Overley Hall School

Climate Change and Sustainability Plan

2026-2027

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Introduction

Overley Hall School is set within extensive rural grounds that provide a rich natural landscape of woodland, gardens, open fields, and purpose-designed outdoor learning spaces. This environment offers daily opportunities for exploration, learning, calm, and connection with nature and is an integral part of how our learners engage, regulate, and develop their understanding of the world around them.

Our learners, many of whom have severe and complex learning needs, thrive when experiences are concrete, meaningful, and embedded in real-world contexts. The school's setting allows sustainability and climate awareness to be taught through hands-on, sensory, and practical activities that honour individual communication styles, developmental stages, and pathways through the Bud to Bloom curriculum.

This Climate Change and Sustainability Plan sets out Overley Hall School's commitment to:

- **Caring for our environment** in ways that learners can experience directly and safely.
- **Embedding sustainability into everyday routines** from our school buildings to outdoor curriculum opportunities.
- **Developing learners' awareness** of nature, weather, seasons, growth, and environmental responsibility in developmentally appropriate ways.
- **Using our grounds as a learning asset** along with supporting wellbeing, independence, regulation, and connection to the natural world.
- **Ensuring staff modelling and whole-school culture** reinforce sustainable behaviours that learners can imitate and generalise.

The plan recognises that climate education at Overley Hall must be **accessible, experiential, and relational to all**. It focuses not only on reducing our environmental impact as an organisation, but also on nurturing learners' capacity to notice, participate, and find joy in the natural environment around them.

Through this approach, Overley Hall School aims to build a culture of sustainability that is lived, felt, and understood, at the right level for each learner, and that strengthens our commitment to safeguarding the future of our learners, our community, and the world they will grow into.

The Pillar of Climate Education

Developing environmental understanding through accessible, meaningful learning experiences.

At Overley Hall School, climate education is built around **experience, connection and participation**, rather than abstract concepts. Our learners engage most deeply when sustainability is taught through sensory exploration, real objects, outdoor learning, and repetition within familiar routines.

This pillar focuses on enabling learners to **notice, explore and enjoy the natural world**, building the foundations of environmental responsibility in ways that align with their communication styles and developmental pathways. Climate education at Overley emphasises:

- Understanding weather, seasons, growth and living things through hands-on experience.
- Learning simple sustainable habits (e.g., turning off lights, caring for plants, recycling).
- Making outdoor learning a central part of the curriculum, using our woodland, gardens and fields.
- Providing staff with the tools to embed sustainability meaningfully for learners with severe and complex needs.

Through this approach, climate education becomes something learners can **feel, see, copy, and participate in**, rather than something they are expected to conceptualise or discuss. Please see below for our action plan.

Climate Education

Year	Action	Responsibility
1	Audit the curriculum to map existing sustainability links (weather, seasons, growth, care for animals, recycling, water).	Bev Doran, Beth Hope, Mandy Peever (PSHE), Liz Hyner, Pete Smith
1	Develop staff CPD on teaching environmental concepts to learners with SLD.	Bev Doran, Jos Clark, Elaine Philips, Dee Marshall
1	Create a sustainability vocabulary bank with symbols and Makaton	Karen Jones, Rachel Hawley, Liz Hyner
1	Introduce simple eco-habits (switching off lights, caring for plants) as daily routines.	Dee Marshall (lead), all staff
1	Begin monthly "Nature Noticing Walks" across the grounds to develop awareness and curiosity.	Jos Clark, Elaine Philips/ Ade Trainer
1	Programme within the Calendar of Events an assembly/ focus session each term on the environment around us and how learners can be involved in this	Bev Doran, Jos Clark, Dee Marshall
1	Investigate Plastic Clever Schools award	
2	Embed sustainability micro-targets into Bud to Bloom Science, PSHE, Communication and Independent Living Skills.	Bev Doran, Pete Smith, Mandy Peever, Liz Hyner, Beth Hope, Rachel Hawley,
2	Expand outdoor learning pathway to ensure progression from sensory experiences to more structured activities.	Bev Doran, Dee Marshall, Jos Clark, Elaine Philips
2	Introduce symbol-supported books and stories on nature, seasons, wildlife and recycling.	Karen Joes, Rachel Hawley, Liz Hyner, Peter Smith
2	Create a "Green Champions" group with sensory-friendly roles such as watering plants, tidying outdoor spaces, switching off lights.	Mandy Peever

2	Share eco-routines with residential teams to support consistency between day and evening routines.	Mandy Peever, Dee Marshall
3	Establish annual sustainability themes, e.g. “Caring for Creatures,” “Growing & Changing,” “Our Weather World.”	Bev Doran, Peter Smith
3	Develop evidence systems for tracking learner participation (photos, sensory responses, observational notes).	Dee Marshall, Mandy Peever
3	Extend outdoor learning resources: bug hotels, bird boxes, wildlife feeders, simple compost demonstrations.	Jos Clarke, Ade Trainer, Elaine Philips
3	Strengthen curriculum links to allow for cross-curricular sustainability projects.	Bev and Curriculum leads
4-5	Fully embed sustainability concepts into curriculum progression maps and annual schemes.	Bev Doran supported by EMT and curriculum leads
4-5	Develop eco-literacy for higher-level learners using visual explanations of climate impacts.	Bev Doran, Pete Smith, Beth Hope
4-5	Annual Eco Day or sustainability showcase celebrating learner engagement.	Jos Clark, Elaine Philips, Ade Trainer
4-5	Review long-term curriculum impact on independence, emotional regulation, and environmental awareness.	Bev Doran, EMT and SAS Board

The Pillar of Climate Resilience

Ensuring our school environment, routines, and staff are prepared for climate-related risks.

Climate resilience at Overley Hall is essential because our learners rely on predictable routines, safe environments, and skilled staff to support regulation and wellbeing. As extreme weather becomes more common—heatwaves, storms, heavy rain—our site must adapt to ensure continuity, safety, and calm.

This pillar focuses on strengthening the school's ability to cope with climate-related challenges by:

- Increasing shaded areas and cool indoor spaces for learner regulation.
- Improving pathways, drainage, and access so outdoor areas remain safe in all seasons.
- Ensuring staff are trained to support learners during unusual or disruptive weather.
- Reviewing emergency procedures and adapting them for the needs of our learners.
- Managing our extensive grounds in ways that promote biodiversity and long-term site resilience.

Climate resilience for Overley is not just about buildings — it is about maintaining environments where learners feel **safe, settled, and supported**, regardless of the weather.

Climate Resilience

Year	Action	Responsibility
1	Review site-wide risk assessments for climate-related events (heatwaves, storms, heavy rain).	
1	Create a 'Safe Management of Trees' Policy/ Procedure.	
1	Conduct a shade audit across playgrounds, sensory spaces, and outdoor learning zones.	
1	Develop symbol-supported communication aids for heatwaves, storms, snow and unusual weather.	
1	Staff CPD: supporting regulation, sensory needs and safe outdoor practice during weather extremes.	
2	Increase shaded spaces using tree planting, canopies and sheltered seating.	
2	Implement ventilation improvements across classrooms (fans, reflective blinds, cooling strategies).	
2	Improve pathways and drainage to allow year-round outdoor access.	
2	Establish a climate-resilient planting plan	
2	Install water-saving devices (aerators, water butts) for garden and habitat areas.	
3	Improve energy efficiency: LED rollout, automatic switch-off systems, heating schedules.	
3	Conduct annual heatwave and storm practice for staff.	
3	Review emergency evacuation and transport plans in relation to climate risks.	
4-5	Implement sustainable land management for woodland, fields and wildlife corridors.	

4-5	Conduct formal evaluation of resilience improvements and report to governors and Ofsted.	

Pillar 3: Climate Action

Reducing our environmental impact through whole-school habits and operational changes.

Climate action at Overley Hall is grounded in **practical, achievable steps** that staff can model and learners can join in with at their own level. Every part of school life — classrooms, catering, residential routines, grounds maintenance — offers opportunities to build sustainable habits.

This pillar focuses on:

- Reducing waste and increasing recycling through simple, symbol-supported systems.
- Making sustainable choices in purchasing, energy use, food, and materials.
- Creating opportunities for learners to participate in eco-friendly routines (e.g., watering plants, sorting materials, composting).
- Making use of our extensive grounds to support biodiversity and nature-positive land management.
- Moving gradually towards lower-carbon operations and long-term eco projects such as solar feasibility.

For learners with SLD, climate action must be **visible, repeated, and meaningful**. Small, everyday actions — switching off lights, helping with gardening, feeding wildlife — help create a culture where sustainability becomes part of daily life.

Climate Action

Year	Action	Responsibility
1	Conduct a school environment audit	
1	Conduct a whole-school waste audit.	
1	Introduce recycling stations with clear symbols and high-contrast bins.	
1	Do staff/ learners know what to put in which bin? Are they easily accessible?	
1	Investigate the light bulbs that are used within school and whether they are energy-saving	
1	Start a “Switch Off Team” (staff-led, learner-participatory).	
1	Begin reviewing procurement for sustainability (cleaning products, stationery, catering).	
1	Audit heat retention practices in school	
1	Investigate whether appliances sit on stand-by overnight and during weekends – if so draw up a school wide action plan of which appliances should be turned off and where.	
1	Is the central heating set for appropriate times and temperatures? Is someone responsible for checking this?	
1	Are hot water pipes sufficiently insulated?	
1	Are school buildings sufficiently insulated? (walls, roof etc)	
1	Has the site tested for ‘leaky’ areas?	
1	Does the school a clear procedure in place to minimise water wastage? (turn off taps)	
1	Is leaf-litter allowed to sit in certain areas of the school site?	
1	Audit whether systems have been installed to reduce water wastage?	
1	Ensure current ‘bug hotels’ are fit for purpose and whether more could be located (of so add to year 2)	

1	Ensure bird feeders are fit for purpose and are filled with healthy bird food.	
1	Complete a staff transport to school audit? Are there any opportunities for car sharing?	
2	Launch “Reduce–Reuse–Recycle–Repair” campaign adapted for sensory learners.	
2	Replace any necessary light bulbs in school ensuring the comply with the DfE’s output specifications.	
2	Audit whether energy efficiency is factored in when buying new equipment.	
2	Establish small allotments or raised beds to grow vegetables and flowers.	
2	Staff training in heat retention practices if necessary following audit in Year 1.	
2	Introduce food waste monitoring using visual representation for learners.	
2	Investigate how much of the food made on the school site was grown locally or in the UK	
2	Discuss with the kitchen whether food miles are considered when planning menus.	
2	Increase plant-based options where appropriate.	
2	Investigate whether the school have any way to generate renewable energy on the site	
2	Investigate the carbon and environmental practices of the services and companies that school use	
3	Develop compost systems for garden waste and selected food waste.	
3	Are herbicides/ pesiticides used on the site?	
3	Create wildlife zones: pollinator planting, meadows, hedgehog corridors.	
3	Explore low-carbon travel for staff and educational visits.	
3	Begin tracking the school’s operational carbon footprint.	
4-5	Shift to majority low-impact procurement.	

4-5	Apply for Eco-Schools Green Flag or equivalent accreditation.	
4-5	Conduct feasibility study for solar energy or alternative renewables.	
4-5	Produce an annual sustainability report featuring learner participation (photos, symbols, sensory evidence).	

Monitoring and Evaluation

To align with Ofsted expectations, Overley Hall School will:

- Provide **termly updates** to the Support and Scrutiny board
- Produce an **annual Sustainability Review**, covering progress against all three pillars.
- Maintain **learner evidence portfolios** showing engagement and participation.
- Track staff CPD and curriculum developments.
- Review site improvements and operational changes annually.
- Engage learners in visual and experiential celebration of sustainability achievements.