



Spirals of change?



Tide~ Elephant Times

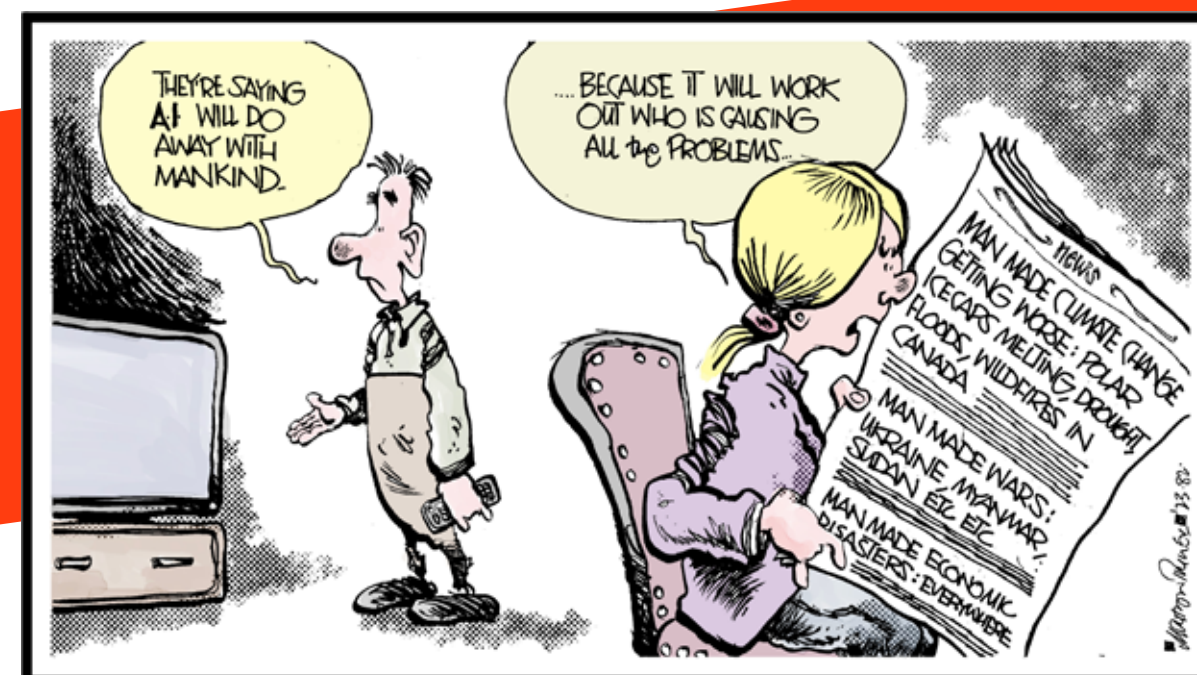
Magazine Issue 34 June 2023



Welcome to ET 3.4

The Elephant Times [ET] offers space for dialogue about global realities amongst education professionals. This ET is part of a series exploring the educational implications of climate change.

Tide ~ Elephant Times



Cartoon by Martyn Turner

The **Elephant Times [ET]** magazine is a Tide~ network initiative.

Website: www.tidegloballearning.net

It is edited by Jeff Serf & Scott Sinclair

We have taken on this voluntary role as Tide~ Trustees.

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If you have feedback or proposals for future ET articles please email us: elephant.times@tidegloballearning.net

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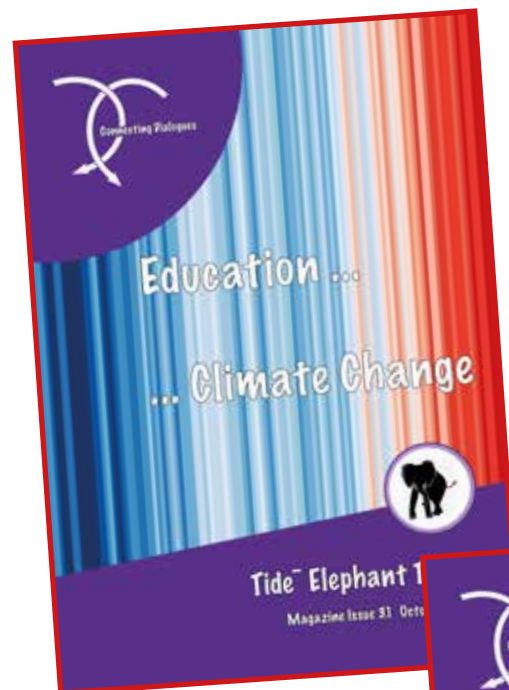
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Cover: *Spirals of change?*

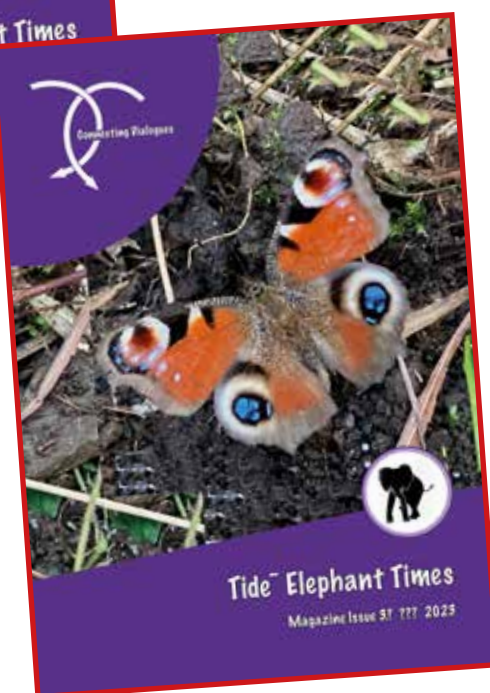
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Thank you to all those who have contributed to Conversations, and to those who have written ET articles, about the educational implications of climate change.

[See Tide~ website for all articles.](#)



The question now is: how do we build on this work to generate interest in an education-driven agenda as one of the responses to the climate crisis.

How do we lobby for recognition of:

- ☐ a Teacher entitlement?
- ☐ Learner entitlement?

Join us on Zoom to shape a plan ... Thursday 6th July at 6.30

[Sign up here to receive Zoom Link](#)

In this issue ...

This Elephant Times builds on the last three issues of the magazine about the educational implications of climate change, and in that context seeks a debate about **teacher entitlement**. And, following the 'Teens and Teachers' conference [see p 39] about **learner entitlement**.

Diane Swift responds to our questions about how she sees the implications of the climate crisis for thinking about educational change.

We are very impressed by a website generated in Brighton, we asked **Jonathan Cooper** to share something of the story behind its development. With the demise of the education role of Local Authorities we note that this raises questions about local leadership for change.

It has been fascinating to follow the development of MEE [Ministry of Eco-Education]. **Dominic Simpson** shares his experience - and **Paul Turner** reflects on strategy. Can MEE help generate a demand from schools for climate change initiatives that are also about 'school improvement'?

Rachel Tomlinson raises similar debates as she shares some of her experience of developing principles and practice in her school.

Marie Hartley reminds us about the value of different areas of curriculum, in her case English. It is important that we do not default to seeing climate change as a theme - the implications go deeper than that. All curriculum areas have something to offer in their own right, not just content relating to a the theme.

Lucy Kirkham, Rhiannon Hawkins, Oliver Lewis & Karina Marwaha are involved in setting up the 'Teens and Teachers' conference. It will take place at Cardiff University on 29th June, the outcomes will be the focus of the next ET magazine -- and help shape proposals on Learner Entitlement.

Teacher entitlement - why is it needed?

Jeff Serf & Scott Sindclair

We reflect ...

Conversation has potential, - potential to influence positive change, potential to unlock our ideas and to value the stimulus of a diversity of responses to a challenge – a challenge such as the climate crisis.

As editors of the ET magazine, we keep on asking people to reflect on what they have been doing – in recent issues this has focused on the educational implications of climate change. It is now time for us as editors to reflect on how we might build on the dialogue that has evolved.



The poster 'The Climate is Changing' asks "Why aren't we?". In the case of this ET the "we" is the education community – and the systems and professionals that shape practice.

The role of teachers is pivotal, yet often taken for granted.

Would debate about the notion of a Teacher Entitlement help highlight how 'we' could change?

The [Conversations](#) in November 2022, and associated interviews, highlighted many examples of sound practice and enthusiasm for engaging with the issues. There is much that inspires.

Yet many concerns were also expressed ranging from: the schools that are not addressing the basics of sustainability and climate change awareness; to the confusion of government messages.

The experience has endorsed the proposition that there is value in work that focuses on **an education-driven agenda responding to the climate crisis**, work that helps build the confidence of education practitioners to be creative about the role of teachers and schools to be part of the solution. Work that complements and is stimulated by other climate change responses but that is distinctive in its focus on the role of schools.

There is a need for further dialogue about: - all aspects of learner needs; teachers and teacher entitlement; school organisation and the effect of education policies.

Many young people are leading the way on the need to address climate change and the importance of climate justice. They have agency. The 'Teens and Teachers' conference highlights this priority and the value of teachers learning with students [see p 39]. As [Liz Cripps'](#) article put it

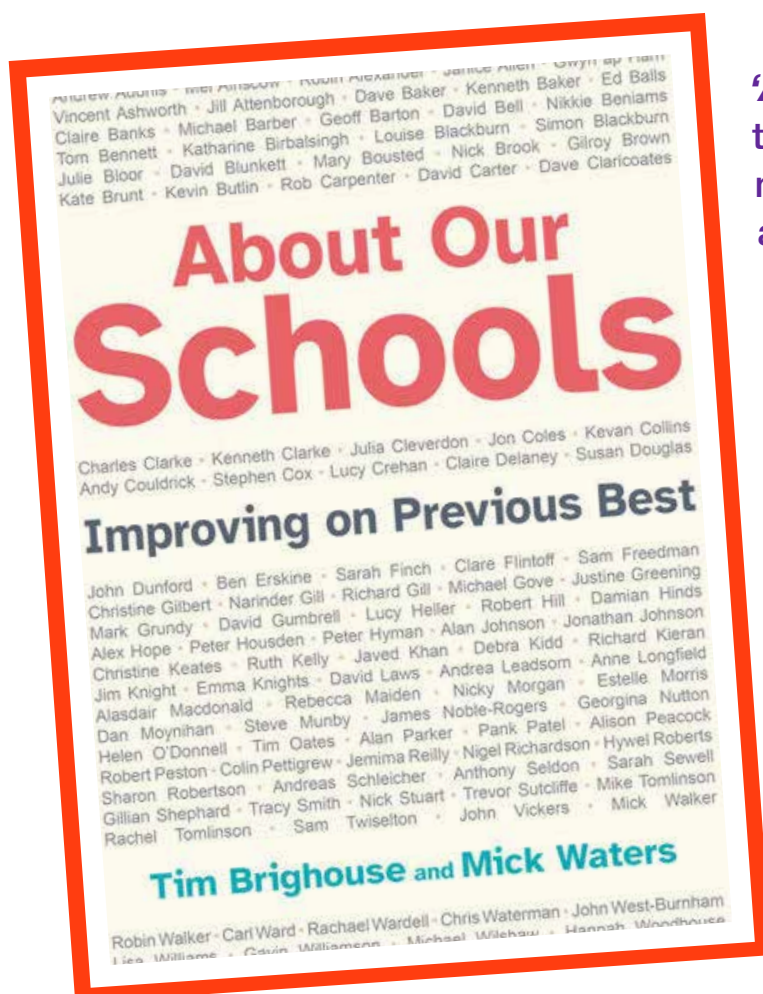
"As well as cultivating citizenship and autonomy, we must recognise and respect young people's unique vulnerability and insight, their political voice."



Video: Paul Carvin - from The Three Rivers Learning Trust, Morpeth

The Paul Carvin video captures the essence of how we might begin to shape an education-driven response to the climate crisis. **It is not just learning about climate change, it is about the development of education opportunities that equip students, and society, for a future that will be impacted by climate change and the consequences of that change.**

See for example when Paul talks about the need for poets



‘About our Schools’, which was one of the starting points for the project, offers much to think about in terms of such an education response but the book [reflecting the many policy-makers and past Ministers interviewed] does not highlight climate change as such.

Authors Tim Brighouse and Mick Waters joined a Tide~ group set up to facilitate the project Conversations and the series of ET magazines, that brought together a range of people involved in education.

For an insight to some of the core questions they explore see BERA article ... [What is the purpose of school and who should control it?](#)

We explored many ideas. In this article we highlight matters relating to:

Learner needs, Awareness, Process - and revisit the connecting dialogue approach.

Learner needs ...

Much of the discussion, and many of the ET articles, highlight learner needs as a core driver for schools. However much concern was expressed about ways in which aspects of curriculum policy and approaches to accountability are in tension with this priority.

There is a need to address learning about climate change but also as important are matters of well-being and the impact of what could be described as eco-anxiety.

Many involved described how taking action on climate related matters was effective in reducing such anxiety. Nevertheless it a key issue. See, for example, [‘Climate change is harming my mental health’](#).

The idea of a Climate Education Entitlement is proposed, with specific opportunities for children, and for adolescents. The outcome of work on this will be the main feature of the next ET magazine.

There is a need for better connections between different aspects of curriculum and more learning approaches that enable learners to engage, for themselves, with complex realities. Such skills need not be developed by a focus on climate change or sustainability. Indeed, we need to avoid “going on about sustainability”, and **effectively reducing the questioning that is essential** – and maybe reducing the learning.

Clearly it is also important that schools, like other organisations, develop policies and practice that address their environmental impact. They have the advantage, or is it seen as a challenge, of also making those initiatives **a stimulus to learning and student engagement**.

See for example ET article by [Chris Berry](#)



Early exploration of the outdoors and of nature is important and needs to progress as children develop. The work of [Forest Schools](#) featured in several discussions. [Learning Through Landscapes](#) Outdoor Learning frameworks were also highlighted.

Awareness ...

Climate change is a complex reality, it is a global issue, global co-operation – [and the complexity that involves] - is needed to respond. Most solutions also raise other questions, not least, about global justice.

Opportunities to build our own awareness should be core to teacher entitlement.

This, we suggest, should be open to ALL teachers. It would be about our own learning, so we feel comfortable with the complexity and confident to be creative. This would, for example, enable us to work more effectively with colleagues on Learner needs in this context, and to clarify what different curriculum areas can offer. As mentioned already, those Learner needs are wider than “learning about climate change”.

Such an approach would also help clarify that we are not just talking about geography and science, nor about a new set of tick boxes, for example to do with recycling. The challenge is greater than that.

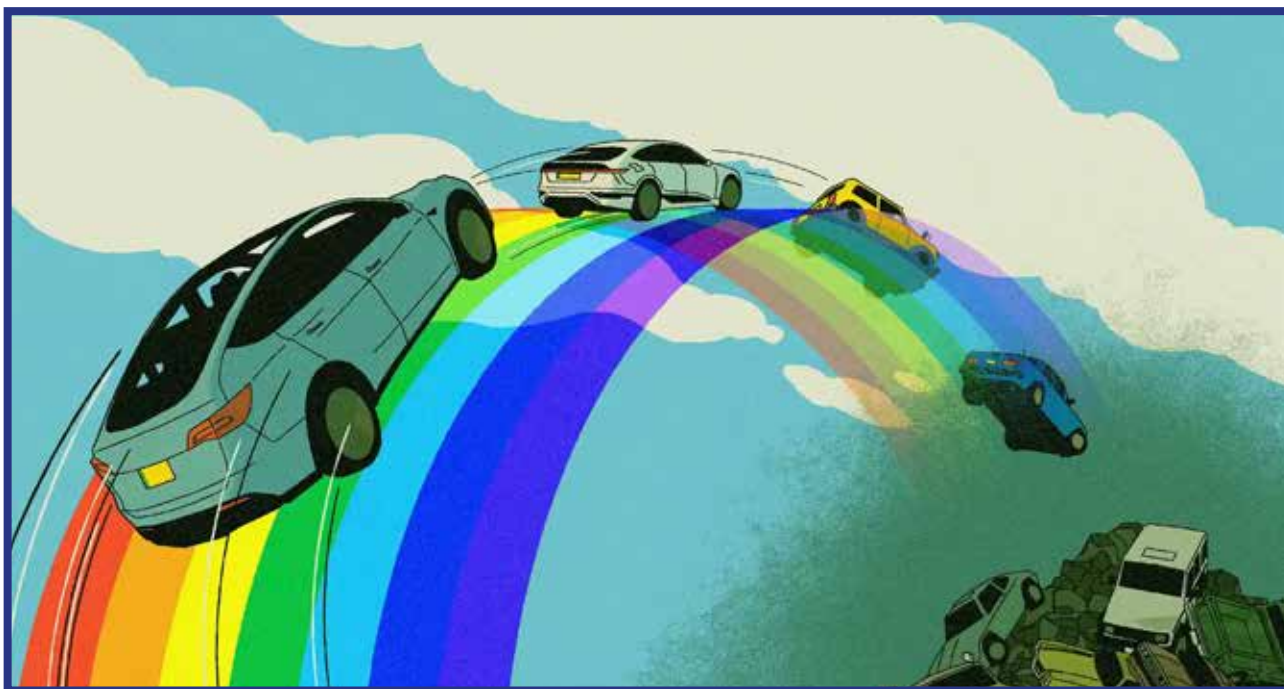


Illustration: R Freeson. The Guardian

Our learning, like that of children and students, needs to take on the uncertainty and the dynamic of new understandings of different aspects of climate change, and the ongoing essential debates.

The illustration - a positive solution, electric cars, fading into disappointment and the need to rethink. It introduced an article by [Rowan Atkinson](#) that is worth a read alongside a fact check article by [Simon Evans](#). The point is that we need to build our ability to engage with such debates. There is no one view that deals with the many questions there are to ask about electric cars. We need both facts and the ability to question.

We all need to **build up our own ‘Critical Reality Assessment’ processes**, even more so in the context of social media and partial news, and the dynamic of changing awareness of complex matters, such as climate change. This is also a core challenge to thinking about learner needs.

Such awareness in a teacher team would also provide the basis for discussion about professional roles relating to matters such as the balance between optimistic and pessimistic dispositions - and the political dimension.

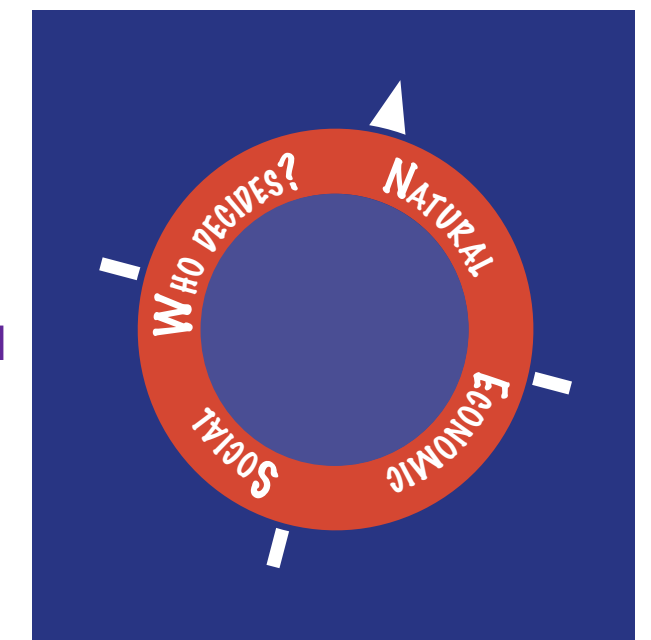
Professionally we have choices.

- ❑ We need to consider **the need for optimism and a positive outlook** without just putting a simplistic “green wash” on the realities.
- ❑ The political dimension - **the question of “who decides?” is pivotal to understanding** - we need to have clear strategies to engage this, without being partial ourselves.

The **development compass rose** is an example of making the complex more accessible. The activities enable learners to generate questions, then develop their own enquiry routes and make connections between different aspects.

Understanding sustainable development involves making connections between nature and **Natural** systems and **Social** and **Economic** activity, as featured in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The decisions involved, the **[W - Who decides?]** range from those we take individually, to companies and governments, to international organisations. Work on that dimension is vital to understanding, and creative thinking about the future.



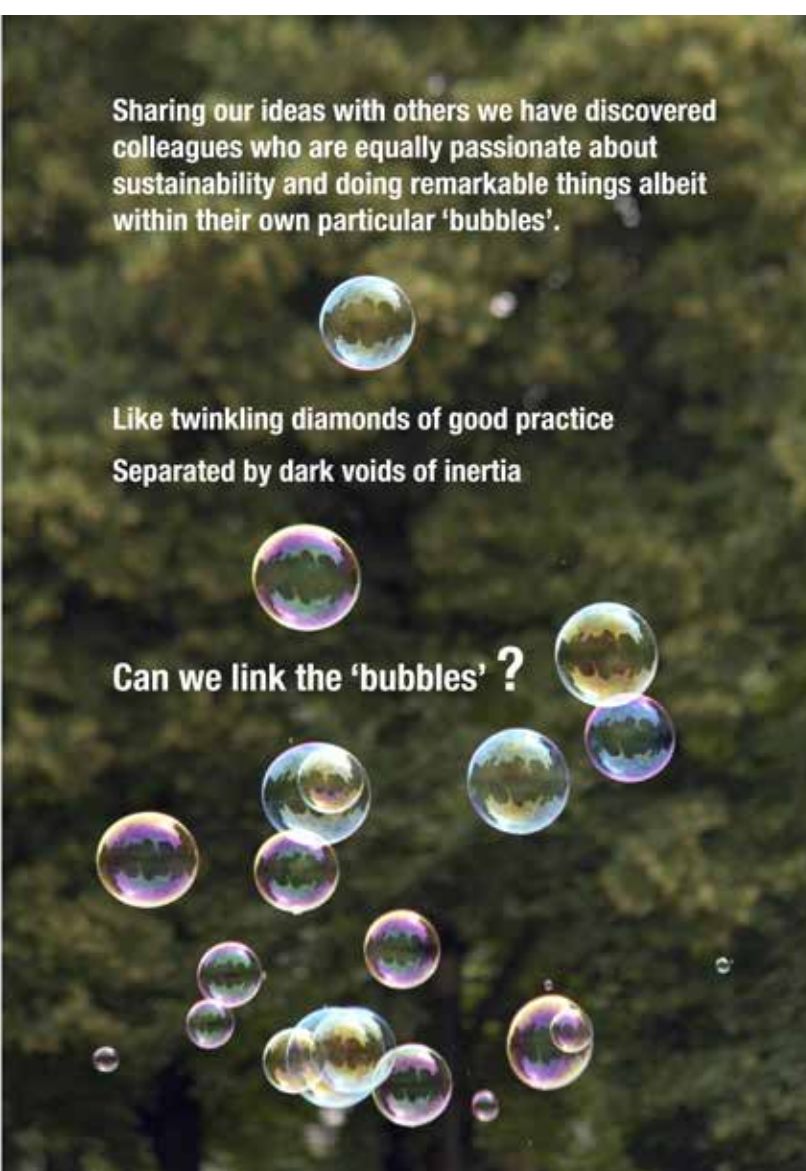
Process ...

In one of the Conversations, [Anne Dolan](#) described the process of developing 'Teaching Climate Change in Primary Schools'. It involved 21 contributors, who are lecturers in teacher education in Limerick. Many initially expressed concerns about their own awareness or assumed that this was a matter for those teaching science or geography.

"A rigorous CPD programme ensued. A group of committed teacher educators met monthly to discuss the causes and impacts of climate change. We invited guest speakers, we travelled to sustainable projects but most importantly of all we began a conversation."

Creating 'space' for teachers to work together creatively is vital to an entitlement. There is also scope for innovation as [Stephen Scoffham & Steve Rawlinson](#) reflected in an article about the development of their book - 'Sustainability Education: A Classroom Guide'...

"Just as in the natural world diversity helps to ensure the resilience of a habitat, so the educational eco-system benefits from a multiplicity of approaches and interpretations."



In that article Stephen and Steve talked about "a world populated by *twinkling diamonds of good practice* [and innovation] *but separated by dark voids of inertia*".

Can we both link the bubbles and value their separate entities?

Clearly there is much to be gained from books such as these and the innovation of others, as featured in ET articles. They give us a head start, but in the same way that no one can learn for us - we too need to be part of an innovatory process.

That is unless you think teachers are just there to do as they are told.

Agency is an issue we need to debate.

Can teachers enable learner agency if they have very limited curriculum agency themselves?



Cartoon by BRICK

Making the connections - teacher Agency - developing learner Agency skills?

A connecting dialogues approach ...

In 2020, during the global pandemic, Tide~ brought together a small group to review priorities. **The pandemic made it clear that we live in a global society and are intimately and intricately connected to people and places all over the world.** This is also essential to understanding the implications of the climate crisis.

The work reflected the spirit of the network's early thinking about the nature of 'Development Education'. Which we defined as

'an approach which seeks to equip people to participate in world society' - and is best described as -

'a process which enables people to work out for themselves what they think'.

From 'What is Development Education? - Nov 1981

A 'connecting dialogues' approach took shape because it was felt that dialogue is essential to enabling us all to engage productively with others, including those who we might not agree with.

The approach assumes that we are all learning all the time, so it is relevant to people at all ages and stages of our lives and careers.

The aim is to enable us as learners to consider our own views, to develop our ideas, values, and opinions, and to understand where and how these opinions are formed. And to be prepared to change our minds when presented with new evidence, or other ways of finding evidence.

Tide ~ has a history of enabling space for teachers at all stages of their careers to support each other. For us as teachers, and for our students, to participate as a global citizen means that we need the skills and enthusiasms to care about the big global challenges such as Climate Change, but also, for example, Migration, Inequality, Injustice, Exploitation, Conflict. These challenges do concern and motivate many young people. **There is a need to provide stimulus to encourage teachers to work with students, to have dialogue about their concerns.**

The aspiration is not to indoctrinate students, or push specific views at them, but to educate them by opening up possibilities. This is not easy, particularly with matters such as sustainable development when we can default to prescribing actions. **Education that enables active global citizens is about listening, reflecting, investigating, proposing, thinking, discovering: learning.**

In the current social, communications, political and economic environment it can be tempting to opt out, or to opt for simplistic answers and explanations of what is going on, to create new “tick boxes”. But reality is not simple. All of us can hold contradictory thoughts and emotions at any one time. **There is a need to find ways in which teachers and students can feel confident in learning about and discussing complexity, without feeling overwhelmed.**

To examine the many facets of complex issues and concerns is not about finding ‘right’ answers, or about particular activities, or even about taking part in protests, although it might involve all of those. Fundamentally it is about working out where we stand, what has influenced us, and to be prepared re-evaluate our position, as well as to debate it with others.

And if that is all we do, that’s ok. More than ok. Because when we have a dialogue about complex global concerns, we make it possible for others to do the same, the skill to do this, individually and collectively grows. **In this way, as educationalists, we contribute to the long-term development of thoughtful, active global citizens and to the possibility of creativity that leads to real change.**

- ☐ **How do we lobby for recognition of such a teacher entitlement?**
- ☐ **Who do we lobby?** [Education leaders? Government? International organisations? Climate Change organisations?]

Photo: Carl Mountain



Invitation

to a Zoom Conversation

Thursday 6th July at 6.30

To consider:

- ☐ core issues from the project - where do we go from here?
- ☐ a proposal about teacher entitlement
- ☐ the outcomes of the ‘Teens & Teachers’ conference

[RSVP - Please use this form](#)

A conversation with Diane Swift ...



Photo: Chris Fournier - The Times of Malta

Diane Swift is currently a teacher educator and advisor with [Keele and North Staffordshire Teacher Education](#), a partnership of over 120 primary, middle, and special schools in Stoke and Staffordshire. She also works with the Primary Education team at the Open University and is a trainer with [Dialogue Works](#).

Diane has been involved with several Tide~ projects, not least [GeoVisions - create the future ... don't let it just happen](#). She chaired the group as it moved from being a Tide~ project to a GA [Geographical Association] strategy group.

We had a conversation with Diane about the education implications of climate change as she sees them. Here are some key points

We have listed links to some of the organisations mentioned. See page 18

Congratulations Diane on your recent PhD



Most climate change issues feature political division - what's your advice?

Engage learners with a variety of perspectives and so they develop the skills to assess the quality of the reasoning underpinning those perspectives.

In broad terms, how do you see the educational implications of climate change?

This goes back to basic questions ... such as "What do we see schools being for?" "What is special about what schools offer?"

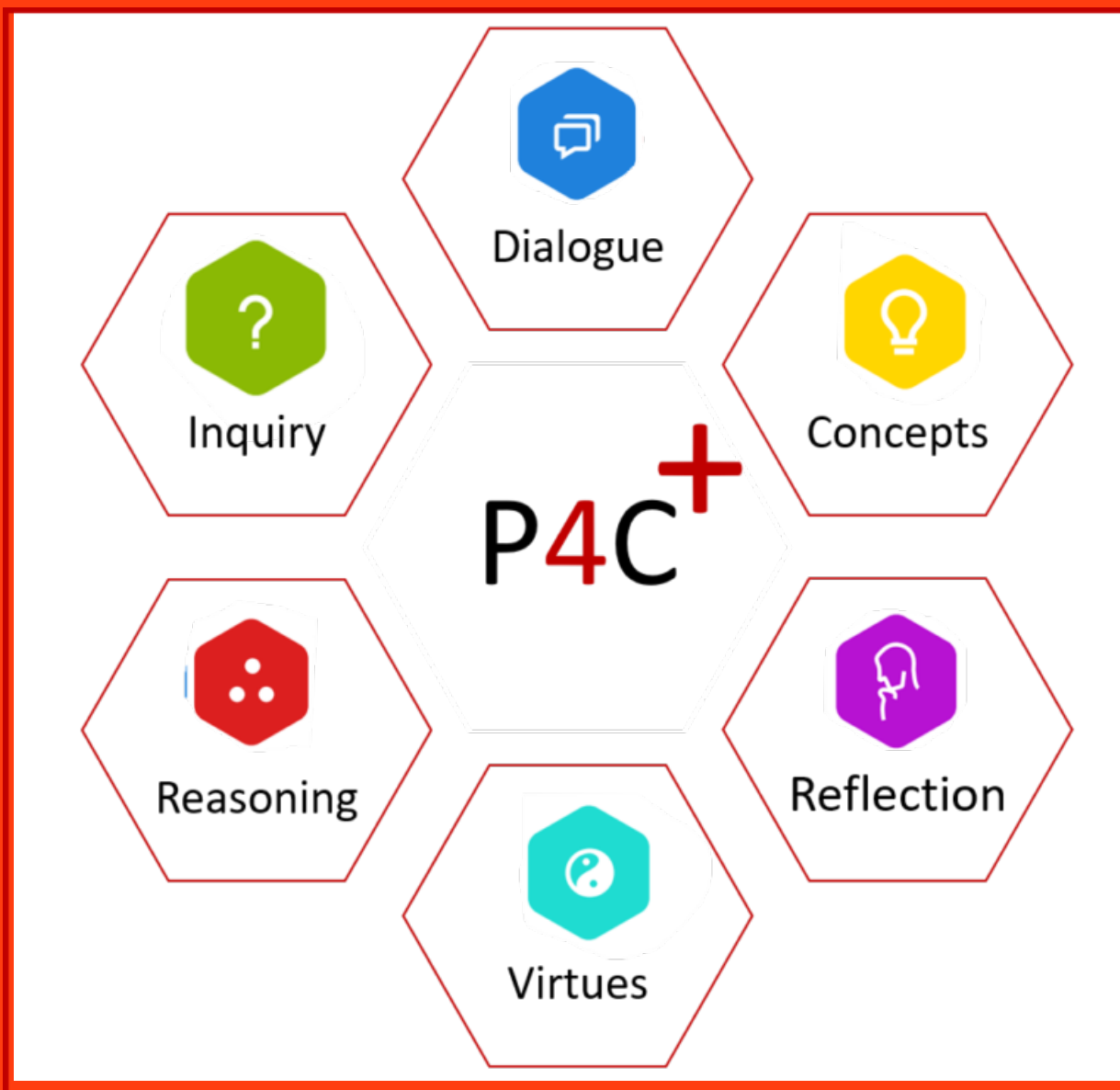
Schools can, and should, make young people's experiences educative, and for me that's about **critical engagement with information in ways that develop reasoning and judgement**. This should result in them being able to participate and have agency in society's 'Big Debates', one of which is the climate crisis.

The implications for my work as a teacher-educator revolves around **curriculum coherence and sequencing in relation to big societal ideas**. If teachers and learners only engage with disconnected elements, it results in an atomised and partial knowledge.



Coherence will enhance learners' reasoning and agency, and an appreciation of nuance and difference so they are able to build that more complex picture. However, **to do that teachers need support to design the curriculum - and not simply to design lessons**.

Dialogue Works ~ six-strand framework of philosophical teaching and learning
extend P4C Plus into a pedagogy which works across the entire curriculum.



Philosophy for Children [P4C]

Tide~ is highlighting dialogue skills. Can you highlight what you see as good practice?

In a number of projects we have used **Philosophy for Children [P4C]** as both a dialogic and a pedagogic approach. The interrelated concepts of caring thinking, critical thinking, creative thinking, and collaborative thinking “hold each other to account”. This helps mitigate against, say, being too collaborative in one’s approach or displaying an “anything goes” attitude.

Through the identification of the Big Ideas or concepts in a key or philosophical question, learners can relate their knowledge and experience to those Big Ideas, and in that collaborative space develop new understandings.

Teachers need the time and space to consider and be explicit about the dilemmas involved and about their education ethos, for example about the role of the teacher. What is key is relational thinking. Thinking in relation to people, other information, other subjects, other places. How does that relational thinking become a resource for the teacher’s and the learners’ own learning and agency?

It is worth considering the difference between dialogic and didactic practices, and how genuinely the teacher **embraces co-construction and being genuinely surprised by learners’ responses**, as opposed to “listening out” for **particular responses** that the teacher wishes to emphasise. In P4C one doesn’t look for a single solution or agreement, but the shared thinking and discussion becomes a resource for all.

There will always be an asymmetry in the relationship between teacher and learner which needs to be acknowledged and I, for one, am comfortable with that, because that is part of what makes schools special. However, the nature of that asymmetry will be different in a dialogic classroom compared to that in a didactic classroom.

It is important that we do not shy away from disciplinary knowledge because there are myths about the very **dangerous misconception that by employing a dialogic pedagogy one is not engaging with a knowledge-rich curriculum.**

A list of key organisations from our discussion

Philosophy for Children [p4c]

p4c process – stimulus – generate questions – vote on questions re. most productive (so modelling democracy as part of the process) – establish ground rules - exercise speaking and listening protocols – concluding stage (e.g. reflect on learners' first thoughts re. different opinion, understanding, contentment).

Dialogue Works

Offers “Thinking Works” as an A to Z framework for making thinking explicit – Thinking Ahead, Thinking Back, Thinking Connect, Thinking Divide ... – allowing a shared language that will facilitate dialogue.

School 21 is a pioneering 4 to 18 school in Stratford, East London, for children from all backgrounds. It operates with the conviction that schools need to ensure a focus on Head (academic success), Heart (character and well-being) and Hand (generating ideas, problem solving, making a difference), and is committed to empowering young people to take on the world, and to the development of innovative practices to change the shape of education in the UK.

Voice 21

Aims to ensure every child in the UK receives high-quality oracy education. [See ET article by Tim Boyes](#)

Rethinking Education

Specialises in three areas, delivering a range of online, remote and face-to-face training programmes for teachers, school leaders and support staff.

Ministry of Eco-Education

See articles on pages 25 and 29.

A collaboration of teachers working together to place sustainability at the heart of education.

Cambridge Educational Dialogue Research

Based at the Faculty of Education, Cambridge, CEDiR has four inter-connected research strands - Dialogue, professional change and leadership; Cultural, religious and philosophical traditions in educational dialogue; Digital technology and dialogue; Classroom dialogue.

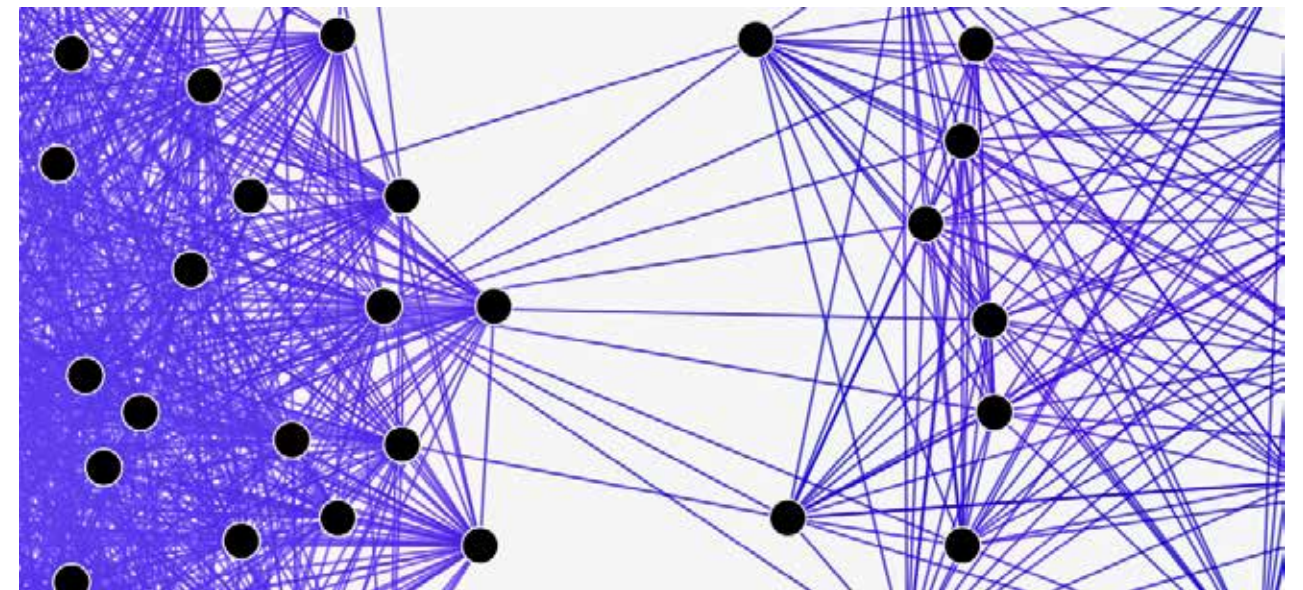
Big Education

A multi-academy trust of schools that believe that the UK curriculum is narrow, outdated, and over-indexed on academics. It argues that “another way is not only possible, but essential”.

When we identify the key concepts underlying, for instance, climate change or sustainability, upon which to base the enquiry, we will find out what learners know. In the process we will identify misconceptions, and gain insight about learner motivation to know and understand more.

Learners are stimulated to seek out and evaluate information, becoming more informed and better prepared to engage in agency, should they wish. This is one way that schools are special places in that they have the subject, knowledge-based organisation that goes well with a dialogic pedagogy.

This allows learners to approach, say, climate change, through different disciplinary lenses and, assuming the sequencing and coherence is correct, **artists, musicians and linguists will have a valued role to play alongside scientists and geographers.**



It is essential that the school works as a community to ensure that the curriculum is coherent and to identify which Big Ideas are to be addressed, allowing learners to engage with different subject disciplines in a structured and reasoned manner. Learners need to employ the different subject lenses to develop their knowledge and understanding.

Underpinning this is dialogue between teachers, departments, and schools **if teachers are to have agency in curriculum development.**

'Our City, Our World' ... a framework



Jonathan Cooper, who recently retired as Head at St Luke's primary in wBrighton, has had a lead strategic role in creating 'Our City Our World', a framework for the development of an integrated climate change and sustainability curriculum and sustainable school operations.

With the demise of the education role of Local Authorities we note that this example of significant work raises questions about local leadership for change in other parts of the country.

Jonathan Cooper reflects on the development of a website - core to a Brighton & Hove strategy

Unlike many UK councils declaring a climate emergency in 2019, Brighton and Hove had the commitment and vision to see that education is key to addressing this emergency. They understood the need to educate ourselves out of this crisis and as a result funded the development with and by local schools of ...

Our City, Our World programme -- a framework which enables schools to place learning about climate change, climate justice and sustainability at the heart of the curriculum.

It is a constructive and creative response to the woeful inadequacies of our present curriculum and the 'placebo policy' (BERA 2022) designed by the DfE - *[Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems]*.

Our education system is failing children. In the Inter-climate Network – 'Climate Action Survey 2021', 3800 young people, aged 11-18 expressed strong views that schools and other adults are not doing enough; 50% are unsure of how they can personally help, whilst 80% feel insufficient time is devoted in school to positive environmental, sustainability and climate change education/action.

As a result, they feel dis-empowered, believing their individual actions have little impact without wider structural change, and that their views don't carry much weight in society, school or even their social group.

Learners are demanding a curriculum which is relevant to today's world and the challenges they are facing. Failure to provide this curriculum is a safeguarding issue and is undermining learners' mental well-being.



Reflecting the opinions and concerns of our students, and community,

'Our City, Our World' is based on the following:

1. **Education is the key** to equipping all learners with the skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of the future. It will enable them to live sustainably in harmony with the planet as part of an inclusive, equitable and diverse society.
2. **Aspiration, vision, and strategy** must be driven by all school leadership and be founded upon collective voice and engagement.
3. **Young people must be deeply involved** in planning, decision making and regular action. They need to develop self-belief as change-makers.
4. **An issues-led but solution-focussed programme.** Children and young people should be regularly involved in significant positive action.
5. **Schools should have clear carbon reduction targets.** [\[The website offers a framework of questions\]](#). We should live our school life through a green lens and embrace a circular economy. The emphasis on sustainable whole school system change is a significant shift, from a few pupils acting through an eco-committee to everyone taking responsibility for change.
6. **The present curriculum must be reviewed**, and opportunities taken to set learning in a 'green' context. The present curriculum is packed leaving no real space for additional modules. [Climate change and sustainability should thread through all subjects.](#)
7. **Pedagogical approaches based on an enquiry-based approach** and collective problem solving, with all parties working in partnership. [See web.](#)
8. **A stronger emphasis on outdoor education.** Many learners feel a disconnect from nature. [Outdoor learning is vital.](#) As David Attenborough said,
"No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced".
9. **A commitment to climate justice** - and to addressing inequalities in access to opportunities to participate in climate and environmental education.

The success of this initial programme has now led to it being adopted by 48 schools in Brighton and Hove - and we have now entered talks with other authorities and academy trusts.

There are challenges for schools with limited capacity to take on new agendas and most staff reported limited expertise in climate change education.

Emerging from a pandemic, and with significant budget issues to deal with, climate change is not always a priority for school leaders. Therefore, the programme aims to give leaders detailed guidance and extensive resources to facilitate its implementation.

It offers 'Leadership for Sustainability' training for heads, governors, school business managers and site managers. **We train them in curriculum development, carbon literacy and support for eco-anxiety.**

The senior programme lead then rolls out this training in the school to all members of staff. Ongoing support is also provided alongside easily adapted strategy documents, audits, surveys, research, curriculum resources and local contacts all collated in [the project website](#).

Networking between these schools is now very strong, enriching each other's work.

Greta Thunberg said ...

"Avoiding climate breakdown will require cathedral thinking. We must lay the foundation while we may not know exactly how to build the ceiling".

Schools are the place for laying these foundations. We have a moral duty to ensure we do so comprehensively and effectively.



Weaving Sustainability into the Curriculum

Dominic Simpson * ...

... describes the journey the school has taken
and the role of Ministry of Eco-Education [MEE]

As the world faces challenges posed by climate change, it is increasingly important to educate future generations about sustainability.

How do we make sustainability part of the curriculum and purposeful, not so that it's a "bolt-on" or just addressing a current issue, but something deeply rooted in the moral purpose that we have as educators to ensure that we provide children with the skills and knowledge they need?

This was the question that we found ourselves asking often over the last few years as we look at how the curriculum can provide opportunities for teaching about sustainability. As part of Windsor Academy Trust the issue of providing our children with understanding of sustainability was already a key part of our strategy. But ...

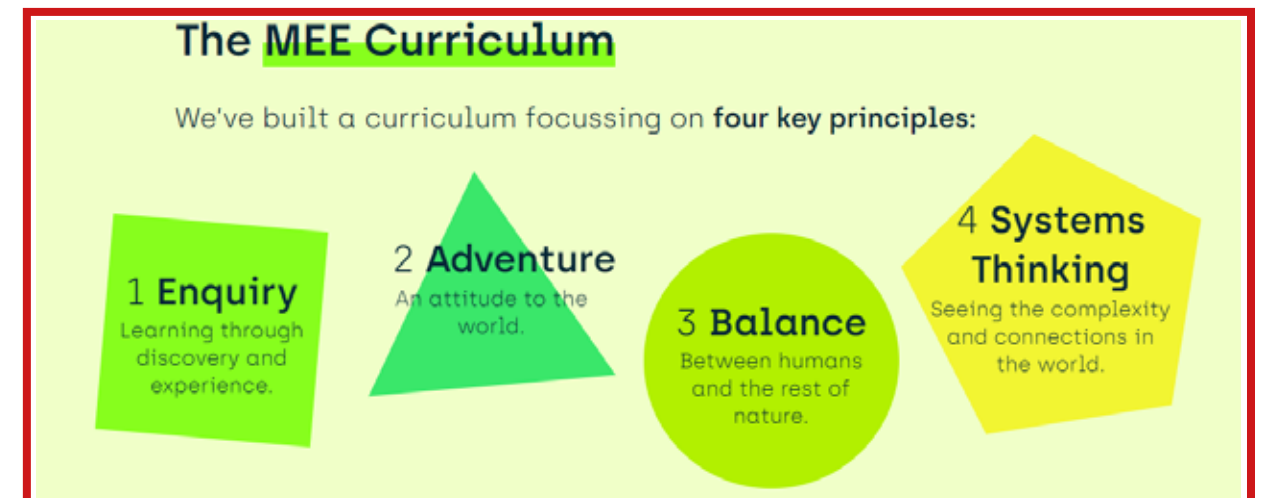
- ◇ How could we approach the challenge?
- ◇ How does it fit into an already time-restricted curriculum?



* Dominic Simpson is headteacher of Colley Lane Primary Academy, Dudley. Part of the Windsor Academy Trust family.

Our journey started in a webinar presented by Paul Turner from the Ministry of Eco-Education [MEE], that I attended last April. Paul presented the ethos of this charitable project and more importantly for time-strapped teachers, explained that they had gathered a host of resources from different sources, turned them into schemes of work and had worked alongside schools and so had a proven record of success. The schemes of work are all based around a big question, such as "Should we all go Vegan?". This is well aligned with the 'Aspire Primary Curriculum' approach that we take as a Trust.

We begin each of our themes with an enquiry question, an overarching big question upon which knowledge, skills and investigation can be built. As I listened to Paul, with his passion, it became clear how I could start to address sustainability through the curriculum.



Later at a meeting with Paul, we looked to trial the resources with staff. They looked at the schemes of work from MEE and discussed 'big questions' that might ignite a passion, such as ...

"Do we live on a plastic planet?" or "Why are some people hungry?".

It was a case of 'having a go' and enabling staff to explore the resources that had been collated by Paul and his team. The trial was a huge success, not only from generating and capturing the school community's passion for sustainability and its importance but also in how it could be weaved into the curriculum. It was clear to staff and leadership that there was the support for implementing sustainability across our curriculum.

MEE have developed curriculum ideas drawing on a wide range of freely available resources to embed sustainability across every subject.



Transport



Energy



Food



Nature



Society



Waste



Water

THE MINISTRY OF ECO EDUCATION

- a collaboration of teachers working together to place sustainability at the heart of education

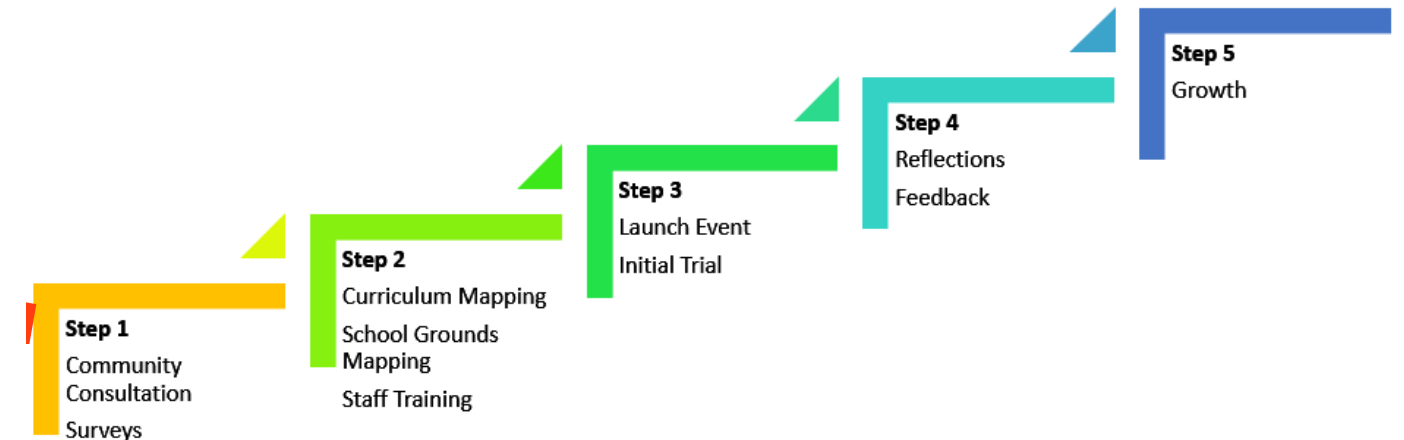


Click to see video

Video: Nick Moss [Head at Minchinhampton Primary] discusses the early days of the MEE initiative. The vision was one of school improvement enhanced by work responding to sustainable development and climate change.

Once we had started this journey, it became clear how much is available for schools to enable children, staff and parents to develop the knowledge and understanding of the need to address sustainability within our curriculum, not only to raise the collective purpose of why it's important but also to address our civic responsibility. An introduction to Schools of Tomorrow and further research into the MEE's successful work with schools such as Minchinhampton Academy, consolidated the desire to move forward with this.

After presenting to our Trust Leadership Team and partnering with MEE, we are now in the stages of developing a Trust-wide approach to the curriculum at primary and secondary level. Colley Lane Primary Academy with Cheslyn Hay Academy and Great Wyrley Academy are the first schools to work on embedding sustainability across the curriculum



The clear 5 steps of implementing the project from the MEE, which has worked in their founding schools, alongside the four key principles of their curriculum, made it easy for us to see how it will be embedded.



Paul Turner (MEE) meeting with Dawn Haywood, CEO, Chris Berry, Director of Operations and Heads from Windsor Academy Trust

MEE has supported us – meeting the Trust Leadership, leading assemblies and delivering CPD for staff.

It is an exciting time, the journey has begun to have sustainability **not just weaved into our Aspire Curriculum, but at the heart of it.**



A call for more collaboration ...



It often feels like competition is a natural and necessary part of the world. We watch football matches where one team wins if they score more goals, nature programmes show fighting and hunting between species, and advertising sells us the vision of a highly individualised society.

Far from natural, we must recognise competition as something forced upon us as a symptom of a capitalist system in crisis. **Competition for profits, resources, and markets disunites more than it unites.**

Scientists on the other hand suggest - *“when we see animals like elephant seals fighting with each other, we’re really seeing only a very small sliver of time. Much more of the time they’re accommodating each other and respecting where the boundaries are, that’s cooperation. There is a tremendous amount of cooperation in nature. Humans, plants, and animals are made up of cells that learned to cooperate long ago.”*

See article: [‘Birds Do It. Bats Do It.’](#)

It features research that shows how cooperation prevails across the animal kingdom. And asks - what can humans learn from other species?



Competition is embedded into every aspect of school life. **Young people take examinations where only a certain proportion of people can achieve each grade.**

Yet schools compete on the basis of the best exam results. Universities only have so many places and there’s only so many high paid jobs.

For people working to create change in education and respond to the climate and nature crisis, this creates a dilemma ...

True sustainability can only be achieved through greater collaboration and human connection.

Just as climate justice requires us to dismantle the structures of inequality, we also need to challenge the normalisation of competition.

Is there the potential for greater collaboration in education for sustainability and the possibility of achieving more?

But is there a danger ...

- ❑ that some organisations operate as if they 'own' ... with potentially detrimental language that could make schools feel like they can't take up opportunities from other organisations?
- ❑ Is there a danger that organisations appear to 'land grab', fencing off academy chains and parts of the country for only them. With schools as metaphorical castles, with moats and drawbridges around towns?
- ❑ Is there a danger of a lack of transparency, with a lack of clarity of where funding comes from? Does it matter if an organisation is for profit, community interest or a charity?
- ❑ Is there danger organisations work in isolation, duplicating or replicating ideas rather than building on the work of others?
- ❑ Is there a danger that organisations operating with vastly different numbers of staff and amounts of money are presented as equal in the eyes of schools?
- ❑ Is there a danger it can feel like a race to Hoover up as many schools as possible, to have the most schools take part in an initiative compared to another?

But why is there an atmosphere of competition?

Is it because the funding for education for sustainability is precarious?
Stripped away by decades of austerity.

Is it a result of the workload of teachers?
A result of an already overwhelmed system.

Is it because of a lack of government co-ordination?
Where strategies are published with little consideration.

We set up the Ministry of Eco Education to help bring people and resources together. We work with organisations to weave the wealth of resources and opportunities into a series of lessons and a 5 step journey for whole school sustainability, to make the most of all the opportunities available. We recognised the decades of experience in people and organisations and actively sought out conversations and opportunities to build on the work of others.

As we see it ----

In nature, biodiversity builds resilience.

A community made of different organisms supporting each other is more likely to overcome difficulty and thrive.

We must take every opportunity to share knowledge and expertise, to build networks and create spaces of sharing.

To achieve the change we need, we need to collaborate, cooperate, and support each other.

Guiding principles for school initiative

Rachel Tomlinson - Headteacher Barrowford Primary

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play a major part in our school and have for the past seven years. The curriculum is built on four pillars, the first being the National Curriculum. The second is a framework of dispositions, skills, qualities that we hope to develop in our pupils, and we call **'Rounded and Grounded'**. That draws on the work of [Guy Claxton](#).

The third pillar is provided by the SDGs, and the fourth is based on the **Rights of the Child**.

The four pillars have equal weighting and value in our school and are considered through a **'Belonging Lens'**, by which I mean ..

- ♦ Can our children see themselves in our curriculum?
- ♦ Can they see other people from the community, local and global?

Guy Claxton's 4 Rs' ...

Resilience: 'being ready, willing and able to look on to learning'. Being able to stick with difficulty and cope with feelings such as fear and frustration.

Resourcefulness: 'being ready, willing and able to learn in different ways'. Having a variety of learning strategies and knowing when to use them.

Reflection: 'being ready, willing and able to become more strategic about learning'. Getting to know our own strengths and weaknesses.

Relationships: 'being ready, willing and able to learn alone and with others'.

The spur to engage pedagogically with the SDGs came when four of us from the school, our office manager, two classroom teachers and myself, attended a weekend conference organised by [Ashoka](#) and [Routes to Resilience](#).

We were ready to make sweeping personal changes, and to consider what the implications were for our professional practice.

On reflection, the curriculum we had developed up to then, which we designed to give our children agency through the opportunity to create change through projects with explicit outcomes, I now think was, perhaps, inauthentic and superficial.

However, it did put us in a position, when we identified what we felt was important, to be able to **challenge ourselves ... and then our children to be agents of change**.

The fact that there were four of us involved was important. Trying to do something similar as an individual in a school would be extremely difficult.

The SDGs provide a useful framework for curriculum review.

Though they are in the public domain, not everyone, and certainly not all Heads, seem to be aware of them. There have been occasions when I have spoken about the SDGs and the reaction from some colleagues, not from our school I might add, has made me think, *"They think I'm talking about STDs"*.

The SDGs may not be an educational tool but what do effective teachers do? **They take a concept, a framework and adapt it to support their practice and enhance their pupils' learning.**

Our approach to teaching and learning is project-based and goes beyond 'topic' and beyond 'theme'. It is knowledge-rich and supports the application of that knowledge to a real-life context.

We've worked with [Tim Taylor](#) to employ Dorothy Heathcote's drama-inspired [The Mantle of the Expert](#) to, for example, explore the issues surrounding hedgerow removal and develop some emotional involvement with the **pupils becoming "bothered"**.



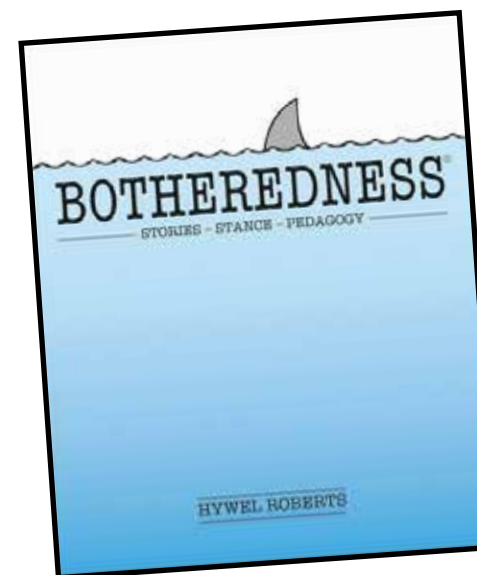
Hedgerow Removal

Supporting pupils to understand and become bothered about

- ☐ Why would a farmer wish to sell a field?
- ☐ How might local residents react?
- ☐ Why might a property developer want to remove an ancient hedgerow?
- ☐ How valuable is an ancient hedgerow?
- ☐ What would be the impact of removing the hedgerow?
- ☐ What would be the possible outcomes for all involved (human, flora and fauna)?
- ☐ How they can influence, say, a local development?
- ☐ What differences can they make in their world?

Our spiral curriculum ensures that we address the content outlined in the National Curriculum and that we can plan for progression.

Barrowford's 12-Week Spring Term Project-Based Spiral



Our efforts at curriculum development have been supported by [Hywel Roberts](#) and [Debra Kidd](#). For example, Hywel's '*Oops, Helping Kids Learn Accidentally*' ... as opposed to making kids jump through hoops. And more recently his book '*Botheredness*'.

I see hope as being an integral element to my role as a head. Without hope, how can we provide children with knowledge and skills needed to drive change towards a more sustainable future?

If you're not hopeful, that must lead to increased anxiety for the children. There's a lot of evidence that children are anxious about the future, theirs and the environment's.

"... anxiousness among both primary and secondary-age pupils appears to have increased and is higher than in 2020/21". Government Report [p13]

['State of the nation 2022: children & young people's wellbeing'](#)

It is our job to be hopeful so that they are hopeful about their agency, their knowledge and abilities impacting positively on the world around them. For example, we're a Reward-Free, Sanction-Free school and that involves taking responsibility for your own actions, and that agency.

I know that much of what I've said may seem like a second-language to some because the notion of a '**knowledge rich curriculum**' is at the very **forefront of current educational practice and thought**, but not only am I hopeful about the children, about our school, but also about what should and could happen educationally in the future.

Routes to resilience ...



Teaching English - a distinctive role

Marie Hartley ...

In response to, and inspired by, the last edition of Elephant Times, I offer some suggestions for how the teaching of English Language and Literature can enable students to develop some of the skills required by the curriculum, and explore ideas relevant to an understanding of the existential threat of climate change, in a dynamic and life affirming way.

I suggest we need to beware of a reliance on measurability alone. It's important to allow the ineffable. In my subject, English Literature, I hope that my students come to have an appreciation of the sublime, of the numinous, to experience awe and wonder, and I believe that those experiences can create the passion and engagement to power their thinking on preserving the planet.

Teaching English Literature is not about searching for plays and stories that illustrate the effects of climate change. Good literature is much more nuanced and complex than that, and education is not about proselytising.

It is vital that we all give credence to students. They are going to inspire their teachers with their passion for change, and the diligence with which they approach the task involved, BUT their lives are not the slightest bit easy.

The curriculum must engage and inspire them, and offer hope so that students can feel that they can be the conduits of change.

And, students, I have every faith, will be passionately committed to making their schools greener. They will drive these initiatives, and inspire their teachers.

Some suggestions for how climate change could be used as a stimulus in English lessons in secondary school.

❑ Younger students will enjoy the following activity:

- ◇ Create an endangered species. Invent habitat and specific details about the species. Draw, paint, make, or use the interactive whiteboard to show the audience a visual representation of the creature.
- ◇ Give a one-minute speech, explaining why the species is in danger from global warming.

The skills of imagination, creativity, persuasion and presentation are to the fore here. This is an initial stimulus which could easily be developed and have further iterations,

❑ Students in the middle secondary school years could practise skills of advocacy, rhetoric, explanation and argument:

- ◇ Role play delegates or protesters at a climate summit.
- ◇ Ask invited guests attending the summit to engage in dialogue, after hearing short speeches from the delegates/ protesters, thus practising the skills of debate in a lively and topical manner.

❑ Shakespeare is timeless. In my experience, students usually love Shakespeare. There is the opportunity, at GCSE level, to be creative.

- ◇ A study of the sheep shearing scene in "The Winter's Tale" will enable them to analyse the language which Shakespeare uses to create the sense of a temperate climate - the one which is now under threat.
- ◇ Students might discuss how the mood and atmosphere of clemency created by Shakespeare in this scene could be represented on stage.

❑ A level or Baccalaureate students, studying English Literature, might read and discuss, perhaps in pairs, using highlighters, the opening chapter of Richard Jefferies' "After London," a post-apocalyptic narrative.

A scrutiny of the ways that Jefferies' style creates a mood of desolation and desuetude might result in pair presentations, or written analysis.

Bridging the gap educators and students

Secondary Schools' Conference
Glamorgan Building, Cardiff University
Thursday 29 June 2023

Teens & Teachers Take on Climate Education

Inspired by conversations between young people and educators, Bassaleg School is working in partnership with Tide~ and Cardiff University to provide **a stimulating and liberating space for older students (Y10 & Y12) and teachers to jointly explore climate education provision.**

We aim to involve up to 120 teacher and student delegates from 20 schools.

Our key question is:
How can we recognise and build young people's skills to navigate the multi-dimensional climate emergency?

A **pre-conference activity** and follow-up **autumn event** will support delegates to apply ideas from the conference to their own setting.

Recommendations from this conference will inform practitioners, policy-makers and politicians in Wales and beyond.

This conference is a pilot for **dialogue events** for young people and their teachers across the UK.

The conference is free, thanks to sponsorship from The Foundation for Compassionate Education (CoEd) and the work of partnership organisations.

YSGOL BASSALEG SCHOOL

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

THE COED FOUNDATION

Tide~
Connecting Dialogues

Conference updates -- see [Bassaleg School website](#)

Conference contact - click to email: conference@bassalegschool.com

*Lucy Kirkham, Rhiannon Hawkins, Oliver Lewis & Karina Marwaha
reflect on the process that led to the conference*

On 29th June Cardiff University's Glamorgan Building will be full of young people and their teachers exploring climate education. The story behind this event starts in Bassaleg School, an 11-18 comprehensive on the outskirts of Newport, South Wales.

Revealing the gap

In November 2021, Rhiannon, an ex-Bassaleg student now a geography student at the University of Oxford, was working on a journal series for the Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMH). The focus was the interconnections between mental health and the global ecological crisis. Rhiannon chaired an ACAMH online seminar titled: [Ecological Crisis and the Impact on Mental Health](#) and invited Lucy, her former geography teacher, to attend.

The seminar opened Lucy's eyes. Despite teaching and worrying about climate change for decades, Lucy had not appreciated how young people feel so alone with the threat; how young people's entirely rational concerns are not acknowledged or acted upon; how the climate and ecological emergency is an existential problem that has been seemingly left for young people to solve. Lucy decided to listen more, connect further and highlight the positive actions that are being taken.

Planting the seed

One year later, Lucy hosts an online 'starter conversation' - part of a project looking at the educational implications of climate change run by Tide~ global learning. Inspired by the ACAMH seminar, the conversation focuses on young people's voices. Rhiannon takes part, along with current pupils, Ollie (Year 12) and Karina (Year 10). The input from very articulate students stimulated the conversation. It led to the suggestion of a conference for learners and their teachers to provide:

- ❑ **space for students and teachers to jointly explore climate education;**
- ❑ **a contribution to developing how climate change is seen in schools.**

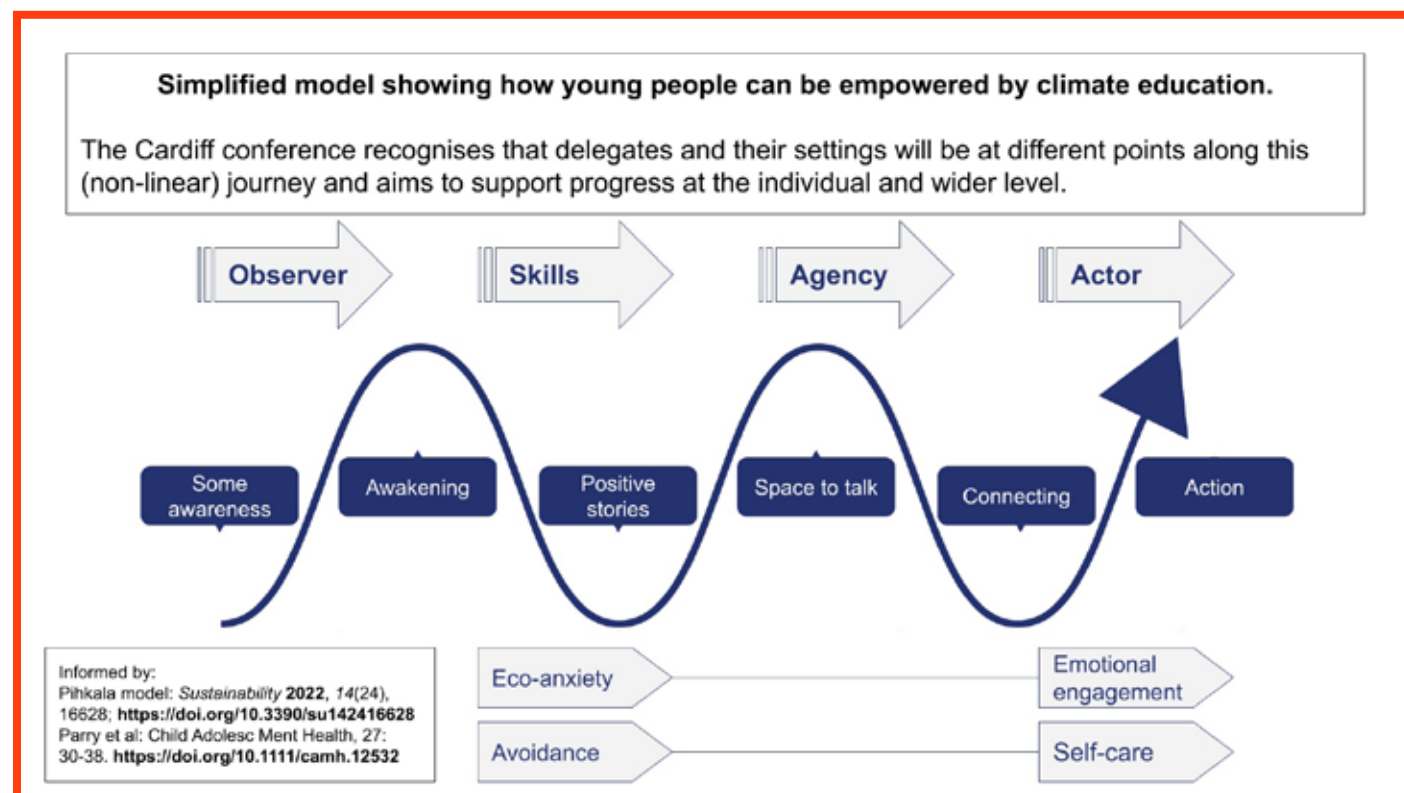
Growing the conference

Rhiannon and Lucy meet up at Newport Wetlands. They started to discuss the conference, and it takes on a life of its own. Ideas emerge from a shared passion to incorporate alternative perspectives, and

provide the space for people to think and speak freely, and critically. The ideas are captured on the only piece of paper to hand - a Tesco receipt!

Back in school Karina and Ollie are positive and they join the conference planning team. Weekly lunchtime meetings are held to discuss ideas, plan conference format and design promotional material. Staff and pupils at Bassaleg lend support. Asher (Year 10) uses the Bassaleg stag in artwork. Rowan (Year 10) works on a diagram to capture the process.

Colleagues help refine ideas and secure sponsorship from the [Compassionate Education Foundation](#). Cardiff University Geography Department offer to host the conference. Approaching suitable speakers has been an adventure.



A journey

To summarise the aims and goals for the conference, we envisage a 'journey' that delegates join when signing up. The journey will help develop pedagogy, gain inspiration for future positive action, and grow mental health resilience.

We seek a conference that will help us all feel:

- less alone; -more informed; - a part of future change.

To support change at the school level, we hope:

- ❑ *people can use what we all learn to develop some new climate education within their school;*
- ❑ *opportunities will shape up for collaboration between schools, within a local area, to create more relevant and inspiring climate education.*

Reflections so far

As we write, schools are replying to conference invitations. An evaluation will be carried out and a post-conference event is planned for the autumn. **For now, we can take stock of what we have gained to this point ...**

Oliver and Karina: During this process, we have been grateful for the opportunities that have been given to us - from being directly involved in the organisation of the conference, to making connections and learning from people in different parts of the country.

We feel it's safe to say that we have gained new and varied skills that will greatly benefit us in the future. As people who are looking to join conservation efforts as a future career, we have found discussing climate change in a new open-minded way, massively helpful in understanding the problem.

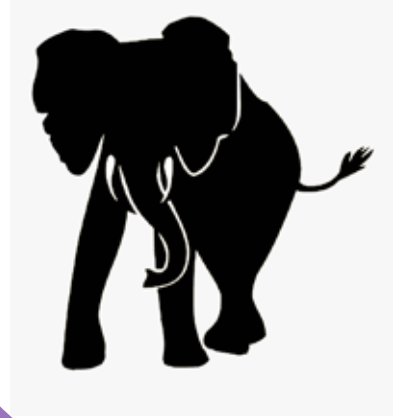
Rhiannon: As an individual who has been provided with the opportunities to learn about various pedagogical perspectives surrounding climate change, and attend COP27 negotiations, I see sharing my knowledge and experiences with other young people as extremely important.

This project has taught me that to achieve climate justice collaborating with schools and policymakers is critical to inspire both educators and young people to work together. I feel extremely privileged to be invited to work on a project which has the potential to inspire current and future secondary school students.

Lucy: This whole journey for me started with a revelation when I attended the ACAMH seminar. It continues in that vein. I am excited about what ideas will emerge from the conference. Already I have learnt so much. I have resolved to continue to listen to learners, connect with practitioners and read more widely - **it makes me a better and happier teacher**. I really hope that other teachers and their students will join the journey.



Elephant Times



Connecting Dialogues

Tide~ global learning

[Visit Tide~ website](#)