



Aims and principles of *Teaching for Sustainable Futures*

We recognise that human activity is having a catastrophic impact on the Earth, which is materialising as climate change, devastating biodiversity loss, and persistent and growing inequality amongst humans, and between humans and the rest of the natural world. These impacts have accelerated to the point that we are now living in the Anthropocene, an epoch that is marked by the negative interference of human behaviour on planetary systems. In this context, we cannot continue with life as normal.

We know that many young people and their teachers care deeply about the health of the planet. We also know that this can lead to anxiety and that this is exacerbated if young people feel a sense of hopelessness. We are therefore committed to balancing honesty with hope in our work by exploring possible futures. **All our work is informed by the values of honesty, wisdom, respect, engagement, justice and hope.** We need to be honest with young people and each other about the planetary crisis while acknowledging the limits of what we know with certainty. We will draw on others' wisdom and be open to diverse ways of knowing. We will root our work in a deep respect for life on earth and engage dynamically with knowledge of the planet's systems. Fundamental issues of social justice, equity, inclusion and pluralism will be a constant feature of our work, as will more optimistic messages around adaptability and hope. These values have helped to shape the principles set out below around which we have designed our teacher development programme, *Teaching for Sustainable Futures*.

Our Teacher Professional Development Programme will be:

Empowering for teachers

- Our professional development and resources will recognise that teachers need flexible ways to build their substantive knowledge and understanding, supported by opportunities to evaluate and develop their practice as curriculum-makers over time
- We will take account of teachers' starting points and particular contexts and will avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.
- We will support and encourage the development of communities of practice within and across schools so that teachers can work together collaboratively.
- Teachers will be supported to develop and realise the distinctive contribution of school subjects.

Research engaged

- Listening to teachers and young people is essential. Research into the attitudes and preconceptions of young people, teachers and school leaders about climate change and sustainability will form a dynamic context for the Centre's work.
- Research about the broader education landscape with reference to climate change and sustainability education will ensure the Centre is sensitive to changing curriculum and policy contexts.
- Research and scholarship across relevant disciplinary domains and subject specialisms will inform the content of our Programme.



Knowledge engaged

- The particular contributions of different school subjects lie at the heart of our work because these subjects provide different ways to think about the breadth of the environmental crisis and its relevance to our lives and wellbeing.
- We recognise that disciplinary knowledge, everyday knowledge and indigenous knowledge interact in potentially powerful ways.
- It is essential that young people engage with knowledge critically, with an understanding of how it is generated, justified, communicated and used in different contexts.
- Our Programme encourages valuable interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches but encourages these in ways that respect (or complement?) disciplinary knowledge.

Pedagogically adventurous

- We will develop a shared understanding of 'enquiry for action' that is underpinned by a participatory pedagogy which empowers pupils to make informed choices and to take appropriate positive action.
- We recognise the need to nurture particular skills and capabilities through this pedagogy including adaptability, creativity, empathy, compassion, cooperation and collaboration.
- We will take account of *all* children and young people's prior knowledge (including misconceptions), understanding and emotions, recognising that they encounter these issues in different contexts.
- We will advocate for the value of outdoor learning.

Futures focussed

- Our work should leave children and young people with a sense of realistic hope for their own futures and for the future of the planet.
- Our work will develop an understanding of the choices and different possible futures facing humankind and of the systemic changes that are needed for a more sustainable future.
- It is crucial that children and young people feel empowered to take appropriate action and we will help them to see what they can do individually and collectively in their communities and how they can contribute to wider debates.