



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Target 2030 Sustainable Learning Settings

Practitioner Guide
March 2026



Learning for
Sustainability



Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Learning for Sustainability



Learning for Sustainability is how we care, hope and act for people and the planet. It is about making the world fairer – both now and in the future.

We know that there are big challenges for society, nature and the environment. Climate change, habitat loss, conflict and unfairness affect how people live, learn and work. Learning for Sustainability helps us think about how and why these things happen. It then supports us to take action with our local and global communities.

- 📍 All learners in Scotland are entitled to Learning for Sustainability (LfS) as part of their education.
- 📍 Children and young people across Scotland have asked for more outdoor learning and climate change education.
- 📍 LfS is built into the curriculum so should feature in everyday practice. It features strongly within the GTCS professional standards.
- 📍 LfS is a cross-curricular theme within the curriculum improvement cycle and wider educational reform.



“ Learning for sustainability teaches us about real world issues, who they affect and how we can make a difference in both our community and wider area.”

S3 learner

Target 2030 Sustainable Learning Setting



What is Target 2030?

Target 2030 is Scotland's [national plan for Learning for Sustainability](#). This calls on all schools and settings to become sustainable by the year 2030. Target 2030 is about important issues such as climate change, nature, rights, waste and more.

What is a sustainable learning setting?

A sustainable learning setting has care, hope and action at the heart of everything it does: care for people and planet, hope for the future, and taking action to help make things better.

There is wonderful LfS practice happening across Scotland. Children and young people are already experiencing LfS and working together on sustainability issues. They are learning

about social justice, the environment and experiencing learning outdoors.

They are taking part in programmes such as Eco Schools and Rights Respecting Schools. These are **all** aspects of being a sustainable setting.

It is not about re-inventing the wheel. Use what you are already doing as you work towards becoming a sustainable setting.

Why are we doing this?

Target 2030 is about responding to what we see happening in the world around us in a way that speaks to children and young people here in Scotland. They are worried about global conflict, the climate and the nature crisis and want to work with adults to create a more positive future both locally and globally. You can do this by taking action and becoming a Target 2030 school/setting.



“ In school we are able to create a generation of young people who are more conscious about the environment and the impact their actions have on the world around them.”

S6 learner

The 4Cs

A sustainable setting embeds LfS through the 4Cs of curriculum, campus, culture and community.

Curriculum

Learning about the world, its people, issues and action e.g. nature, climate change and rights.

Campus

Making the building and grounds more sustainable e.g. minimising energy use and waste, promoting active travel and protecting biodiversity.

Culture

Where everyone, adults, children and young people, develop caring attitudes and behaviours for each other and the world.

Community

Taking action with people, groups and organisations to make a difference locally and globally.

The 4Cs are all connected. Action in one area can impact another e.g. learning about food (curriculum), planting vegetables (campus) and families coming together to cook/share the produce (community and culture).

“ The 4C framework is a great tool to use to understand your establishment. ”
Primary Head Teacher

“ We look after the plants because they're alive like us. ”
Nursery child

Target 2030 Indicators

The indicators below will help you measure your progress towards becoming a sustainable setting. They can be used flexibly as discussion prompts to evaluate where you are on your journey and what you might do next.

Curriculum

- 1** Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is a planned part of our curriculum through curricular areas, interdisciplinary learning, ethos and life, and personal achievement.
- 2** We learn in, through and about the outdoors.
- 3** Approaches to LfS are engaging, relevant and challenging.

Culture

- 7** Everyone contributes to LfS in our setting and we work together to bring about positive change.
- 8** We uphold rights and celebrate equality and diversity.
- 9** Staff engage in LfS-specific professional learning.

Campus

- 4** We take positive action for people and the planet.
- 5** We actively reduce our impact on the environment both locally and globally.
- 6** We use our outdoor spaces for learning and play, and to support nature.

Community

- 10** We work with families, communities and organisations to make our local places better.
- 11** Our actions show that we care for people and nature across the world.
- 12** We share our LfS actions to inspire others.

“ Our journey towards becoming a sustainable setting has been both deliberate and evolving, one that we hope will inspire children, families, and the wider school community to take positive action for people and the planet. **”**
Early learning and childcare (ELC) Team Leader

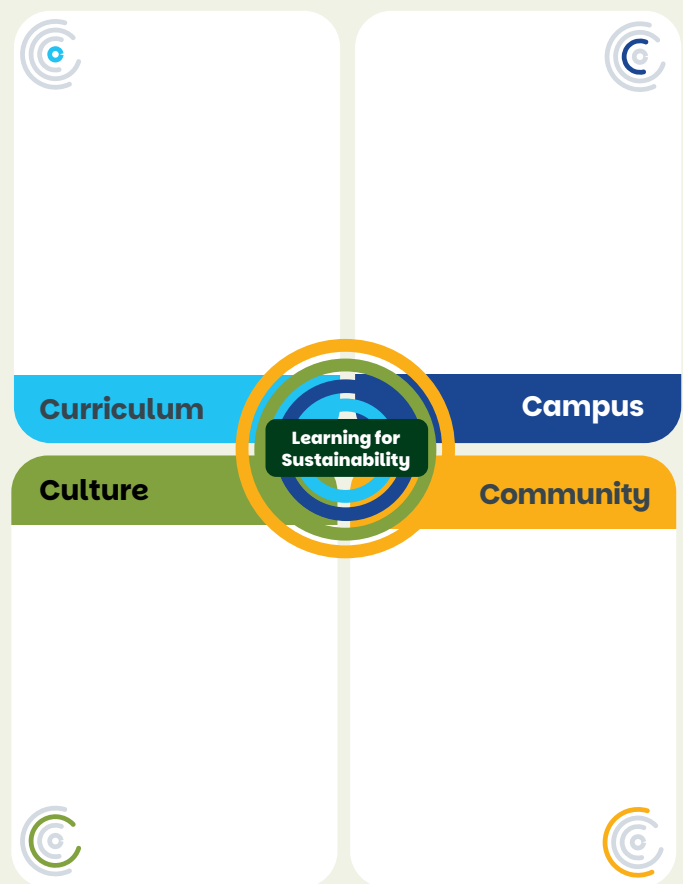
Exploring what you already do

Children and young people are at the heart of a sustainable learning setting. They want to be involved in things that make a real difference to where they live and the wider world. To do this effectively everyone should be involved – children/young people, practitioners and the wider community.

You need to know where you are starting from. Capture what you are already doing in relation to the 4Cs: curriculum, campus, culture and community. Prompts included in this guide will help to support your discussion.

Explore what people see and hear, and what they think and feel. Encourage them to share their experiences of sustainability. Think about what is special about your setting, place and community and what changes you would like to see. Work with families, and partnerships with community learning and development (CLD) groups in your area, can support your journey towards becoming a Target 2030 school/setting.

Keep the discussion positive, focus on what you are doing well but be open to challenge and differing opinions.



Use the blank 4Cs grid at the back of this guide to capture and plan your sustainable setting journey.

“ We can use this box again –it’s not rubbish yet!”
Nursery child

“ Be kind to others. Spread positivity, even a smile, time for others is important. People need to know they are loved by their community and feel seen. They are not by themselves in this world. ”
P7 learner

Planning next steps

Now that you have a good picture of what you are already doing, plan together what might you do next in curriculum, campus, culture, community.

- An easy way to think of it is: What will make your school/setting kinder, fairer, greener?
- Keep in mind you want it to be enjoyable, realistic and action-focused.
- Prompts included in this guide will help to support your planning.
- You can use the indicators to review your plans and chart your progress to Target 2030.

“We reached out to our local community and found a gem of a place to use to have forest adventures.”
ELC practitioner



“We need to work together no matter where we live in the world. Lots of small actions can lead to big actions. Sometimes we are the voice of people that maybe can't be heard yet for lots of different reasons.”
P4 learner







Curriculum



Learning about the world, its people, issues and action e.g. nature, climate change and rights.

These prompts will help you get started and reflect on what you are already doing and what you might do next.



- Having “wow” moments connecting to nature.
- Learning about the causes and effects of climate change.
- Exploring the global goals, social justice issues and human rights.
- Researching fast fashion and its impact on people and the environment.
- Using stories, music and food to explore cultures from around the world.
- Investigating data sources that tell us more about sustainability e.g. food miles, migration, energy use, carbon emissions, global inequalities.
- Developing creative solutions to local and global issues.



“ We introduce early concepts of climate change, biodiversity and global citizenship in age-appropriate ways – through stories, role play, outdoor exploration and conversations about caring for living things.”

ELC Head of Centre

Campus



Making the building and grounds more sustainable e.g. minimising energy use and waste, promoting active travel and protecting biodiversity.

These prompts will help you get started and reflect on what you are already doing and what you might do next.



- Supporting active travel for children and young people to walk, cycle or wheel.
- Developing inspiring spaces for play and outdoor learning.
- Setting up a reusing and recycling system throughout the setting to divert waste from landfill e.g. paper, plastic, food and clothing, including uniform reuse.
- Supporting biodiversity through habitat creation in the grounds e.g. planting trees, hedges, wildflower meadows.
- Planting, growing, harvesting, and eating produce.
- Monitoring energy use and creating an action plan to reduce energy waste.

“Our school grounds and buildings actively support sustainability in action. Outdoor learning, food growing and biodiversity projects are part of everyday school life.”

Primary Head Teacher

“Our campus environment acts as a powerful teacher. Our green spaces and communal areas create natural opportunities for children to explore sustainability in meaningful ways.”

Depute Head

Culture

Where everyone, adults, children and young people, develop caring attitudes and behaviours for each other and the world.

These prompts will help you get started and reflect on what you are already doing and what you might do next.



- Respecting views, ideas and opinions and engaging with challenging issues with children and young people.
- Valuing outdoor learning and ensuring children and young people experience it regularly.
- Participating in professional learning to build practitioner confidence in Learning for Sustainability.
- Recognising and celebrating equality and diversity.
- Understanding inequality and discrimination, both locally and globally and working together to uphold human rights.
- Exploring conflict and building skills to resolve disagreement.

“ Learning for Sustainability and Target 2030 ground our work in what truly matters – helping children and young people make sense of their world and grow as thoughtful, confident, and caring citizens ready to shape a sustainable future.”
Local authority officer

“ LfS helps us nurture a culture where children learn to care for each other and the world around them. ”
ELC practitioner

“ We are working together in our house to make our lifestyle more sustainable as a family! ”
Mum of three children

Community

Taking action with people, groups and organisations to make a difference locally and globally.

These prompts will help you get started and reflect on what you are already doing and what you might do next.

- Exploring heritage, employability, issues and opportunities through place-based learning.
- Using local greenspace for outdoor learning e.g. parks, woodlands and beaches.
- Connecting with community members and groups.
- Taking action on an issue that impacts the local community.
- Supporting and working with charities e.g. food bank, community cycling etc.
- Working with companies to explore green careers.
- Connecting with communities around Scotland and the rest of the world.



“LfS extends far beyond the classroom. Pupils care for local spaces and develop pride in their surroundings. Through our community cafés, repair and reuse initiatives and circular economy projects, children create welcoming spaces that bring generations together.” **Primary Head Teacher**

Be part of the story



Children and young people have said they want to hear more of what people in Scotland are doing to make it kinder, greener and fairer. By completing the Target 2030 survey, you can be part of Scotland's sustainability story and inspire others. The survey will track Scotland's progress towards Target 2030. Education Scotland will update local authorities to assist future planning and support.

The survey asks for:

- contact details.
- examples of LfS in your curriculum, campus, culture and community.
- where you are on your journey to becoming a sustainable setting.

Please complete the Target 2030 survey once each year until you become a sustainable setting. It can be completed at any time of the year. Each setting should submit one response.



“ Sustainability offers more opportunities for pupils to lead learning, the idea of education for action. **”**
Secondary teacher



Curriculum

Campus

Culture

Community

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For advice and support material

Email: LfS@educationscotland.gov.scot

Web: education.gov.scot/resource-themes/learning-for-sustainability/

