



Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education

Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education Environmental Policy

Our Vision for Church Schools

**Church schools living out the good news of Jesus:
transforming the world by transforming lives.**

From the natural world, people see creation in many forms and get a glimpse of God's vast imagination. Many find they are close to God in nature, able to listen and have glimpses of the gifts and the surprises generously given us.

Christians also believe that the Church should have a vital role in care for the environment and good stewardship for future generations. Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) recognises that there is a climate crisis and a crisis for creation. The collective response across the diocesan family of schools is driven by our call to mission, as outlined in The Five Marks of Mission which express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ. For the purpose of this policy we are drawn to the fourth and fifth marks of mission; To seek to transform unjust structures of society and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The environmental vision of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education is that the DBE and Church of England schools will celebrate God as Creator, and fully understand the impact of their work, and the way that staff, pupils and their families live and act, upon the environment. Church of England schools will become truly sustainable places of learning which create better outcomes for all children and young people, conserve the environment and enable the planet to flourish for future generations.

The DBE recognises that responsibility for the environment includes such things as looking after wildlife, habitats, the need for biodiversity and the carbon Zero agenda. The DBE is committed to supporting schools with the environmental agenda, including for schools, where the Church of England Birmingham has significant control, working towards achieving the net zero carbon emissions target of 2030. Where it has influence, it will encourage such steps.

1. Background

In 2020 General Synod made a declaration to '*work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030*

in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target'. This was predated by Birmingham Diocesan Synod's resolution to achieve net carbon Zero in November 2019.

In response the National Environment Programme commissioned a Routemap setting out the vision for the whole church estate to be Net Zero Carbon. This is defined within the Routemap as *'the reduction as far as possible of all in-scope carbon emissions (from the oil, gas and electricity we use in our buildings and petrol and diesel transport) and the removal of an equivalent amount of carbon from the atmosphere for the remaining in-scope emissions by use of accredited offsetting schemes.'*

The 2030 target is focused on Scope 1 emissions; *Building emissions from oil & gas heating and business travel in owned petrol/diesel vehicles*, and Scope 2 emissions; *generation emissions from the electricity we use to run our buildings.*

To achieve this demands energy efficient buildings which support technology required for the decarbonisation of the estate including the installation of renewable energy as applicable in each context.

The Routemap also acknowledges the inter-connected nature of the climate and environmental crises, encouraging, for example, dioceses to consider the use of well-established diocesan landholdings and woodland as an asset not only in terms of offsetting but also as forest schools and activities that raise awareness and appreciation of the natural environment.

2. The Routemap Milestones

All parts of the Church of England are required to adopt the principles established within the Routemap and in the context of schools these included; *'based in theology', 'urgent' and 'widely understood', 'data driven', 'embedded', 'reducing energy demand' and 'travelling sustainably'.*

Regarding schools, the scope includes all CofE schools where the DBE has a *significant degree of influence* (generally Voluntary Aided & majority governance structured Multi Academy Trusts).

3. The National Framework for Net Zero Carbon Schools

The National Framework for the decarbonisation of CofE schools is offered through the Church of England Education Office utilising Triennium Funding from the Church Commissioners and is designed to empower DBEs and school communities to respond to the challenges of reaching net zero carbon. The Framework, which is being centrally coordinated by DBE Services and supported by 'RAFT' as the lead consultant, provides access to a network of Regional Energy Consultants created to build capacity in every diocese to respond to funding opportunities in each area, and to benefit from 'economies of scale' by aggregating energy efficiency projects such as insulation, renewable energy schemes or LED lighting. The Framework also provides resources to support every school to

take incremental actions in each context to work toward the decarbonisation of the site as required to reach net zero carbon.

Resources include energy *self-audits* and an *annual resilience statement*, which will establish data to be aggregated at both school and at diocesan level including recommendations to inform reporting and drive sustainable decision making through 'greener governance'.

4. Role of the DBE

The Diocesan Board of Education is a statutory committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance with particular functions and responsibilities for church schools, RE and Collective Worship and education in the diocese more widely:

- to develop and support highly effective church schools and Headteachers
- to equip and resource church schools to deliver high quality RE and Collective Worship
- to support schools, governors and clergy in ensuring the Christian distinctiveness of church schools

Birmingham DBE as the religious authority for CofE schools takes seriously its responsibilities to all of its schools. In accordance with the Routemap's scope, in relation to the diocesan family of schools over which it has significant control, it will work to ensure that an effective Carbon Action Plan is established and implemented at every school site. In relation to other CofE schools, it will encourage such actions.

5. DBE Commitment

Within the DBE control:

1. Birmingham DBE will strive to embed the fourth and fifth marks of mission within policy creation and decision making, working through the lens of our children and young people and ensuring the protection of future generations by acting proactively to reduce our own impact on the environment.
2. We will understand the environmental impact of DBE Members' and Officers' work (e.g. travel, paper, office, emails, waste) and seek to reduce adverse impact.
3. We will demonstrate leadership by encouraging the whole diocesan family of schools to make a declaration to take action, though for example by signing up to the 'Let's Go Zero' campaign and Eco Schools.
4. We will support evidence led planning through the creation of school level Carbon Action Plans to reduce the carbon footprint by the end of the decade.
5. We will encourage schools to explore ways in which their individual theological Christian vision drives their work to achieve the 2030 target, including how this vision should inspire the whole school community to engage in social action and be courageous advocates for change in their local national and global communities, and inspire students to think globally about life and develop an understanding of

disadvantage, deprivation and the exploitation of the natural world. We will also encourage links with the diocese and local and world churches. We will draw their attention to IQ5 in the SIAMS framework (SIAMS framework Sept 2023. IQ5 asks the question of how the school's vision creates an active culture of justice and responsibility and in particular *'How does this culture encourage justice and courageous advocacy, enabling pupils to make ethical choices and to be agents of change?'*

6. Through our work with our asset management team (Contracted surveyors and DBE services) we will make it clear that our Diocesan Asset Management Plan will ensure that the Net Zero 2030 target (together with conservation and improvement of the environment more generally) are appropriately prioritised in the allocation of School Condition Allocation (SCA) grant capital funding from the Education Skills & Funding Agency (ESFA) for Voluntary Aided schools, with at least 20% being allocated to this work specifically, to deliver fabric improvements as required to ensure energy efficient buildings to get prioritised sites 'retrofit ready'.
7. We will ensure our asset management team keep abreast of funding opportunities and promote these to schools (e.g. Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme)
8. We will maintain the 2030 target as a Key Priority in our DBE business plan with timescales and periodically review this.
9. We undertake to celebrate and publicise success and learn from experience.

Within the DBE's influence:

1. We will promote understanding and teaching of best environmental practice at all Church of England schools (e.g. meetings of school leaders, weblinks and distribution of external resources)
2. We will encourage all Church of England schools to commission and implement a Heat Decarbonisation Plan and subsequent carbon Zero action plans.
3. We will encourage governing bodies and academy trust boards to make meaningful commitments to reduce their carbon emissions and other environmental impacts
4. We will follow up individual schools as to progress made against the route map priorities.
5. We will collaborate with the Local Authority to ensure that Voluntary Controlled schools are supported, and learn from the Local Authority's experience with these and community schools
6. With the support of charities and other organisations, we will encourage behavioural change at all Church of England schools to reduce energy consumption, waste and carbon emissions, and encourage biodiversity.

6. Next Steps

The DBE will encourage and support Governing Boards and School leaders to think about their response to wider Environmental issues and will commit to sharing resources and

ideas with schools. It will encourage schools to reflect on their curriculum offer and where these wider environmental issues can be addressed.

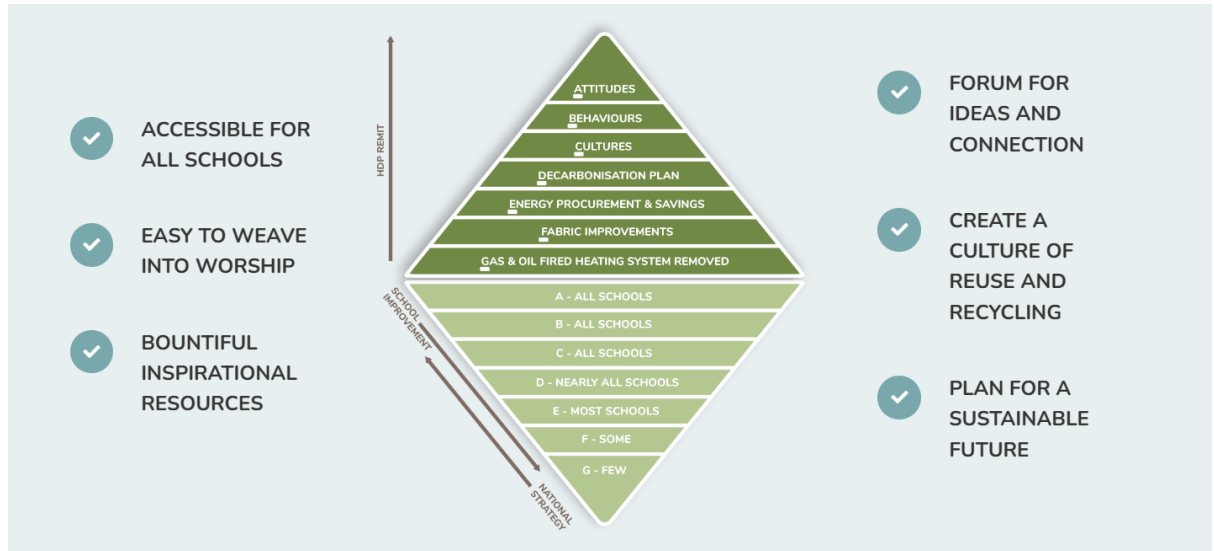
A Zero Carbon Execution Plan has been provided by the Church of England Education Office to DBEs which offers a step-by-step guide to reach net zero carbon across the school estate. The guidance is underpinned by a requirement for whole community engagement which is supported through the creation of further bespoke resources and guidance through the Framework. . There are an increasing number of resources and case studies available to support schools in their thinking and these are shared with schools as they are produced.

Birmingham DBE commits to implementing the Routemap by implementing the Cof E Birmingham net zero carbon action plan starting by gathering information as required to underpin the evidence-based planning to secure the basis on which to start acting in each context including:

- a. Embedding an estates vision which demonstrates leadership by the DBE working toward becoming Net Zero Carbon.
- b. Inspiring and encouraging diocesan schools to sign up to a vision of sustainable schools that create better outcomes for all children and young people, conserve the environment and to enable the planet to flourish for future generations.
- c. Supporting children and young people to use their voice to advocate for a more just and sustainable future.
- d. Aiding all schools to install and understand smart meter data, utilising the data in the curriculum and to empower the school community to understand its energy consumption.
- e. Encouraging all schools to review their curriculum plans and look for and identify opportunities to build links in their curriculum to address these matters.
- f. Ensuring schools and local authorities are working together with the DfE School Commercial Services to procure green energy at the point of contract renewal.
- g. Utilising the DBE Asset Management Plan and 'Condition Data Collection' report (DFE commissioned surveys) to identify 'quick wins' and to inform and verify data collection undertaken through the Framework and,
- h. proactively identifying sites which are most likely to be eligible for public sector funding by further supporting schools that are within scope to undertake the *Buildings and Energy Self Audit tool* provided through the Framework, and
- i. Applying for additional support through the Framework to build capacity to get prioritised sites 'funding ready';
- j. commissioning through the Framework 'Heat Decarbonisation Plans' on sites which are in scope or undertaking further technical analysis on prioritised sites as required, and
- l. Engaging all schools in the ABC of the Decarbonisation Diamond by signposting and supporting the application of resources provided by the Framework, including the *Practical Path* and *Annual Resilience Statement* to ensure schools are climate aware.
- m. Working in accordance with the Department for Education Sustainability Strategy

7. Additional Resources

The Decarbonisation Diamond



8. Reference and Links

[Sustainability and climate change strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy)

[Net Zero Accelerator – LocatED](#)

[Joint statement on climate change by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch | The Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion:

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

SIAMS Sept 2023 framework

<https://churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/siams-framework-september-2023.pdf>

National Church of England Guidance and resources for schools

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/net-zero-carbon-schools>

RAFT execution plan and video

Zero Carbon Execution Plan

A step-by-step guide on how to get your school buildings to Net Zero Carbon

<https://youtu.be/Ht1AOzxWm9Q>

Energy Footprint tool

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/our-views/environment-and-climate-change/about-our-environment/energy-footprint-tool#na>

The Route map: school section 4.3

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/RoutemapToNetZeroCarbonFinal.pdf>