



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# School Sector Climate Action Mandate



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# School Sector Climate Action Mandate

## Context

A Public Sector Climate Action Mandate was published in 2022 to support public sector bodies leading by example on climate action with the aim to inspire the necessary climate action in wider society to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030.

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate excluded the school sector, which would have its own dedicated climate action mandate that would best reflect the particular circumstances in schools and also minimise the burden on schools where possible.

This dedicated School Sector Mandate recognises the variance between large public bodies and the school sector and the distinctive role schools are playing in the areas of Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Change.

## 1. Overall School Sector Targets

- As part of Public Sector targets, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% in 2030 and improve energy efficiency in the overall school sector to 50% by 2030.

## 2. Our Schools

- **Include and champion where possible sustainability as part of school leadership.**  
There is a strong tradition and practice of this leadership and coordination in schools with for example 4,000 schools and education centres in Ireland registered for the Green Flag Programme<sup>1</sup> Recognise young people as key contributors to our sustainable future, to ensure that they are meaningfully included in the design, delivery and monitoring of policies and programmes. Provide under the ESD 2030 Action 4.1.a opportunities via student engagement processes for student voice, including the national umbrella body for second-level student councils in Ireland the Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU). At school level, ensure that there is full opportunity for inclusion of the student voice through student councils at both post-primary and primary schools.
- Engage via the [Energy in Education Programme](#) to access the opportunities for advice and mentoring developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the Department of Education. This will help support appropriate climate action engagement on climate issues and potential to decrease the school's carbon footprint.

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1. An Taisce Annual Report 2020

### 3. Schools Way of Working

- Continue to promote and facilitate [Education for Sustainable Development](#) teaching and learning as appropriate by:
  - raising awareness and promote sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) including Goal 13 - Climate Action themes through the range of curricular subjects
  - participating in Education for Sustainable Development programmes and activities (for example; ECO UNESCO, World Wise Global Schools, Take 1 programme etc.<sup>2</sup>)
  - considering where feasible how elements of the 17 SDG can be integrated into school life, for example. food waste, bio-diversity, water consumption, recycling, reusing, walking and cycling etc.
  - continuing to engage in available programmes such as the Green Schools which provides a very practical initiative in raising the climate action agenda
- **Subscribe to the ESD Newsletter:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a1d6e-education-for-sustainable-development-newsletter/>. The Department will explore more ways to communicate, promote and drive further awareness of and engagement with the wide range of activities underway in the schools sector to support climate action and sustainable development. Subscribe to the ESD Newsletter: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a1d6e-education-for-sustainable-development-newsletter/>.
- Complete the annual energy Monitoring and Reporting legislated requirement to the SEAI, <https://www.seai.ie/business-and-public-sector/public-sector/monitoring-and-reporting/for-schools/>
- **Adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement (templates with guidance to be provided)**
- Implement Green Public Procurement (GPP) particularly for purchasing over €25,000. (Guidance to be provided)
- Consider the Safe Routes to School Programme which was launched in March 2021 with the aim of supporting walking, scooting and cycling to primary and post-primary schools, and creating safer walking and cycling routes within communities <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/safe-routes-to-school-srts-programme/>.
- Department will examine where possible digitisation of Department paper-based processes

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.scoilnet.ie/esd/>.

#### **4. School Buildings**

- The Department will ensure that its school design guidance supports active travel arrangements including provision of secure and accessible bicycle parking etc.
- The school sector under the direction and guidance from the Planning and Building Unit will only install renewable heating systems in school buildings, except where one of the following exceptions applies:
  - fossil-fuel use is provided for backup, peaking, or operational purposes (and makes up less than 10% of annual heating energy)
  - fossil-fuel use is only provided as part of a decarbonisation strategy and to support a renewable heating system that maximises the capacity of the existing electrical infrastructure to the school (existing schools only). Over the course of 2023 the incorporation of the decarbonisation strategy for existing projects will result in the relevant phasing and transition arrangements being developed based on the most appropriate approach on a project by project basis
  - Where the replacement of existing fossil fuel heating is required for an emergency maintenance purpose.

#### **5. School Transport**

- The Department of Education commenced the review of the School Transport Scheme in February 2021. The review is being conducted with a view to examining the current scheme and how it currently operates, its broader effectiveness and sustainability and so as to ensure that it adequately supports the provision of services to students and their families. The review involves an in-depth analysis of scheme and its broader effectiveness and sustainability, and will build upon the commitments within the Programme for Government as they relate to school transport, including examining options to reduce car journeys and assessing how the School Transport Scheme can continue to work in liaison with the Safe Routes to Schools Programme.
- While it has been agreed that School Transport Scheme services will fall under the Transport Sector in relation to emission reduction measures as opposed to the Education Sector, it should be noted that the Department will continue to work with school communities to promote active and sustainable travel.