

One World. One Chance. One Future

A celebration of sustainability across the GDST



**One World. One Future.
One Chance.**

G D S T



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Our Highlights



We reduced our carbon footprint by 20% from 2020/2021 academic year, equivalent to almost 2,000 tonnes of CO₂.



We achieved CarbonNeutral[®] Organisation certification in accordance with The CarbonNeutral Protocol through sponsoring offsetting projects.



We launched ‘One World, One Future, One Chance’, an ethos uniting the educational, behavioural and operational strands of our sustainability framework.



We have already replaced over 5,000 inefficient lights with LEDs and put in motion an ambitious programme to swap over 25,000 more across our schools by 2024.



We introduced our pupil milestone programme, starting with our We are One project for our year 6 pupils focused on promoting sustainable behaviour change across our schools.



We appointed our first Trust Consultant Teacher for Sustainability and upskilled over 100 staff through the eduCCate Global Bronze Award.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION



Cathryn Buckle
Director of Estates,
GDST

Sustainability and climate change are among the most significant issues that will impact and shape our students' futures. As educators, we have a responsibility not only to teach our students about the science of climate change, but also to equip them to live in a world affected by it.

Our students are incredibly passionate about all aspects of sustainability and the environment.

Interestingly, our Girls' Futures Report research found that GDST girls are more confident about finding solutions to climate change than many and are already proactively addressing the challenges that the world faces. At the GDST, our aim is to empower them to ignite their passion and to support them to reimagine and shape a brighter, greener future.



In 2022, as we turned 150, we harmonized our work on sustainability under the ethos – One World, One Future, One Chance. This unites the many campaigns started by our students, as well as the work we lead on across the GDST. Sustainability is a green thread that underpins and is woven through everything that we do.

The establishment of the GDST Green Steering Group has brought together key stakeholders across the organisation and identified three main strands:

- **Education** – how we embed sustainability throughout the curriculum.
- **Behaviour** – how we encourage, model and nurture behaviours that promote sustainability.
- **Operation** – how we improve the efficiency and minimise the impact of our operations.

Sustainability impacts all of us in many different ways, and our efforts cannot be the preserve of a few; it must involve everyone in our community taking action if we are truly to make a difference. We have supported over 100 of our teachers and staff through the eduCCate Global Bronze Award and have appointed our first Trust Consultant Teacher for Sustainability.

Our schools have a dedicated Sustainability Lead who works tirelessly to support environmental projects amongst their students, then sharing best practice across the wider group.

Education is rapidly becoming a critical pillar of the ambitious action needed to champion a greener future. COP26 was the

first large summit to include discussions with environment and education ministers about the role of education in addressing climate change, and the publication of the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy in April 2022 marked an important step forward in sustainability education. It is the GDST's commitment to ensure we do all that we can to embed this across our network.

There is still so much to do. But it is also important to reflect and celebrate what we have already achieved, to share and inspire our communities to improve our collective futures, whilst empowering our girls to make a difference in the world. In June 2023, we hosted our We are One event, bringing over 100 Year 6 students together for a day of outdoor learning and to explore how to create a greener future.

I hope that you find the varied and innovative projects showcased in this document inspiring, and that you share our commitment to ensuring we all take action to improve the future for each of our students.

Sustainability is a green thread that underpins and is woven through everything that we do.



We have already achieved CarbonNeutral® Organisation certification by offsetting our carbon footprint and continue to work towards our aspiration to deliver a Net Zero target by 2050.

“There are many things we can do on an individual level: for example, eat less meat, use less plastic, fly and drive less, consume less. But real opportunities come from the power of numbers, in our case, the number of students across GDST schools.”

GDST sixth form student

Overview

This document celebrates sustainable activities across the GDST and is arranged in three sections.



OUR SCHOOLS

Projects included in this section showcase the work that schools are doing in the curriculum, reflecting the education strand of our framework. As educators, we have a responsibility not only to teach our students about the science of climate change, but also to equip them to live in a world affected by it. Every day in our schools, staff and students work tirelessly on a range of environmental projects and teachers are committed to delivering holistic sustainability and climate change education.



OUR PEOPLE

The varied case studies in this section illustrate the impact that each person can bring about and highlight the **behavioural** strand of our framework. We know that promoting behaviour change has a big part to play in creating a sustainability-minded school culture and that we need a girls-first approach where our students feel empowered to drive change. GDST schools have adopted a number of innovative and creative ways to nudge behaviour and encourage and nurture a systems thinking mindset with sustainability at its heart.



OUR ESTATE

With around 250 buildings across the GDST, the projects in this section, address the **operational** strand of our sustainability framework, looking at improving efficiency and minimising the impact of our assets. Many of these case studies explore biodiversity and the importance of connecting with nature informed by evidence demonstrating that engaging with outdoor activities improves children's confidence, relationships and attitude to school work.

Our Schools

The case studies in this section show the breadth of our sustainability curriculum led by our imaginative and innovative educators and students across the GDST.

INTRODUCTION



Vicky Bingham, Headmistress, South Hampstead High School and outgoing Heads' representative on the Green Steering Group and Natalie Argile, Head, Blackheath High School and incoming Heads' representative on the Green Steering Group.

Our pupils will face some of the greatest challenges in human history. A natural human response to such threats is to become disengaged in the face of a multi-faceted and enormous challenge, or to look fervently for alternative narratives, or for others to find the solutions.

There are three things school leaders need to bring to their communities to ensure that GDST is not just tinkering at the edges, but driving pioneering and systemic change for a more sustainable future. We need courage, energy and hope. We need the courage to motivate our communities to do things differently, and to tell them that difficult choices may need to be made today. We need energy to keep driving change when we meet with seemingly intractable challenges, challenges that are often woven into the very fabric of our school systems.

Finally, and most importantly, we need hope. It is from our pupils' vision for a better future that we must draw hope and turn it into action. The GDST Girls' Futures Report told us that our pupils were most hopeful about the future aged 9. We need to bottle the hope of our 9 year olds, and ally it with our experience as leaders to drive change for a better, greener future.



Wild Beach School

BRIGHTON GIRLS

Pupils in pre-prep at Brighton Girls experience Beach School as part of their curriculum. They attend all year round, embracing the ever-changing coastal landscape and weather. As well as building resilience, teamwork and investigative skills, we consider sustainability within our local area. This year, we visited the lifeboat station to understand the importance of community and volunteering as well as how to respect our coastlines; we looked at the relationship between the moon and the tides and how climate change might affect our world; and we have enjoyed digging into the sand, finding fossils to understand changes over time.

As part of our Beach School curriculum, pupils have looked at the sky and weather patterns and visited the Rampion Wind Farm, exploring electricity production. Finally, we considered how we can care for our planet and what happens when rubbish enters the ocean. Litter-picks are a frequent occurrence as pupils learn to play their part in protecting our beautiful coastlines.

'Why there is hope for our planet' - using STEAM to find real-world sustainability solutions

WIMBLEDON HIGH SCHOOL

"Don't be discouraged by people saying your actions are just a drop in the ocean. What's an ocean except millions upon millions of drops?"

At Wimbledon, we harnessed the power of interdisciplinary learning through our STEAM+ Expo, asking students and staff to think about how the different subjects we study help us look at climate change in a new light. With the theme "Hope through Action", academic departments were encouraged to explore different aspects of sustainability and weave them into their curriculum. In a collaboration of Maths and Art, students researched the statistics around plastic pollution and created bird sculptures from plastic milk bottles for an impactful art installation. Year 9 students combined English and Music in a unique performance celebrating the natural world; Year 6 demonstrated fascinating future uses of fungi and Year 10 shocked visitors with an interactive food mileage game, amongst many more highlights. On the main stage, sixth former Olivia gave the keynote speech on 'Why there is hope for our planet', inspiring us in the message that we can all play a part in bringing about change.





The nudge factor: sustainable psychology

SOUTH HAMPSTEAD HIGH SCHOOL

Every year, Year 12 psychology students carry out a Research Methods project and during the 2022/2023 academic year, the theme was sustainability. The psychology department and School Consultant Teacher for Sustainability worked in collaboration to identify research areas for students to explore, categorised into three key areas: nudge behaviour theory, factors affecting sustainable behaviour (e.g., gender and age), and feelings about climate change. The field of environmental psychology research is relatively new, so we felt students had lots of opportunity to explore areas of interest to them and carry out a range of research methods for their study.

It is hoped that students will conduct research that could have longer term benefits beyond the timeframe of the project e.g. data collection on, and understanding of, specific barriers to sustainable behaviours, which could be used to make changes to school policy and systems. The project also provided an opportunity for the Year 12 psychology students to work with younger year groups and capture live data. This will benefit their subject-specific skills development and also provide a route of action for them on sustainability and climate change issues.

Greening our Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education provision

OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL

During the 2022/2023 academic year we have introduced a new sustainability thread into the Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education curriculum, focussing on Key stages 3 and 5. Our ultimate goal is a joined-up scheme of work, going through from Reception to Year 13, guiding everyone towards a sustainable and responsible way of life.

We have introduced a number of environmental topics into Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education encouraging students to think about sustainable behaviours and their role in the school and local community. We started by looking at correct waste separation to avoid contamination of recycling and felt that education here was key and that Year 7 was a good place to start. First we tackled the basics, offering an introduction to climate change, using NASA children's resources, which was followed up by a presentation to reiterate key messages. We took a similar approach with our Year 8 and 9 students looking at food waste exploring the carbon footprint of our diets, with students presenting their findings and contextualising them with examples of how food poverty affects other countries around the world.

We have introduced a number of environmental topics into Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education encouraging students to think about sustainable behaviours and their role in school and local community.

Rethinking Design Technology resourcing

BLACKHEATH HIGH SCHOOL

True designers embrace difficult situations and chase constraints that make them think more creatively. The Chinese symbol for crisis is comprised of two characters: danger and opportunity. In the spirit of this, and paired with making our curriculum more environmentally



friendly, we decided to set ourselves a Design Technology department challenge. First, we started conceptualising projects back to front by looking around the department and focussing upon material that had been there for some time, was redundant, reusable or just out of vogue. Secondly, we awarded ourselves a 20% pay cut on buying new materials. These two principles were applied to planning and implementing a fairly straightforward timber skills building project at Year 7. Designs and outcomes were varied and reflective of our students' interests. We intend to expand the concept a little next year and are also looking at starting a "packaging centre" that holds any potentially usable packaging that students, parents and/or staff bring in that can be used to spark an idea or two.

Sustainable entrepreneurship, GDST-Wide

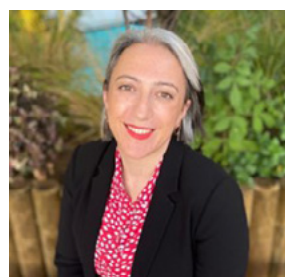
LEAD (Leadership & Enterprise Advanced Diploma) is the GDST's flagship leadership and enterprise programme for Year 12 students, designed to ensure that key tenets of sustainability run through it.

It is a hands-on, experiential, female-focused programme, grounded in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, encouraging students to learn about leadership and entrepreneurship by setting up a sustainable business initiative which has social impact. As one Norwich High School student put it, 'We recognise the amazing platform that the GDST has offered us, with a multitude of opportunities that have enabled us to look outward into our local community and propose the change that we wish to see.'

The academic year 2022/2023 has seen over 180 Year 12 students from across 16 GDST schools taking part in the programme and we hope the LEAD community will expand further next academic year.

Our People

INTRODUCTION



*Laura Comerford,
Prep School Head, Brighton Girls and Junior Heads
Representative on the Green Steering Group*

GDST schools are lucky to have students who are interested, active and engaged with environmental issues. Our student eco-groups continue to grow and thrive across our schools, with pupils given the opportunity to lead projects which impact many areas of school life.

These students are our changemakers of the future.

We are also fortunate to have colleagues who support them in this work and welcome the opportunity to deepen their own understanding and explore creative ways of working on these big and complex issues.

Our first Trust Consultant Teacher for Sustainability has created and nurtured a highly effective community of sustainability leads across the Trust and formalised a professional development programme centred around the theme of 'Knowledge to Action'. With the establishment of the Green Steering Group, key stakeholders from across GDST are able to come together to discuss strategic priorities which are aligned to school plans and interests.

Leading sustainable change with our Ministers for the Environment

ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL BATH

Pupils at our prep school held a 'COP27' event in November to discuss our sustainability aims for the year ahead. Research from behavioural psychology has shown the importance of student engagement and consultation in bringing about sustainable behaviour change. During the event, students from our senior school spoke to our Ministers for the Environment (part of our School Parliament) and we voted on issues to address and how we could move things forward. During the 2022/2023 academic year we have focussed on recycling and reusing. Funded by our Friends of the Royal High, we now have a glue stick recycling station and have ensured our food waste has been composted. Responsible consumption is also a key area of our strategy and rather than purchasing new books for our library, we ran a campaign to encourage pupils to bring in recently published books in good condition that they no longer wanted. These books have a special book plate in them thanking their donor and we have added over 100 nearly new books to our library.

The 1% Difference

CROYDON HIGH SCHOOL

At Croydon High School, we believe in making a difference and we believe that we all have a part to play in making that difference.

The 1% Difference is an idea driven by the belief that marginal changes we all can make support us in achieving a bigger goal. In terms of sustainability, we are looking to promote a cultural change to be more sustainable with each member of the community making small changes to their habits. We are motivated by the belief that if each of us make small changes the collective effect will have a significant impact and make a tangible change to our progress in our mission to be more sustainable.

Initial areas we have identified to nudge behaviour and change habits include staff bringing in their own tupperware at lunchtime instead of using a disposable container, a collective drive to switch off lights and IT equipment across the school and considering how we can consume less meat.



The 1% Difference



*Go beyond thinking green by
actively making a difference*

Currently, we use around 8 or 9 'trees' a month and we have set our target to get this down to below 5 trees per month. To support our EdTech vision and commitment to the environment, we have invested in communication and feedback tools, alongside continuous staff training, which enables teachers to maximise the benefit of Google Classroom by managing workflow electronically, and by making marking and feedback online more effective, reducing the need to print workbooks and past papers.

The 1% Difference is an idea driven by the belief that marginal changes we can all make support us in achieving a bigger goal.

Reducing our reliance on printing and paper use

NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

Our goal is to encourage departments to be completely paperless while simultaneously preparing for a digital future by embracing electronic resources to monitor and assess pupil progress. Printing uses a lot of resources, but with EdTech we can reduce the impact on the environment while also preparing our students for the future. Since September 2022, we have been monitoring the use of printing to see if we can make improvements. We produce a monthly report using PaperCut and our Deputy Head - Academic highlights faculty and individual use regularly with colleagues. Currently we use around 8 or 9 'trees' a month and we have set our target to get this down to below 5 trees per month. To support our EdTech vision and commitment to the environment, we have invested in communication and feedback tools, alongside continuous staff training which enables teachers to maximise the benefit of Google Classroom by managing workflow electronically, and by making marking and feedback online more effective, reducing the need to print workbooks and past papers.

Our goal is to encourage departments to be completely paperless



Green careers

PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

During the 2022/2023 academic year, we ran our inaugural Eco Week with a focus on green careers, to highlight the rapidly expanding green job sector. Older students attended talks on careers with sustainability links; sustainable fashion, a think tank focussing on community green policies to help develop clean, green economic growth and a climate analyst at Southern Co-op.

To reach as many students as possible, sustainability was brought to life through integration across all subjects; in geography Year 7 focused on the causes of global warming, improving their knowledge of fossil fuels. Year 8 welcomed the Fair Trade Forum, who spoke about the benefits of Fair Trade and in history students learnt about change makers and their impact on climate action in the past.

Our prep school also took part in a range of environmental activities including an inter-house debate on whether climate change is the biggest issue facing us. Pupils were encouraged to think about ways to care for the planet and wrote thank you notes to Earth.

A greener Christmas

SHEFFIELD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Our students are becoming increasingly mindful of their own behaviours as consumers and have enjoyed lectures on fast fashion during the 2022/2023 academic year. Inspired by this, our Eco Reps set about 'greening' our Christmas activities and planned a festive swapping event last year, in place of our traditional Christmas Fayre.



Our students are becoming increasingly mindful of their own behaviours as consumers and have enjoyed lectures on fast fashion this year.



All students were invited to bring in up to three items and exchange these for tickets which could be exchanged for 'new' items at the event. It was super to see lots of students pick up a new Christmas jumper at the event, as this is the sort of item we have fallen into the habit of buying, wearing a couple of times and then relegating it to the back of a wardrobe. Many of the swapped junior school fancy dress outfits made an appearance on World Book Day a few months later.

We are now looking to plan a 'backpacks and ballgowns' swap for students who are about to embark on their Duke of Edinburgh journey or planning for an upcoming prom.



Combatting fast fashion

THE BELVEDERE ACADEMY

During the 2022/2023 academic year Belvedere Academy have worked through the eduCCate Global Bronze Award. The programme is designed to upskill inter-disciplinary teams in schools to feel confident with the basics of climate change, train others in their school community and work with students on a range of sustainability challenges. Our favourite part of the Award was working with students on projects to combat fast fashion. The project aimed to raise awareness about waste issues associated with the UK fashion industry and focused on preventing clothes from going into landfill by promoting the re-use of old clothes. An estimated £140 million worth of clothing equating to 350,000 tonnes, or the same weight as 21,777 buses goes into landfill each year. This can take 40 years to biodegrade. To help encourage reuse and recycling, we ran a number of swap shops which were popular with students who had the opportunity to refresh their wardrobe. The event also benefited students who were struggling financially enabling them to get clothes for free and over 20 bags of clothes found loving new homes.

Sustainable behaviour change

SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

Our Eco-Committee and Eco-Club have continued to drive forward behavioural change initiatives, demonstrating the importance of student agency. At a school level, we have seen some significant changes such as switching to recycled paper and initiatives to further reduce the amount of plastic used in the school canteen. As we work towards renewing our Eco Schools Green Flag Award, students have engaged in a range of activities to improve the local area. Our Eco-Club have continued to undertake regular local litter picks and our juniors have been growing their own fruit and vegetables and learning about the impact this has on the environment.



Sustainable behaviour change is also embedded across the curriculum and the whole of Year 8 took part in our own Earthshot competition to design sustainability solutions which ranged from initiatives to reduce over-fishing to biodegradable plant pots. Year 7 students have been exploring ways to reduce the environmental and climate impacts of their fashion choices, by creating and modeling their own sustainable outfits.

Our favourite part of the Award was working with students on projects to combat fast fashion.





Every little helps: changing environmental behaviour

KENSINGTON PREP SCHOOL

Through the consistent efforts of the Eco Warriors, we are encouraging the community to make small changes to their behaviour. Initiatives such as: BYOB (bring your own water bottle) and the pen recycling scheme have been hugely successful and we are currently working towards achieving our accreditation as a Plastic Free School. With the rising cost of energy, in April we ran 'No Power Hour', with classes taking part across the day. Our Energy Sparks data clearly shows lower usage from 11.00am - 7.00pm on that day. The Eco-Warriors discussed the data and reasons for the fluctuations. While there are lots of factors to consider, our overall usage when compared over the seven-day period, to that of the same date one year ago, is significantly lower and this is likely to be because of the behaviour changes promoted by our 'No Power Hour.' These small changes have definitely made a difference and this little experiment has certainly given us something to think about.

Making these small changes in our homes and schools will make a difference to the environment and to our pockets!

Reducing our food waste

NEWCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

Last May, during our inaugural 'Touch of Green Week', we aimed to bring attention to the issue of food waste. Our catering team at senior school, 'Holroyd Howe,' had already been measuring food waste for some time. However, we wanted to further reduce food waste and turned it into a House competition. To achieve this, we implemented a new system. Firstly, we reminded pupils to take only what they needed and that they could always go back for more. Secondly, we asked pupils to scrape their leftover food into their House bin. The House bin with the least amount of food waste won the competition. The first week saw a significant reduction of 20kg of food waste and Carpathia House was declared the winner. The success of the week prompted our catering team to request the continuation of the new system, which we have since simplified.

Now, all pupils scrape their food waste into a central bin, resulting in a continued reduction of food waste.

As we approach our next 'Touch of Green Week,' we plan to reinstate the House competition to see if Carpathia can retain their Eco crown.

we are One.
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

We are One, GDST-wide

Imagine if we provided young people with empowering opportunities to explore and make sense of the world they live in, responding to the biggest challenges of our time, enabling students to have a voice and champion for a greener future.

In partnership with ThoughtBox Education, Year 6 pupils were invited to complete a Changing Climates Curriculum and then create a video encouraging sustainable behaviour in others. Throughout the project, pupils were supported by their teachers and mentors to explore how they felt about climate change and to build the skills they felt they needed to live and thrive in a world affected by it.

The project culminated with a day of celebration at Wimbledon High School where pupils engaged with nature through a range of outdoor learning activities and were inspired by the acclaimed environmentalist, Cindy Forde.



Our Estate

The case studies in this section explore how we can minimise the impact of our assets and how operational changes can also impact on the schools' communities wellbeing and culture.

INTRODUCTION



Jeremy Dunn,
Director of Finance
and Operations,
Nottingham Girls'
High School and
Director for Finance
and Operations
representative on
the Green Steering
Group

Sustainability is an important strand in any organisation's physical infrastructure and operating strategy. Not only does it move towards our zero carbon targets, it can make financial sense in our current economic climate.

At Nottingham Girls' High School, we share many of the same challenges as at our sister GDST schools, having a mixed estate of Victorian buildings through to new builds. Faced with often complex, costly and challenging solutions, it can sometimes feel easier not to make the green choice but we've taken the opportunity to do what we can, when we can, towards our green agenda. For instance, over the years we have replaced all our windows with sealed unit glazing and more recently, we replaced all our interior lighting with LED. Being a Director of Finance and Operations in a school environment provides a unique opportunity to work with young people on tackling climate change.

From being lobbied for better ways to measure our food waste to campaigns for a more sustainable school uniform, there are lots of ways we can support and influence sustainable behaviour change.

But compromise is often the name of the game and when designing our newest operating building, our performing arts centre, we considered everything from PVs to rammed earth walls. Sadly, the latter didn't make it to the final design but we do have natural ventilation in the public areas, including the auditorium, and ground source heat pumps. The natural ventilation – designed by the built environment team at the University of Nottingham – has been very successful, maintaining a comfortable temperature regardless of how many are in the audience. We are currently refurbishing and extending our sports facilities, which will be heated through air source heat pumps. The new plant will also be extended to include the junior school.

There are no perfect solutions, but through our operational expertise and ambitious targets, mixed with a healthy pragmatism and inspired by our school communities, we can push forward our environmental agenda and should look to the future with confidence.



Rethinking our minibus routes

NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL

At Norwich, we've reviewed our nine minibus routes, covering most of Norfolk. Rationalising these routes has collectively removed over 110 parents driving to and from our school, at least twice a day, via small side roads. Based on an average one-way commute of 15 miles, we have displaced over 1,000,000 miles per year driven in private cars, saving an equivalent amount of CO₂ emissions. The scheme has also helped to reduce congestion and idling cars making the environment around school much cleaner, improving air quality and safety. It has also been well received by our neighbours and is a demonstrable way of showing we are committed to reducing both congestion at those daily pinch points and our carbon footprint. We are now keen to explore the possibility of using hybrid or fully electric minibuses to further reduce our carbon footprint and eagerly await this next step in our sustainability journey.

Building a bottle green house

BIRKENHEAD HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMY

A standout concern raised by our students over the last few years has been the seemingly unstoppable rise of single use plastic in just about every area of life. As an eco-council we set about devising a way of identifying the extent to which this issue existed within our own school community; raising awareness as well as looking to find an effective way of repurposing some of the plastic waste that was produced in our schools and homes. To this end we devised a plan to build a greenhouse out of plastic bottles collected in school as well as the homes of our students. Over the space of one month, we collected over 1200 pieces of single use plastic, these were cut and thread onto bamboo sticks to form walls which were drilled into a frame. After many after school sessions our installation was complete and formed one of the useable spaces on our school grounds for students to experience gardening and food production through our enrichment program while all the time it stands as a reminder of how much single use plastic, we as a society are wasting.

A standout concern raised by our students... has been the seemingly unstoppable rise of single use plastic in just about every area of life.

Back to meadow

BROMLEY HIGH SCHOOL

The decline of meadow grasslands is without parallel in the history of nature conservation. In one generation, 97% of meadow ecosystems have been destroyed in the UK. Meadows are crucial sanctuaries, offering habitats and sources of food to butterflies, birds, small mammals, amphibians and wildflowers.

Our Year 3 girls are collaborating with our post-16 geographers and biologists to take areas of our school grounds Back to Meadow. No Mow May is giving wild plants the chance to grow and add colour, attracting pollinating insects. The girls are weeding the ground, exposing bare soil and scattering a mix of annual seeds, including cornflowers, field poppies and corn marigolds.

Our aim is to reach 40 species per square metre to promote biodiversity and raise the profile of natural environments. A wildflower meadow is so descriptive of summer; the sounds of crickets and bees are reminders that we're not the only ones who are busy! As the girls enjoy these outside spaces, they will focus on their own wellbeing and immerse in wildlife.

Our aim is to reach 40 species per square metre to promote biodiversity and raise the profile of natural environments.



Nurturing our biodiversity

NORTHWOOD COLLEGE FOR GIRLS

Northwood College cares deeply about the impact that we have on our environment. From planting thousands of native hedgerow plants and introducing dozens of flowering fruit trees, to constructing bat and bird boxes and removing areas of barren turf - which we replaced with lush grasses and vibrant plants, our dynamic environment bursts with colour, organic life and natural habitats. Our approach to biodiversity is not simply a policy or procedure; it provides a tangible, high impact channel for us to connect with nature and enjoy its positive impact on our wellbeing.

Our students have taken on the challenge of transforming our overgrown pond into a beautiful, living and breathing feature. Eco representatives from across year groups enthusiastically shared their proposal with our leadership team and we all feel privileged to be able to watch this homemade project come to fruition. As part of their work with NWC 130 community service projects, students are spreading their support of biodiversity into our local community. By aerating soil and planting seeds, under the supervision of the Nature Recovery Ranger, our girls have helped develop a meadow for staff and patients to benefit from at the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre in Northwood.

Wheelbarrow planting

HOWELL'S SCHOOL, LLANDAFF

Howell's is a remarkably green space despite being so close to the centre of the city. Some of our trees, hedges and shrubs act as wildlife corridors, which provide habitat, cover for movement and safer places for animals to find food. The sustainability and climate change group plans to supplement the wildlife corridors with wheelbarrows planted with flowers, vegetables and scented and culinary herbs.

To this end, each form in the prep school and in Years 7 to 9 in the senior school has been given a wheelbarrow to design, plant and cultivate. Many of the student groups have chosen to plant flowers, considering colour and texture in their designs. As well as adding biodiversity to gardens and ecosystems, flowers are botanically important structures and essential sources of food for many organisms.

The flower is an important means of attracting pollinators to a plant. The wheelbarrows which are planted with herbs and vegetables will, later on in the garden season, be used in the kitchens to add fresh, school-grown produce to the lunches served to students.

The sustainability and climate change group plan to supplement the wildlife corridors with wheelbarrows planted with flowers, vegetables and scented and culinary herbs.

Breathe the wild air

SUTTON HIGH SCHOOL

In September 2022, our new state-of-the-art prep and nursery building, Fernwood House opened, nurturing a new generation of budding David Attenboroughs. One of our key aims for the project was for our pupils to learn about nature in nature: research clearly shows this results in pastoral and academic benefits.

The building is the first educational building in the UK to meet the Low Energy Transformation Initiative Standards, incorporating a range of sustainable features to ensure it's not only carbon neutral, but carbon positive. The building combines a traditional learning environment that naturally encourages exploration, discovery, and play while providing the perfect backdrop to teach about the environment and sustainability. It has been carefully designed to include natural materials and lots of greenery to maximise health and wellbeing benefits and provide a calming environment.

This environmental and sustainable ethos runs seamlessly throughout our 'Breathe the wild air' curriculum which covers orienteering, trees, plants and flowers, gardening and wellbeing, sustainability, animals, birds and insects, weather and climate change.



The plant project

SYDENHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Fostering a sense of responsibility is a core element of our mission at Sydenham High, and our eco-prefects play a key role in driving this agenda. During the academic year 2022/2023, they have been on a mission to create biophilic learning environments, with a key focus on plants and planting.



Our gardening club gave us the opportunity to revive the school eco-zone, develop horticultural skills and plant a stock of fruit, vegetables and flowers. During the winter, we propagated house plants. Then, every Key Stage 3 form was given a plant to nurture, as part of a house competition: The Plant Project. The purpose was to encourage more biophilia around school, with a view to oxygenating the air and boosting health and wellbeing. Students have taken full responsibility for their plant, naming it and designing a care programme for it, to ensure that it is kept healthy and well. All plants are happily still going strong, as this goes to print!

LED replacement project

NOTTINGHAM GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

We had been exploring replacing all our lighting with LED for a couple of years before we went ahead in October 2020, becoming the first school in the GDST to do this in one go. This project focussed on internal lighting, replacing 1990 fittings across the school. Our electrical consumption in 2021/2022 was over 250,000 kWh lower when compared to 2018/2019, a 25% decrease that would equate to over £40,000 in savings.

The design of the fittings was really important as one size definitely doesn't fit all in this case. Most classrooms, offices and corridors have lighting panels set into suspended ceilings. But for some rooms, like the Head's office, we wanted something with more of a contemporary look. Similarly, the dining hall and the junior library had different requirements.

Light levels have improved massively across the site, even in the darkest corners, and overall we have a much better environment for teaching, learning and working. We look forward now to replacing our external lights later this year.

We have replaced 1990 light fittings which has led to a 25% reduction in electrical consumption.



Our ecologist in residence

PUTNEY HIGH SCHOOL

Putney is committed to environmental education and to learning about future sustainability, so we are building on the success of our 'Biophilic Classroom' project with the appointment of an ecologist in residence, to embed a deeper understanding of local ecology.

Dr Helen Miller is now working with pupils across junior and senior schools on a variety of ecology projects exploring diverse habitats and protected species. She leads a programme of cross curricular lessons and challenges for students who are busily connecting with nature on site and involved in ongoing monitoring opportunities. The starting point has been our own phenology challenge – a long-term study of the seasonal changes around our school.

Through our existing 'Breathe' programme, eco and gardening clubs are enjoying taking 'ownership' of these projects and students are already joining up with local bat groups and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 'Big Garden Birdwatch'. We look forward to installing our own weather system which will provide us with the opportunity to contribute to real-life ecology data collection.

Greening our school site

NOTTING HILL AND EALING HIGH SCHOOL

During the academic year 2022/2023, we have been working on several innovative projects to raise the profile of sustainability across the school community. As part of the new eco-enrichment programme, girls have led the sourcing, buying and delivery of plants across the school. Every form in the school now has a snake plant to improve air quality and promote care for nature. New planters have also been bought with fresh plants, bringing splashes of green into previously unadorned thoroughfares. We're also delighted to have won the STARS 'gold' award from TfL, in recognition of our efforts to promote active travel among staff and students. The whole school community has come together to embrace the initiatives, from an anti-idling campaign to a 'walk to work' week, complete with a hearty yet healthy 'bikers' breakfast'. Finally, planning is now well underway for what promises to be the jewel in the ecological crown: the installation of a thirty metre, self-watering vertical meadow on both sides of the science block. Such a system will not only look beautiful; it will also attract wildlife, such as bees and butterflies, to this corner of West London.

The whole school community has come together to embrace the initiatives, from an anti-idling campaign to a 'walk to work' week.

Our hope garden

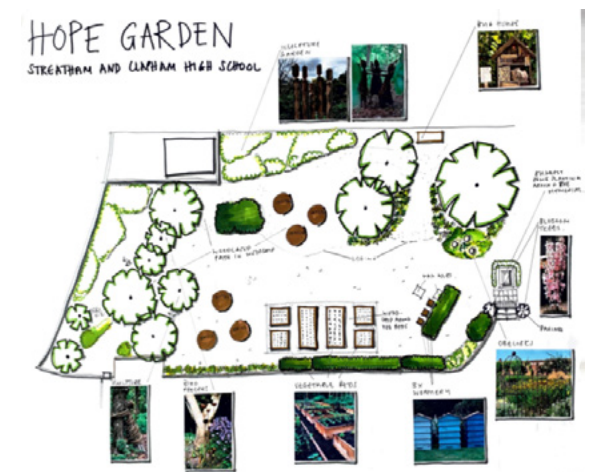
STREATHAM AND CLAPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

The hope garden project was the fantastic idea of the head girl and sixth form captains in 2022. The pupils felt that post covid a wellness space was very important for the school and set about designing and planning the garden in collaboration with gardening specialists from the local community.

The pupils then embarked on their fundraising and were very successful, raising £3,500 by a second-hand clothes sale, an own clothes day and a cake sale.

Work on the hope garden has now begun. The storage shed has been built, the planters have arrived, and the working party of eco-pupils, from Years 7-13, have been dedicating their lunchtimes to the project and the plants are ordered.

The planned plants will provide not only flowers and vegetables for the pupils to learn from, but also a lovely area for our bee and butterfly friends. We have a bat colony nearby that will thrive on the insect population. Once finished, not only will the school have a lovely, calm, wildlife friendly space, we will also be able to welcome others to enjoy it on open days and for pupil and parent events.



Managing our Energy Use, GDST-wide

All GDST schools, alongside 1,000 schools across the country, use Energy Sparks to access and view their energy use data. This can increase awareness of where energy is being used, but Energy Sparks also offers guidance on how we can use energy more efficiently in our schools.

For example, schools were encouraged to turn off their heating and other non-critical energy uses for the Christmas break. This resulted in over £10,000 of savings, translating into 200MWh of energy and 35 tonnes of CO₂, when compared to the previous year's Christmas break.

School staff have been using Energy Sparks to pinpoint interventions and monitor energy use. At South Hampstead High School, supported by Energy Sparks data, they have been turning off fridges, freezers and point of use water heaters over school holidays and coffee machines over weekends, and have observed some significant energy savings. In Wimbledon, staff have been using Energy Sparks data to identify high electricity overnight use and launched an effort to pinpoint the causes. Some of the changes include electric radiator timings being corrected and Air Source Heat Pump operation being adjusted to help reduce overnight energy use.



Our Future

As we plan the next steps of our sustainability journey, we are keenly aware that climate change impacts women most acutely, with the UN finding that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women - and that some of those women live in the poorest parts of the planet. As the largest educator of girls in the UK, the GDST has an important role to play in championing a greener future.

We have a moral imperative to act and we are listening to our girls. They are dedicated to achieving a sustainable world and, accordingly, the GDST is committed to meeting ambitious but critically important sustainability targets at every level of the organisation.

The urgency of climate change means it's critical that we take immediate action; this document highlights how we are already laying firm foundations and engaging with projects that will help deliver our Net Zero target by 2050. While this work is ongoing, we recognise that it is critical to set robust targets and a clear pathway, especially given the complexity of our buildings portfolio and to achieve this we are working on our Estate Decarbonisation strategy.

Going forward, to support the development of the educational and behavioural stands of our framework, we will work with schools to further develop our Sustainability and Climate Change Education provision, advocating for an embedded and holistic approach.

Through our partnerships, increased professional development and meaningful pupil programmes, we welcome further opportunities to debate and explore what climate change education for girls looks like.

Together, we have a unique opportunity to create our own legacy, one that will mean future generations of GDST girls will look back and feel proud of our contribution to tackling the unprecedented planetary challenges we currently face.

Girls' education has been identified as one of the best and most cost-effective investments against climate change.



About GDST

The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) is a family of 25 independent schools and academies across the UK, with 4,000 staff educating 20,000 girls from ages three to 18. We pride ourselves on the excellent academic and pastoral provision on offer in our schools; GDST girls are supported to be happy, confident and fearless. We tailor our approach to how girls learn best, providing them with the attributes they need to excel.

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Published in 2023