



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige**
Department of Education
and Youth

School Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025

Table of Contents

Context

- 1 Overall School Sector Targets**
- 2 Our School Communities**
- 3 Schools' Way of Working**
- 4 School Buildings**
- 5 Travelling to School**

School Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025

Context

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate published as part of Climate Action Plan 2025 supports public sector bodies leading by example on climate action. The aim is to inspire the necessary climate action in wider society to reduce Ireland's energy related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate excludes the school sector, which instead has its own dedicated School Sector Climate Action Mandate that best reflects the particular opportunities and constraints in schools and also seeks to minimise the burden on schools where possible.

This dedicated School Sector Mandate recognises the difference 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 action.

The first School Sector Mandate was published in March 2023. It has now been updated to reflect the principles of the 2025 Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

1. Overall School Sector Targets

As part of public sector targets, reduce energy related greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and improve energy efficiency in the overall school sector by 50% by 2030. This work will be guided by the strategies set out in the School Sector Climate Action Roadmap, which was first published in July 2023 and will be updated annually. The Roadmap is available [here](#).

2. Our School Communities

- 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 extensive participation in the Green Flag Programme.
- 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 [ESD to 2030](#) Action 4.1.a opportunities via student engagement processes for student voice, including through 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 in both primary and post-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.

3. Schools' Way of Working

Education for Sustainable Development:

Continue to promote and facilitate Education for Sustainable Development teaching and learning as appropriate by:

- raising awareness and promoting 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](#)) Further information on ESD programmes and resources is available on [Education for Sustainable Development – Scoilnet](#).
- considering where feasible how elements of the 17 SDGs can be integrated into school life, for example, food waste, biodiversity, water consumption, recycling, reusing, walking and cycling etc.
- continuing to engage in available programmes such as Green Schools which provides very practical supports in advancing the climate action agenda.
- encouraging and enabling school staff to participate in ESD-related Continuing Professional Development: [ESD CPD List](#)

Subscribe to the ESD Newsletter: [Education for Sustainable Development Newsletter](#). The Department of Education 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.

Adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement using the Sustainability Toolkit for Schools available on the ESD webpage: [Sustainability Toolkit for Schools](#).

Managing Resources & Eliminating Waste:

- Aim for a minimum of 10% by value (€) of food sought under new contract arrangements (including via contractors such as canteen service providers), to be certified organic in each of the following categories of Cereals, fresh Beef, Lamb, Pork, Poultry, Fish, Vegetables and Dairy products, where possible.
- Measure and monitor paper consumption. Where office paper for printing and photocopying must be procured, aim to achieve 100% of the paper being recycled paper. The Department will also examine where possible digitisation of Department paper-based processes.
- Ensure that all new contracts relating to food services include measures that are targeted at addressing food waste, with a specific focus on food waste

prevention and food waste segregation. The Schools Procurement Unit advises and supports schools in respect of the procurement process for the Hot School Meals programme. Template documents on the SPU website include reference to the suppliers' responsibilities around food waste.

- Wherever possible, eliminate single use items within the school and at events organised by the school.
- Contract waste collection services that are segregated into a minimum of 3 streams – residual/general waste, recycling waste and organic/biowaste where possible.

ICT Equipment

- Aim to achieve that a minimum of 80% of ICT end user products (desktop computers, portable computers and mobile phones) procured under new contract arrangements are certified to [EPEAT Gold Standard](#) (or equivalent), [TCO Certified](#) (or equivalent) or will have been remanufactured.

Procurement

- Implement Green Public Procurement (GPP). Refer to [the EPA Green Public Procurement Guidance and criteria](#) / [Office of Government Procurement's online Green Public Procurement Criteria](#) as resources.
- All tenders for the public procurement of energy-related products, heating equipment, or indoor and outdoor lighting to include a requirement for tenderers to specify recommendations and options for the product, when the product or components of the product comes to the end of life, that consider environmental sustainability, including options for reuse, repair, and recycling. Comply with SI 626 of 2016 to procure Triple E registered products or equivalent.
- All tenders for the public procurement of indoor cleaning services to include a requirement for tenderers to specify the training that will be put in place to ensure that all staff involved in delivery of the contract have the knowledge and skills to apply cleaning methods, which will reduce the environmental impact of the services.
- Vehicles – Priority is to be given to the procurement of (purchase or lease) only zero-emissions, to promote clean energy efficient transport vehicles. However, certain exceptions apply where the vehicle is exempt under the Clean Vehicles Directive

4. School Buildings

- Schools should complete the annual energy Monitoring and Reporting requirement to the SEAI: [Monitoring and Reporting for Schools](#).
- Schools can reap the benefits of reduce your use by supporting energy efficiency and management in their buildings (heating controls etc.) resulting in lower energy bills and less CO₂. [Energy Management for Schools | Community Energy | SEAI](#)
- The Department will ensure that its school design guidance supports active travel arrangements including provision of secure and accessible bicycle parking.
- 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).
 - where the replacement of existing fossil fuel heating is required for an emergency maintenance purpose
- The Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme is a key strategy under the Department's School Sector Climate Action Roadmap. The Programme, co-funded with SEAI, allows for the testing of different technology and retrofit approaches in a school context to inform future investment strategies.
- The Department will continue to request Design teams to submit evidence of best-practice carbon management design approaches on new builds and adherence to its published guidance [SDG 02 TN04 Low Carbon Concrete Design Guidance Technical Note 04](#) on the area of embodied carbon in relation to concrete use in new schools.
- The Department will continue to request adherence to the best practice guidelines for the preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for new schools.

5. Travelling to School

- Promote sustainable and active travel within the school community.
- Consider participation in 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 [Safe Routes to School \(SRTS\)](#)

- The Department of Education has recently completed a review of the School Transport Scheme. [School Transport 2030](#) was published in Q1 2024. The review was conducted with a view to examining the current scheme and how it operates, its broader effectiveness and sustainability and to ensure that it adequately supports the provision of services to students and their families. *School Transport 2030* has recommended expanding access to the scheme so that an additional 100,000 pupils can be carried by 2030 and has identified the potential for the scheme, together with walking and cycling, to reduce carbon emissions by reducing the number of students being driven to school. *School Transport 2030* has built 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.