

Introduction

The logo for NAEE's 50th anniversary. It features a green circular emblem with a silhouette of a person standing on a wooden fence, looking out at a landscape with green hills, a yellow sun, and three birds in flight. Above the emblem, a banner reads "Celebrating 50 Years" with "1971" on the left and "2021" on the right. Below the emblem, the text "NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (UK)" is written in a green box. At the bottom, it says "Registered charity no. 1166502".

The manifesto sets out 16 commitments that we think will help guide institutions to become more sustainable, and improve the education that pupils and students receive. We hope that you can sign up to these as an individual or an institution. Following these, we set out four principles which the Manifesto is based on and which we think are at the heart of what is important for schools and colleges to do in relation to young people's learning and the environment. Finally, we briefly expand on the 16 points in a section that explores the thinking behind the Manifesto.



A note on terminology. In this document, when we use the words *environment* and *environmental* we mean the full range of environmental, social and economic issues, including equity and justice, as are found in the full meaning of sustainability and used in the sustainable development goals.

The Manifesto

As leaders we shall

1. foreground an inclusive whole-institution approach to environmental issues, including those around equity and justice;
2. encourage a genuinely collaborative, participative approach to decision making and leadership, that puts the environment at the heart of what we do;
3. be especially mindful of what pupils and students learn through the hidden curriculum;
4. provide opportunities for appropriate staff professional development, so that all subjects can contribute to education about key environmental issues, and the whole school supports sustainability in practice.

As teachers we shall

1. commit to working collaboratively with colleagues, and with pupils and students, periodically to audit what they currently experience so that all subject areas can make valuable contributions to learning about local, national and global environmental issues;
2. provide pupils and students with first-hand experience of investigating environmental issues both inside and outside the classroom, doing so at least once a year and building on this throughout their education;
3. encourage pupils and students to explore issues critically and creatively, and to challenge the views, values and ideas that are presented to them in ways that develop their capacity to contribute to society throughout their lives;
4. enable pupils and students to think across subjects about possible futures from a range of perspectives, with a key focus on equity and justice and on the rights of species to exist.

As learners we shall

1. support and challenge the school in its work to become sustainable including running projects to help tackle issues in the local community;
2. be open-minded, critical and creative when encountering new ideas and recognise that values are important in making decisions for ourselves, our families and for society, and that values can change;
3. commit to learning collaboratively as well as individually;
4. understand that environmental issues can be complex and that not all problems have clear-cut solutions so it may be necessary to make decisions on the basis of incomplete evidence and to live with a degree of uncertainty.

As an organisation we shall

1. encourage young people to consider environmental issues in their personal decision-making and employment choices;
2. work together with parents and carers to draw them into environmentally-focused activities;
3. become part of a community hub for issues related to the environment, providing opportunities for local organisations to think about their own actions and becoming a role model for how to become more sustainable;
4. partner with external organisations and individuals to enhance learning in relation to the environment (eg farms, local shops, NGOs, etc), and champion causes that promote sustainability and environmental education within the community.

Four Principles

There are a number of recurrent themes across these 16 commitments. These constitute a set of principles which are at the heart of what we think is important for schools and colleges to do in relation to young people's learning and the environment.

Partnership is present in every section and includes whole-school decision-making, teachers working together across subjects, pupil and students working together and being involved in curriculum-making, drawing parents and carers into school activities, and working with community organisations.



Integrity involves matching words with deeds, exploring issues from a range of perspectives, being clear about values, and honest and open in admitting uncertainty, and not settling for easy answers.

Building Capacity is present in every section and relates to the development of the school as a sustainable institution, teacher professional development and curriculum-building, pupil and student learning and skill development, the creation of community-based opportunities for development.



Inclusiveness is found in whole-school decision making, in taking global as well as local perspectives on issues, in having considerations of equity and justice at the core of thinking and practice, and in enabling all subjects to contribute.

The Thinking behind the Manifesto

In this section we set out brief notes on the thinking behind the Manifesto. We have deliberately kept these short and they should be seen as indications rather than prescriptions. They might usefully be read alongside the documents produced by the *National Governance Association* which set out how governing boards can support and challenge senior leadership teams.¹

As leaders we shall

1 foreground an inclusive whole-institution approach to environmental issues, including those around equity and justice.

This includes setting out the institution's vision, mission, values, strategy and policies to integrate the principles of sustainable living across all subjects and core activities. It also means ensuring the budget allocates sufficient funding to support sustainability in the school's core functions, address environmental issues, and enable buildings and grounds to be used as active teaching resources that model good practice. Where poor environmental practice persists, this can provide a useful focus for action. The sustainable development goals can be used to show the range of issues that might be focused on, and equity and justice are crucial both within the school community and in the wider world as it is disadvantaged and marginalised groups that tend to suffer most from environmental disasters.

2 encourage a genuinely collaborative, participative approach to decision making and leadership, that puts the environment at the heart of what we do.

Collaborative leadership involves respecting pupils' and students' views and concerns as well as those of other staff members. Through consultation, roles and responsibilities are distributed among staff members and learners who all have a stake in how the institution develops. Communication and consultation are key to whole-institution approaches. Schools have a lot of experience of forums such as school councils, eco-clubs and the like, with teachers and governors often being involved. Enabling students to be part of governance is much less well developed in schools than it is, for example, in FE or HE, but everyone has much to gain from facilitating this.

¹ Environmental sustainability: a whole school approach: tinyurl.com/3crcwuht

As leaders we shall

3 be especially mindful of what pupils and students learn through the hidden curriculum.

This includes the way that the school uses energy and other resources, its purchasing policies and the way in which it supports, rewards and challenges its staff and pupils and students. Any difference between what an institution says about itself and what it actually does can quickly expose how sincerely values are held. In turn this can affect the respect with which institutions are held by teachers, learners, parents and carers, and the community more generally. It is of course impossible for any organisation (or individual) always to do what ought to be done in every circumstance. Sometimes this is because the financial resource is insufficient or because there would be unwanted side effects. The shift to net-zero will throw up many such examples both in schools and colleges as well as more widely. Coming to understand this, and that sometimes trades-off will be necessary in making progress is an important part of leaning about environmental issues and their consequences. As such, each dilemma offers a learning opportunity. Clear and open communication and explanation is imperative if this is to happen.

4 provide opportunities for appropriate staff professional development, so that all subjects can contribute to education about key environmental issues, and the whole school supports sustainability in practice.

Opportunities to enhance teaching about environmental concerns need to feature in continuing professional development [CPD] at all levels from early career teachers to senior leaders. It should include the (proposed) specific National Professional Qualification in environmental sustainability, which is relevant to those who wish to lead in this area, but its main focus should be developing the curriculum and pedagogical approaches that will help young people learn more about environmental issues and what we can all do about them. Fundamentally, it is teachers and schools that are best placed to determine what their professional development needs are and how they can be best met. There are already a large number of local, national and international environmental organisations that produce resources and make CPD opportunities available, and the DfE plans to fund additional resource and training provision. Further, governing boards, business managers and non-teaching staff also need to build capacity in sustainable leadership, management and operations.

The Thinking behind the Manifesto

As teachers we shall

1 commit to working collaboratively with colleagues, and with pupils and students, periodically to audit what they currently experience so that all subject areas can make valuable contributions to learning about local national and global environmental issues.

This includes not only those topics that are found within discrete subject areas, but the opportunities that there are for cross-subject collaboration. It will not only include analysing what is taught and learned, but also how this is done. Teaching about specific issues should include (i) consideration of why it is important, (ii) its likely impacts and (iii) what can be done to address the issue. Looking at this from a whole-institution perspective, three points stand out: [i] student groups such as eco-councils and watch groups, and projects such as Eco-schools need to be seen as an integral part of what is being done rather than incidental additions; [ii] how the institution is managed in relation to energy, materials, waste, water, food, and transport can contribute to student learning as well as to overall sustainability; [iii] links with parents and community groups can provide valuable learning opportunities for all involved as well as contributing to community cohesion.

2 provide pupils and students with first-hand experience of investigating environmental issues both inside and outside the classroom, doing so at least once a year and building year on year throughout their education.

In addition to the hugely important area of ecological field study, this includes giving pupils and students opportunities to investigate and seek to address issues that matter to the local community while acknowledging the limits to what young people and schools and colleges can do alone. Doing this once a year is obviously a bare minimum; ideally it will be much more frequent and will be seen as an integral and essential part of every learner's experience helping them develop an affinity with the natural world and develop key skills. Crucially, this is an opportunity for students to envision how something might be different in the future and to become an agent of that change. There can be considerable scope for using school and college grounds for these explorations if they are managed with this in mind and there are organisations that can help to do this. Local green space of various kinds can also afford opportunities, as can collaborations with local wildlife trusts and the like. It is useful to remember that there is now considerable experience of young people learning outside on a regular basis; forest school practice is an obvious example with some providers making this the core of a child's educational experiences.

As teachers we shall

3 encourage pupils and students to explore issues critically and creatively and to challenge the views, values and ideas that are presented to them in ways that develop their capacity to contribute to society throughout their lives.

This includes enabling pupils and students to recognise that honest disagreement about future choices is to be expected given that people and groups can have different values, priorities and desires. Many of the more significant environmental issues we face are inherently political as they involve decision-making about society's priorities and the allocation of scarce resources. Environmental educators have worked with young people on a wide range of such controversial issues over a long period. The DfE says that teaching about political issues, the different views people have, and the ways pupils can engage in our democratic society is an essential part of a broad and balanced curriculum: an important way in which schools support pupils and students to become active citizens who can form their own views, whilst having an understanding and respect for legitimate differences of opinion. The DfE issued guidance on schools legal duties on political impartiality in February 2022. In this it confirmed that although schools do not need to present the views of climate change deniers, when discussing climate-related socio-economic reform, normal duties on political impartiality apply. Schools are directed not to encourage pupils to join campaigning groups, or take part in protests, but they are not instructed to actively discourage this.

4 enable pupils and students to think across subjects about possible futures from a range of perspectives, with a key focus on equity and justice and on the rights of species to exist.

This includes helping pupils and students to recognise that obvious solutions may not always be immediately possible because of technological limitations or economic constraints. Particular emphasis should be given to exploring values when learning about possible futures. Collaboration between teachers across subject disciplines becomes harder to realise the more specialist the curriculum becomes; thus it is more difficult in secondary schools than in primaries where an integration through themes and special projects has long been a feature. And yet, without such collaboration, pupils and students will be unable to gain insights into the issues we are faced with. A prime example of this is how to respond to the climate emergency where it is not just science and technology that matters (what we might do) but the social sciences, humanities and economics as well (how we might do it). Young people are being disadvantaged if they are left to try to do this integration themselves. The focus on equity and justice is crucial as it is disadvantaged and marginalised communities that both historically and currently tend to be those that suffer most when environmental disasters affect human populations. A focus on the rights of other species serves to remind us that it is the human tendency to focus on our own concerns while ignoring impacts on other species that has caused most of the environmental issues we face.

The Thinking behind the Manifesto

As learners we shall

1 support and challenge the school in its work to become sustainable including running projects to help tackle issues in the local community.

This includes exploring and critically analysing the local natural, social and built environment, including the school, to find opportunities for bringing about change. Working within the school council, the eco-club and projects such as Eco-schools are obvious places to begin but care should be taken to avoid excluding pupils who are not involved in such groups. The governing body should be seen as an ally in this. All institutions grapple with environmental issues around energy, waste and water, and social disadvantage and discrimination also often feature. The sustainable development goals can be used as a reference point to show the range of issues that might be focused on, and working with local organisations such as the wildlife trust and other NGOs may well be useful. Campaigns such as those to raise the quality of local green spaces and their accessibility to all could be useful ways of getting involved.

2 be open-minded, critical and creative when encountering new ideas and recognise that values are important in making decisions for ourselves, our families and for society, and that values can change.

This means appreciating that societies and communities can develop positively through an open consideration of different perspectives where values and wants are set out. This implies that clear and frequent communication and discussion are necessary if we are to understand each other. Today we get our news, information and ideas from multiple sources and it's available 24 hours a day. All information invites us to accept it at face-value, but how do we know it is accurate? Being sceptical of information is a useful way of considering its value. This can include asking yourself whether something sounds or feels right; considering whether the source of the data is usually reliable; seeking corroboration from other sources; and checking with other people. Being sceptical is sometimes dismissed as just being negative and distrustful, but in reality it's the basis of sound decision-making.

As learners we shall

3 commit to learning collaboratively as well as individually.

This includes understanding that taking part in activities provides opportunities to share ideas and experiences and helps us recognise ways in which we might bring about change, and that we can often achieve more by working together and supporting each other. In another sense, everyone (even those acknowledged as experts) and every organisation (including educational ones) has a lot to learn together as we shift towards a sustainable future. In a similar way, it is likely that there is much that we shall all need to unlearn. In addition, we are frequently invited to assume that all learning is not only done individually, but is held individually. After all, school and college examinations all involve the individual proving what they (alone) know and can reproduce in competition with everyone else. But in many things we do, knowledge and understanding is commonly held. This applies especially to groups of people involved in a common task whether a sports team or an environmental project.

4 understand that environmental issues can be complex and that not all problems have clear-cut solutions so it may be necessary to make decisions on the basis of incomplete evidence and to live with a degree of uncertainty.

This means trying to act in line with our values when faced with uncertainty, and being aware that we are all part of complex adaptive systems so that postponing decisions and not acting is also a decision. It can be frustrating at any age to be told that things are complex and therefore (too) difficult for you. It's especially so when you are motivated to find out more and do something to help. Doing something may well be possible even if you cannot do everything. Not all environmental issues are difficult though and many can be resolved simply and cheaply, especially those in and around the home. Making a difference to the waste you produce and what you do with that waste is one example, and there are lots of organisations locally and nationally to help with practical suggestions and tools. Ideas and practices developed in schools can be taken home to make a difference there, and home and community expertise can be brought to schools.

The Thinking behind the Manifesto

As an organisation we shall

1 encourage young people to consider environmental issues in their personal decision-making and employment choices.

This includes helping pupils and students see that these issues are becoming increasingly important factors that influence how we work and live together, and the life choices we make. Desirable though becoming more sustainable (as a society, community, and family) obviously now is, it is important to realise that other things matter as well and that such a social transition is likely to need to be achieved through small steps rather than great leaps; for example, turning off all your home heating in winter to cut your carbon footprint is not sensible, even though it would be effective. All educational institutions need to remember that their core business is helping young people learn, and to become more sustainable at the expense of important learning opportunities would be folly. As well as specific employment that obviously focuses on the environment, all jobs are now 'green jobs' for two reasons: firstly there is the wide range of employment legislation and regulation with a sustainability focus, and secondly, there's a need to be aware and knowledgeable and motivated to ease the shift to becoming sustainable. Just as they have a key role in promoting literacy and numeracy, schools and colleges also need to be helping young people learn about environmental issues, and to become, as some term it, environmentally literate.

2 work together with parents and carers to draw them into environmentally-focused activities.

This includes keeping them up to date with developments in the school and drawing extended families into school-community activities. It also recognises that parents, carers and the extended family can be a valuable resource for schools to draw on. Care needs to be taken, however, to ensure that parents and carers are genuine partners in this process and not just the recipients of perhaps unwelcome advice, guidance or instruction. Young people should certainly not be sent home to correct their family's bad environmental habits as not all family relationships are amenable to such interventions. Schools and colleges can promote environmentally-focused activities through what they do, and draw on this in their teaching by involving young people.

As an organisation we shall

3 become part of a community hub for issues related to the environment, providing opportunities for local organisations to think about their own actions and becoming a role model for how to become more sustainable.

This means understanding that the transition to a more sustainable future that we are all engaged in will benefit from a sharing of effort and activity, and that how things are done is often just as important as what is done. It will be an unusual institution that does not already have strong community relationships and this probably means that there is much experience and trust to build on. Uniquely, schools and colleges can bring young peoples' voices to the debate about our futures, and their energies to initiatives and actions. They can also bring skills of data gathering and analysis which can enhance the value of what is experienced and achieved. In terms of being a role model for how to become more sustainable, schools and colleges can emphasise the importance of having values that are congruent with actions, and the importance of shared learning, and building on that learning.

4 partner with external organisations and individuals to enhance learning in relation to the environment (eg farms, local shops, NGOs, etc), and champion causes that promote sustainability and environmental education within the community.

This means understanding that there is considerable expertise and experience to be found in the wider community and in other organisations, and that collaboration is likely to bring mutual support and reward. The need to address environmental issues offers an ideal opportunity to further develop school – community relationships and establish mutually-supportive projects and initiatives. This is because, as environmental issues know no boundaries, there is common ground to work on and the chance to support and learn from each other. Local organisations will include elected councils, large and small businesses, charities and other NGOs, and a wide range of community groups. Most institutions will have many such links already and this will mean that there are lots of experiences and trust to build on.

Background to the Manifesto

Despite excellent examples of practice, the experience of schools and colleges that most young people say they have today is one that all too frequently downplays the existential threats that the world faces. These come from rapid climate change, the accelerating damage to species, habitats and ecosystems and, because of these, to the richness, diversity and integrity of the biosphere that all life on Earth needs in order to thrive. The reasons for this lack of focus are multifaceted and can differ between key stages and across subjects, with committed teachers often struggling in unsupportive contexts.

Young people are critical of how little relevant education most schools and colleges currently provide. Part of this criticism relates to how much time is currently devoted to preparing for tests and exams, and the loss of opportunity this means for exploring issues in depth and for experiential learning and skill-acquisition in the natural world. For their part, schools tend to be caught between their values-driven wish to provide holistic, beneficial and stimulating experiences and opportunities for all their pupils and students, and external demands to deliver a knowledge-rich curriculum to prepare for high stakes testing that is of limited validity in the wider world.

Many young people say that they want to learn more about climate change and the other environmental threats we face, and what we can do about them, and say that the learning opportunities currently provided to learn about these hugely important issues are insufficient to meet the needs of young people themselves, teachers or, indeed, society. There is increasingly awareness that the current school curriculum is not fit for purpose and NAEE has been supporting Teach the Future to help to get young people's voices heard by those politicians prepared to act.

Whilst it is true, as governments tend to say, that the curriculum does usually require some basic study of environmental issues ², this tends to be limited, restricted to certain subjects, and taught in a piecemeal fashion. Further, research suggests that many teachers are not as confident in approaching these important issues as they'd like to be.

Although our concern about the effects we are having on the planet has a long history, and educational programmes focused on this began in the late 1960s, it is only since the 2015 Paris Agreement that school pupils and students have begun to publicly articulate how poorly they think they are being prepared for a future very different from what they now know; a future that will likely be more unpredictable, more chaotic and much less fair or just. Pupils and students know that the threat posed by the global heating that is driving climate change is serious, and they take it personally, as their generation will likely live with it into the 2080s and beyond. Moreover, many are driven to campaign not only because of their own circumstances but also because they see climate change as making the world even more unfair for those in the global South where people with the lowest carbon footprints are likely to suffer the most severe effects.

Young people don't just want to learn about the science of the issues, about how we know there is a problem, and about the scope for social and technological innovation. They want to be part of the solution to the problems, and they want their schools and colleges to help them prepare for that role. Some institutions already do this well through lessons, first-hand investigations and practical activities, and by taking sustainability seriously as an organisation. Important and valuable though these are, young people also need such activities brought together into coherent experiences that inform, inspire, motivate and empower them; that allow them to think about and examine issues and solutions in ways that will help us all deal with the climate and environmental threats we face.

² See these [NAEE resources](https://tinyurl.com/yckamzsb) which show how climate and climate change are covered in the English national curriculum: tinyurl.com/yckamzsb

The National Association for Environmental Education – NAEE



NAEE is the UK's oldest educational charity supporting schools and teachers to help young people understand the inter-relationship between humans and the rest of nature, and the responsibilities that we have towards the planet. Ours is a long-standing and trusted voice and we are currently celebrating our 50th anniversary year. Uniquely, NAEE still produces a termly journal for practitioners. We work with like-minded organisations to promote real-world learning, innovative practice and sustainable school development. We publish blogs, articles, reviews, reports and position papers that are freely-available on our website – naee.org.uk

NAEE is an Incorporated Charitable Organisation [Charity No. 1166502] that is run by its members and volunteers who care passionately about environmental education. Our charitable object is to provide a public benefit by advancing environmental education within early years settings, primary and secondary schools, and institutions responsible for teacher education within the UK and elsewhere by:

1. facilitating curriculum development through the provision of resources, information and ideas for teachers,
2. providing financial support for pupils to visit outdoor education centres, and
3. collaborating with organisations that have related objectives.

NAEE's purpose is to promote all forms of environmental education, and to support all those involved in its delivery, so that together we can understand and act on the need to live more sustainably in order to protect the future of our planet. We believe that young people have a right to first-hand educational experiences in their local environment, because these are critical in helping people understand the importance of the biosphere to all life on the planet, as well as being a source of wellbeing and fulfilment, and a motivation towards sustainable living. The Association is committed to campaigning for a strong focus on environmental and sustainability issues across the school curriculum and supports the work of Teach the Future.

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