

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



'Together We Can,


With Christ By our Side'

SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Approved by:	Full Governing Board
Last reviewed on:	November 2022
Next review due by:	November 2023

[Table of contents](#)

BACKGROUND



AIMS

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

OBJECTIVES

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

APPENDIX A: CURRENT INITITATIVES

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.