



Climate Action Plan

Created: January 2026

Review: January 2027

Copies of all of our policies can be found
in the school office, and online at
rutherfordschool.org.uk

1. Purpose and Alignment

Rutherford School is committed to playing an active role in addressing climate change while ensuring that sustainability initiatives are inclusive, meaningful, and appropriate for learners with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD).

This Climate Action Plan aligns with the expectations set out in the Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, including the ambition for all education settings to:

- Have a Climate Action Plan
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Embed sustainability within education
- Build climate resilience across estates and operations

2. Rutherford Context

This plan reflects Rutherford's specific context:

- Specialist independent school for learners with PMLD
- High levels of medical, therapy, and equipment usage
- Ongoing capital development (hydrotherapy pool and new classrooms)
- Strong emphasis on sensory, experiential learning
- Close partnership with the Garwood Foundation

Sustainability decisions are therefore balanced against health, safety, accessibility, and therapeutic need.

3. Strategic Aims

Aim	Description
Reduce environmental impact	Lower energy, water, and waste where possible
Build climate resilience	Ensure the site remains safe and operational in extreme weather
Embed sustainability in learning	Make climate concepts accessible to PMLD learners

Lead responsibly	Model sustainable practice for staff, families, and partners
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4. Governance and Leadership

- **Named Climate Lead:** Headteacher (supported by Premises Manager and CEO)
- **Oversight:** School Governors
- **Review Cycle:** Annual (linked to School Development Plan)
- **Reporting:** Included in Leadership & Management evidence and Governor updates

5. Priority Action Areas

A. Energy and Carbon Reduction

DfE focus: Decarbonisation and energy efficiency

Current Position

- Energy-intensive environment due to:
 - Specialist equipment
 - Hydrotherapy provision
 - Heating and ventilation needs
 - Limited use of Solar Panels

Actions

- Integrate energy-efficient systems into all new build phases
- Use LED lighting and smart controls where feasible
- Review heating and ventilation settings termly
- Monitor energy use annually through utility data

Longer-Term Ambition

- Explore further solar or low-carbon energy options when infrastructure allows
- Align future capital projects with net-zero principles where practical

B. Water Use and Hydrotherapy

DfE focus: Resource efficiency

Actions

- Use water-efficient plant and filtration systems in hydrotherapy pool
- Staff training on responsible water management
- Annual review of water consumption

Non-Negotiable

- Therapeutic outcomes and student safety always take precedence

C. Waste Reduction and Recycling

Actions

- Increase recycling of:
 - Paper and cardboard
 - Packaging
- Reduce single-use plastics where possible
- Encourage digital communication with parents and professionals
- Safe disposal routes for clinical waste maintained

D. Sustainable Procurement

Actions

- Consider sustainability when purchasing:
 - Furniture
 - Consumables
 - Cleaning products
- Prioritise durable, long-life resources suited to PMLD environments
- Work with suppliers aligned with ethical and environmental standards

E. Biodiversity and Outdoor Environment

Actions

- Maintain and enhance outdoor sensory spaces
- Use planting that supports biodiversity and sensory engagement
- Encourage wildlife-friendly features where safe and appropriate
- Link outdoor spaces to wellbeing and sensory curriculum work

6. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

DfE focus: Preparing for climate risks

Risks Considered

- Heatwaves
- Heavy rainfall and flooding
- Disruption to utilities

Mitigation

- Cooling strategies in classrooms during extreme heat
- Site drainage checks during heavy rain periods
- Business continuity planning linked to estates management
- Risk assessments updated to reflect climate considerations

7. Curriculum and Learner Engagement

DfE focus: Climate education

Sustainability is embedded within Rutherford's bespoke curriculum:

For Learners with PMLD:

- Sensory experiences linked to:
 - Nature
 - Weather
 - Seasons
- Cause-and-effect learning (e.g. light, water, planting)
- Engagement through:
 - Outdoor learning
 - Sensory stories

- Practical exploration

Learning is aligned with:

- Engagement Model
- RARPA
- “My World” and “My Well-being” curriculum strands

8. Staff Development and Culture

Actions

- Staff awareness raised through briefings and CPD
- Sustainability included in premises and health & safety discussions
- Encourage staff-led ideas for small, meaningful changes
- Link sustainability to wellbeing and professional responsibility

9. Monitoring, Review and Evidence

Area	Evidence
Energy & water	Utility data, premises reports
Curriculum	Schemes of work, learning evidence
Governance	Trustee/Governors minutes, SDP
Estates	Risk assessments, project plans
Culture	Staff training logs

Review Cycle

- Annual review
- Adjusted alongside building phases and operational change

10. Statement of Commitment

Rutherford School recognises its responsibility to contribute positively to climate action while remaining fully committed to providing safe, inclusive, and high-quality education and care for learners with PMLD. Sustainability is approached thoughtfully, ethically, and in a way that enhances, not compromises, student outcomes.