do an effective job, we should encourage re-use and recycling of materials where possible, as well as encourage the use of more environmentally-friendly alternatives (e.g. compostable bin bags).
- **Groundskeeping** – Recognising the difference between areas which require regular maintenance due to their prominent / “front-of-house” nature (such as the sports field, the driveways, office areas) and those which can be left to “return to nature” or “wilding” (to encourage native plant species which require little maintenance but would encourage bees and other fauna to thrive). We note that certain areas of the school are better suited to this such as the forest school and areas under trees, whereas others are more suited for teaching & learning activities.

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Appendix A: Actions per Focus Area

Sustainability Action Undertaken	Status
Energy	
Switch to 100% renewable electricity	From September 2021 when existing fixed-term contracts with Engie expire
Switch to UK-sourced gas	From September 2021 when existing fixed-term contracts with Engie expire
Solar panels	Activate existing panels in infant school as an alternative to electricity from the grid – from September 2020
Paper / Stationery / Consumables	
Paper Newsletters	Phased out in October 2019; newsletters exclusively sent out by email, text and on school website; online teacher parent evening booking system since February 2020
Paper application forms / clubs entry	To be phased out from September 2020; use of Google forms to collect data and permissions; already being used for parental surveys
Purchase of books	Limit use of AMAZON in preference for local bookshops (e.g. Dulwich Books) who deliver in one shipment, provide a school discount, and do not shrink wrap their books in plastic
Printing / Photocopying	Instituting quotas / print limits for teachers to reduce printing, as well as

	encouraging black & white printing versus colour where it is sufficient (from September 2020)
Plastics	
School trips	Recommend children bring a re-usable water bottle as well as paper lunch bags – from September 2020
Cutlery	Use of disposable wooden knives, forks, and spoons versus plastic – from July 2020
Disposable plates and cups	Use of compostable paper cups and plates for functions not Styrofoam – from July 2020
Consumption and Waste	
Recycling bins	<p>Buying sturdy bins with separate compartments for paper, cans/recyclable and general waste (September 2020)</p> <p>Requesting that Veolia also plan for collection of plastics and cans, not just general waste, and cardboard (September 2020)</p>
Food consumption	Request that Relish make sure there is a credible vegetarian alternative in the menu (not just an after-thought) and ensure kitchen staff prepare it accordingly (from September 2020)
Transport	

Encourage alternatives to cars to and from school for pupils	School Street requested and supported by the school (effective from 1 September 2020)
Encourage alternatives to cars to and from school for staff	Cycle-to-work scheme and Tech-scheme (effective from July 2020)
Minibus	To review whether to keep or sell (from September 2020) considering high up-keep costs (insurance, maintenance, spare parts, congestion, and emission charges) as well as limited use
Premises	
Cleaning	Switch to compostable bin bags (new cleaning company from August 2020)
Lighting	Ongoing replacement programme to convert to LED lighting vs fluorescent and halogen; longer useful lives and less maintenance
Groundskeeping	
Wilding areas	Identified and agreed the following as wilding areas with Acorn (August 2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top of junior playground, grass bank • Crown Dale Rd, infants car park • Angel garden, against fence
Areas for students for teaching & learning	Forest School: new entrance path from junior school Angel Garden: raised beds, growing a

	<p>mix of vegetables, decorative weeds, and flowering plants</p> <p>Junior ex-Pond area: fenced off area with raised beds for planting</p>
Increasing access to grass / outdoor seating areas	<p>Grass area behind garden hall: shaded and sheltered clear of weeds, suitable for putting up a gazebo for outdoor classroom</p> <p>Grass area behind junior classrooms: now available since fence/gate removed</p>
Electric car charging points	<p>Considered but rejected as no one on staff has an electric car; also includes high set-up costs</p>
Relocation of pond	<p>Not possible as Governors have already approved the pond's removal as part of the LCVAP bid and no funds allocated for relocation; a pond on school grounds will also require high fencing for health and safety reasons which would require additional cost and maintenance (the old pond had become rancid and a hygiene issue so needed to be removed).</p>
Planting of trees along boundary with Virgo Fidelis	<p>Considered but decided not workable as would obstruct a view of the convent which works well in our publicity / marketing; also, as trees would grow quite large, they would require bi-</p>



	annual inspections and regular trimming.
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