

2019-20

# Environmental Sustainability Update



# Introduction

Following the publication of our Environmental Sustainability Initial Strategy Plan (January 2020), I thought that this would be a perfect opportunity for us to pause and reflect on some of the progress that we have made over the past academic year (2019-2020).

This celebratory booklet has been designed to capture some of the ‘green highlights’ from the year to date: it isn’t an exhaustive list of all of our environmental sustainability activity; however, I hope that it will give you a flavour of some of the activities and events that have been taking place across the three schools. We know that there is still so much more to do but it seemed like an opportune moment to thank and celebrate the achievements of those people who have already been making a difference.

We have been delighted by the positive response to our Environmental Initial Strategy Plan and we hope that we can rely on you to continue to support us to achieve our aims. In addition to all of the activities mentioned in this document,

it is worth remembering that the Consultative and Executive Committees have been meeting regularly to monitor progress (and, we will continue to do so, in a virtual way, during our period of Highgate@Home).

At this strange time of global uncertainty, the importance and wonder of the natural world has been brought to the fore. From an environmental perspective, there have been shafts of light emerging from the darkness of the pandemic: we are re-evaluating the importance of nature, of our relationship with our planet and of our role in safeguarding it moving forward. We have the chance now to re-imagine the future. In addition to the small steps that we are taking as individuals (and as a school community), I feel hopeful that innovators and creative problem solvers will be able to draw inspiration from this time of unprecedented change.

Last week, we celebrated World Earth Day and I hope that this booklet, too, will give you all cause to smile.

With very best wishes

**Louise Shelley**

Deputy Head (Pupils’ Personal Development and Employability)

## Priority Areas



**Environmental Education**



**Biodiversity and the Natural Environment**



**Buildings and Construction**



**Community Engagement**



**Energy and Carbon Management**



**Food and Catering**



**Procurement and Third Parties**



**Travel and Transport**



**Waste Management**



**Water Management**

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With representatives from each Junior School class, our Eco Council meets regularly to work on projects and develop ideas associated with sustainable living. We undertake regular reviews in our school community of issues relating to paper, plastic and food waste; we also look at how our school can respond to key issues affecting the environment. As a school, we realise the importance of our curriculum considering issues both locally and globally. We use the outcomes of various reviews to devise our action plan for the terms ahead, and create an overlap in our PSHEE, Geography, English, Art, DTE, PE/Games and Science schemes of work supporting our initiatives.

Vicky Nemeth  
Junior School

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As a Geography teacher and committed environmental activist, it is a great pleasure to work in as progressive and ethically conscious a school as Highgate, where senior staff are willing to listen and make big changes, and where many pupils are incredibly engaged and passionate about making the world a better and safer place. Having organised the first of many annual Pupil Sustainability Conferences in September 2019, involving 150 staff and pupils from 20 different North London schools, Highgate is not only changing the way it educates and operates in terms of environmental sustainability, it is also setting a positive example to others and having a wider impact within London schools, which is incredibly exciting to be a part of.

Sarah M.  
Geography Teacher

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The School has a unique opportunity, as part of its capital programme for the replacement and refurbishment for our buildings, to capitalise on the use of technology and construction techniques to improve the environmental performance of our Estate. The Junior School (completed in 2016) is a sound example of how we can conserve energy whilst ensuring that our educational spaces connect with and respect the green spaces in which they sit. With our vision for the next sequence of capital investment on the School Estate developing, our focus is firmly on continuing this theme through to all our new projects.

Chris Birkbeck  
Estates

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In the Pre-Prep School, we know that it is vital to enthuse the youngest pupils in the School with a love of the natural world; they are, after-all, the future guardians of our planet. Our pupils really enjoy learning about the environment, through our Forest School curriculum, and they love the hands-on experience of the natural world in the practical sessions that they have in the Outdoor Education classroom.

Philipa Poll  
Pre-Prep School



# Environmental Education

## Key Achievements

- The Senior School founded and hosted the inaugural *London Schools' Sustainability Conference* (Sept. 2019) for 150 pupils and teachers from 20 local state and independent schools.
- Due to the brilliant work of the Environment Committee (EC), Highgate School was shortlisted for the TES Award for 'Student Initiative of the Year' and won the overall 'Independent School of the Year' award.
- EC members have masterminded Fast Fashion-Free February campaigns and participated in 'School Strike 4 Climate.'

"The conference really demonstrated how far we have come as a committee and we're delighted that our influence now extends beyond Highgate: we are helping to expand the community of like-minded individuals who have the same goal – saving our planet. I'm very proud to be a member of the Environment Committee and it's been one of the best experiences of my time at Highgate"

Vivika, Y13

*Regarding the Sustainability Conference:* "[we] loved the whole event and left with a real buzz and excitement about all the great ideas on how to make our school more sustainable. It is a real tribute to you and your students!"

Henrietta Barnet School



Sustainability Conference



Fashion Fashion-Free display in Central Hall



Y13 pupils Vivika and Maryam, Environment Committee



Y13 pupil Bea promoting grow-your-own vegetables and seeds

## Key Achievements (continued)

- The three environmentally themed clubs and societies are proving very popular with our pupils.
- In December, the Junior School hosted an Eco Conference with local primary schools.
- DofE numbers 2019-2020: 145 Bronze, 56 Silver, 40 Gold.
- All Pre-Prep pupils participate in Forest Schools programme two afternoons per week.
- The JS was shortlisted for the TES Sustainability Award, in recognition of the work carried out by the JS Eco Council to make sustainability the golden thread in the overall curriculum and to join forces with 6 local primary schools working on joint eco projects.
- Our Junior School pupils built an electric vehicle inspired by Green Power Trust as part of an design, engineering and technology project focused on ways to reduce carbon emissions - and won an award with it!
- Pre-Prep Eco-School Bronze Award.
- Each year, we celebrate World Earth Day by encouraging our whole School community to share images of how they appreciate the planet.

"I really enjoyed meeting pupils from UCS and St. Michael's. We had a long discussion and we came up with lots of great ideas such as the small animal enclosure and the joint gardening club."

Eloise Mundy, 3W

"I love the fact that in Outdoor Ed you can go to the forest and explore around."

Frida, Y8

"I really enjoyed Outdoor Ed, because you try loads of cool things and it is really cool making fires."

Emilia, Y7



Junior School pupils celebrate planting over 1,000 trees



Junior School pupils making bird seed cakes



An electric vehicle designed by our JS pupils for a project focused on reduction of carbon emissions



Vivika shares her celebration of Earth Day on social media



# Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

## Key Achievements

- Planting of hedgerow species along boundary of Senior Field and planting drought tolerant plants adjacent to Pre-Prep.
- Established composting bays in the Backlands area.
- Established pupil gardening clubs.
- JS pupils have made bird houses and bird feeders in DTE lessons and Gardening club.
- JS pupils monitor bird species through infrared cameras inside two bird houses.
- JS pupils have continued to link up gardening club with cookery club and outdoor education (own produce, food waste reduction, education).
- A masterplan of landscaping with focus on biodiversity and sustainability has been created.

"We couldn't believe how much litter we picked up in half an hour."

Y2 pupil

"We're so excited to clean up our rivers and ponds!"

Sonia, Y2

"I like being on the Eco Committee as I want to help stop climate change and global warming as the world is getting hotter because of the pollution and gases. I usually get the bus to school!"

Frank, Y2



JS pupils helped to plant trees along the School boundaries which will promote biodiversity and exclude car emissions from the fields



Our sustainability tree - each leaf captions a New Year sustainability pledge

# Buildings and Construction

## Key Achievements

- Designed to 'Passive House' elevated environmental standards the Junior School continues to use considerably less energy than comparable buildings, and the smaller building it replaced (Cholmeley House).
- Production of a standard specification for new mechanical and electrical equipment for all new construction projects (to improve life cycle of components / reduce and economise on servicing requirements).
- Completed Energy Audit in accordance with ESOS (Energy Saving Opportunity Scheme Phases 1 & 2).
- Our newly re-furbished swimming pool uses improved energy saving technologies, including modern environmental systems to control the internal environment and a pool cover to conserve heat overnight.



SpEx staff test the waters at the re-opening of our new swimming pool at the MSC



# Community Engagement

## Key Achievements

- Pupils and staff from Highgate and St Joseph's Junior School planted over 1,000 new trees.
- The Junior School joined forces with 6 local primary schools working on joint eco projects.
- 177 pupils took part in an Environment Day participating in 10 local projects .
- In October 2019, over 2,500 pupils and staff from Highgate and sibling school, The London Academy of Excellence in Tottenham, walked across North London to raise over £110,000 for our partner school in Uganda, Great Lakes High. The sum was donated to improve the teaching and learning experience in the school and secure its long-term sustainability.
- Re-use, re-wear and now also 're-read'**  
In early March over 2,200 pre-loved books were collected from Highgate by [The Children's Book Project](#), a charity dedicated to providing reading material for children who have little or no access to books. Ran Holst, Trustee and Chair, said: "We distributed 1,200 of the books in bundles to children across 11 schools prior to them closing in March, meaning that children were able to take books home to read while libraries and schools are not open. The remaining 1,000 will be shared out across 71 schools. These books, that might otherwise have remained on shelves, will be re-read by new readers and then potentially passed on again. As one recipient of a gifted book told his teacher: "the stories never run out."

"It was really interesting learning about planting vegetables during our Environment Day. I loved it!"

Frankie, Y11

"The 400 pupils and 40 staff from LAE don't often get out to large open spaces like Hampstead Heath and we enjoyed walking with Highgate School pupils and colleagues starting from the magnificent new Tottenham stadium through the built environment and small urban park landscapes like Trinity and Nightingale Gardens in Wood Green; the large green open space that is Alexandra Park; the 'countryside' of the Parkland Walk (North) and Highgate Wood with its ancient trees and finally the mighty Heath!"

Jan Balon, Head, LAET



Adam Pettitt and Jan Balon lead the walk from Tottenham Hotspur FC stadium to Hampstead Heath



Highgate School pupils help to distribute 2,200 books to the Children's Book Project

# Energy and Carbon Management

## Key Achievements

- Programme of updating ICT hardware with energy efficient systems.
- Programme of replacing lighting with LEDs underway.
- Phased migration to green tariffs for electricity as fixed term provider contracts expire.

"We feel great about saving the planet!"

Joseph, Y2

# Food and Catering

## Key Achievements

- Meat Free Mondays, first established in March 2015, remain a fixture in our weekly menu.
- Removed plastic water bottles and straws.
- Introduced re-useable drinking cups and removed single use cups throughout the school.
- Running down current stock of snacks containing palm oil from unsustainable sources.
- Purchased first electric vehicle for use by the catering dept.

**3,300kg**

reduced meat consumption  
in the school per year

**2,000**

plastic water bottles per  
week saved

# Travel and Transport

## Key Achievements

- Travel plan achieved Gold accreditation to TfL "STARS" scheme.
- 30,000 home to school journeys by School Bus annually.
- Air Pollution Monitoring Schemes outside school and campaign to reduce drop-offs/pick-ups outside school.

"The most rewarding moment I've had being involved with EC was when a family friend, whose child goes to a different local school, told me about how she is changing the family's morning commute to avoid using the car. This was because she had been given a leaflet during one of our campaign weeks. We are helping to spread environmentalism within the school but also further afield!"

Gabriel, Y13

## Key Achievements (continued)

- Successfully campaigned TFL to use electric buses for the 214 bus route.
- A school petrol vehicle was replaced by a fully electric one.

"Since the School raised awareness about traffic pollution, I asked my parents not to drop me off outside School. I now use the tube every day."

Jay, Y10



Adam Pettitt helps pupils hand out leaflets to parents during Walk & Talk Week



Banners to promote the reduction of carbon emissions are placed around School

## Waste Management

### Key Achievements

- Pupil survey monitoring the food waste in the dining hall.



Angus delivers a presentation on the food waste survey results

"We did a food waste survey for 3 days and, by day 2, we could see improvements as pupils became more aware of their food waste."

Max, Y13

## Water Management

### Key Achievements

- Phased introduction of increased number of water fountains to discourage reliance on single use bottled water.



# Next Steps...

With your help, we will continue to shape, develop and drive through our Environmental Sustainability Agenda. We are delighted that so many members of our Highgate Community (most notably our pupils) have already been raising awareness of environmental issues and taking positive action. We know that the journey is going to be challenging but we also know that it has the potential to be tremendously rewarding. By continuing to embrace our collective and individual responsibilities, we feel confident that we will be able to work together to achieve our ambitious plans.

Above all, thank you for your support.

For now, we'll let Wordsworth's close this booklet with a reminder of the wonders of the natural world.

If you have any ideas, comments or further suggestions, we'd love to hear from you:  
[sustainability@highgateschool.org.uk](mailto:sustainability@highgateschool.org.uk)

**Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,  
On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour.  
July 13, 1798**

By William Wordsworth

(an excerpt)

'...For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.'



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