



Children's
Parliament
Investigates...

Learning for Sustainability



Learning for Sustainability

Phase 3:

Children at the Centre: Exploring the
Four Learner Settings of Scotland's
Target 2030 Action Plan

July 2025



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**"The earth should
be treated with
dignity too—like a
person."**

- Member of Children's Parliament, age 10



Introduction

In this report we share children's views, opinions, and key messages resulting from their investigation into the four learner settings of Scotland's Learning For Sustainability Target 2030 Action Plan.

Phase 3 of the partnership with the Scottish Government's Curriculum and Qualifications Division builds on two years of collaboration during which children informed the content and direction of the Target 2030 Action Plan. This phase also connects to ongoing work across Children's Parliament to embed children's participation in Scottish climate policy and education. Children play a key role in shaping the national response to the climate emergency through their contributions to [Scotland's Climate Assembly](#) and the [Child Human Rights Defenders project](#), which includes a series of Calls to Action for the Scottish Government on climate education.

This phase focused on providing space for children to reflect on and respond to the Target 2030 Action Plan, which aims to ensure that all children, educators, and school communities work together to create sustainable learning environments.

The Target 2030 Action Plan is structured around four interconnected areas: curriculum, campus, culture, and community. These areas aim to ensure a whole-school approach to sustainability. The Target 2030 Action Plan seeks to ensure all children in Scotland receive their entitlement to Learning For Sustainability, allowing them to explore more deeply and practically the cross-cutting curriculum areas of outdoor learning, sustainable development, and global citizenship—all of which embed children's human rights and social justice into educational practice. Learning For Sustainability equips children with the understanding and skills to explore the kind of communities and world they want to live in, now and in the future.

Children's Parliament has worked with children in this phase of the project to explore their understanding of the Target 2030 Action Plan, identify where it is already being implemented in their schools, review their participation in their learning, and make recommendations for Learning For Sustainability provision. This work continues to reinforce the importance of listening to children as equal partners in shaping a sustainable and fair future for all.



A Children's Human Rights Approach to Learning for Sustainability

At Children's Parliament, children's human rights are at the heart of everything we do. With the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) now part of [Scots law](#) it is more important than ever to ensure children grow up safe, supported, and empowered to shape their own futures. This includes the right to live in, learn about, and help protect a healthy and sustainable environment.

Children's Parliaments work is grounded in a children's human rights approach, which recognises children as rights holders with ideas, insights, and solutions. We support children to understand and claim their rights, and to defend not only their own rights but also the rights of others. At the same time, we help adults build their capacity as duty bearers, equipping them to meet their responsibilities to children.

We work with children from early years to age 14, creating safe and respectful environments where they are listened to, their views influence decisions, and they are encouraged to advocate for themselves and their communities. We see children not just as future leaders, but as active citizens today; central to shaping education, policy, and the world around them, especially in the context of climate change and sustainability.

This rights-based approach is underpinned by the core values of the UNCRC: dignity, participation, inclusion, non-discrimination, and the best interests of the child. It is built on relationships founded in human rights values such as respect, empathy, equity, and trust. These relationships are essential for children to develop confidence in their own voice, and for adults to learn from children and create meaningful change.

Education plays a crucial role in this work. It should not only help children understand their rights and the challenges their communities

face but also equip them to take part in climate action and environmental protection. Children have the right to grow up in a world where nature is respected and sustained. This is supported not only by the UNCRC but also by [General Comment No. 26](#), which reminds governments and decision-makers of their duty to protect children from environmental harm, including that caused by business and policy decisions.

Scotland's Learning For Sustainability Target 2030 Action Plan was shaped in part by children's voices. Our ongoing focus is to help turn those ideas into reality. We are working alongside schools and early years settings to build supportive, inclusive learning environments where children can lead, contribute meaningfully, and help co-create a fairer, greener, and just future for all.



Engagement and Exploring the Target 2030 Action Plan

Children's Parliament focused on two primary schools in Dumfries and Galloway Kirkcolm and Leswalt. Both schools were selected for their strong leadership and commitment to Learning For Sustainability, with sustainability embedded across the curriculum and supported by a whole school approach to environmental responsibility.

Their achievements include the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award, Eco Schools Green Flag status, as well as been awarded national recognition in Education Scotland's annual Learning for Sustainability awards in 2021.

Located within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, the schools make use of their natural surroundings to support place based outdoor learning. Connections with local farms, conservation groups, and community organisations help make sustainability education relevant and meaningful to children and their families.

Learning is further supported through forest school approaches, regular outdoor activities, and self-evaluation using "[How Good is Our School?](#)" frameworks adapted for children. [The Eco Schools Action Plan](#) also guides whole school planning. Both schools actively explore how to embed Learning For Sustainability over

the long term and are open to developing this work further taking a stronger Children's Human Rights approach and practice.

To explore Scotland's Learning For Sustainability Target 2030 Action Plan, Children's Parliament worked with composite classes of Primary 5, 6, and 7 pupils. In total, 42 children participated. Through interactive, child led activities, they explored how the areas of curriculum, campus, community, and culture contribute to a sustainable school. Children reflected on what was already working and identified where further action was needed.

Over a six-month period, children shared their ideas, priorities, and lived experiences. A thematic analysis identified which parts of the Target 2030 Action Plan felt most relevant and achievable in their school settings. The process demonstrated children's capacity to engage meaningfully with national policy and reinforced their role as rights holders and changemakers.

Child Friendly Version of the Target 2030 Action Plan: Developed by Children's Parliament with consultation with children from Kirkcolm Primary School and Leswalt Primary School.



TARGET 2030: LFS ACTION PLAN

Target 2030 is a plan to make sure that by the year 2030, every school and learning place in Scotland (for children aged 3 to 18) becomes more sustainable. This means learning how to care for the environment, treat people fairly, and make good choices that help the world. These actions will be taken in the following areas and through the following ways.

Campus – Spaces we learn in

School buildings and playgrounds will be greener, cleaner, and better for nature.

Children spend more time learning outdoors in gardens, forests, and parks.

Schools will try to use less energy and waste fewer things, like paper and plastic.

Curriculum – What We Learn

Children will learn more about how to take care of the planet across all our subjects.

Classes and awards will help us show what we know about the environment and fairness.

Children will learn by connecting different topics, like nature, helping others, and learning outside.

Culture – How the place allows us Learn and Live

Everyone at school will try to be kind, fair, and helpful to people and the planet.

Children and young people will help lead eco-projects and share their ideas.

Teachers will get training so they can include caring for the Earth in everyday lessons.

Community – People who we learn with

Schools will work with families, local people, and groups to make good changes together.

Some teachers and helpers will share ideas and tips to help other schools.

A website will help schools and communities share cool projects and fun resources.

Understanding Dignity: Exploring Children's Rights and the Planet

To create a shared starting point with the children and to firmly root the project in a human rights based approach, we began by exploring the concept of dignity. Together, we considered what dignity means for each child as an individual, for other children, and for the planet. We framed dignity as the experience of being happy, healthy, and safe, core entitlements for every child.

Children were invited to explore the concept of dignity through metaphors, storytelling, and creative, hands-on activities. These approaches opened space for children to speak about rights

and empathy, as well as to demonstrate care for each other and the environment. This approach laid the foundations for the rest of the project, helping children connect their own experiences with wider ideas about justice, fairness, and sustainability.



What We Did

Dignity and Rights: The Dignitree

Children were introduced to the concept of dignity through the Dignitree, a visual metaphor. The roots and the trunk of the tree represented the foundations of dignity, grounded in the UNCRC and children's rights, while the branches and leaves symbolised the people, places, and experiences that help children feel safe, valued, and cared for. Through drawing and discussion, each child created their own Dignitree.

This process encouraged them to reflect on their lived experiences, recognise how their rights are upheld, and develop empathy by hearing how others experience dignity in different ways.



Dignity and the Environment: The Dignometer

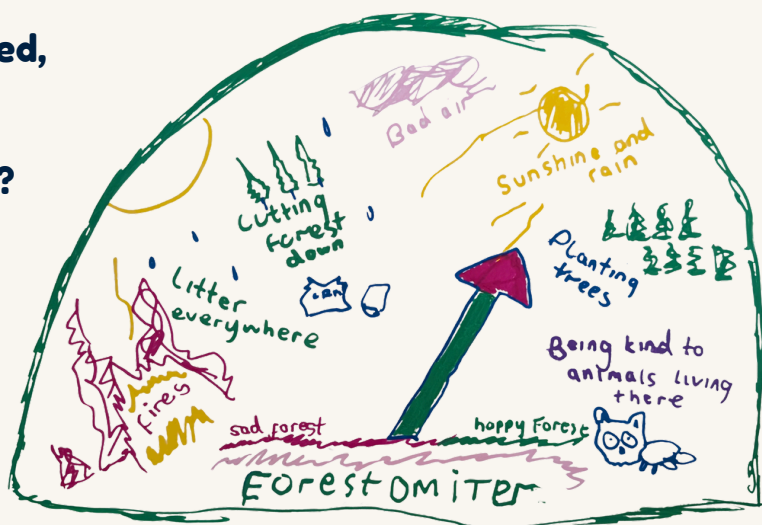
To build on this understanding, children explored how dignity applies to the natural environment using the Dignometer. This is a tool developed by Children's Parliament to help children reflect on what allows them to be happy, healthy, and safe, and adapted to consider how this applies to the natural world.

Working in groups, children selected local natural spaces such as nearby woodlands, school grounds, or coastal areas and used the Dignometer to reflect on how human actions may support or damage the environment. Children were asked to think about:

What makes this place feel respected, protected, or cared for?

What improves or harms its dignity?

How do people's actions affect this environment?



Linking Rights to the Natural World

To connect children's rights more directly with the environment, children engaged with illustrated scenarios featuring the Learning For Sustainability mascot "Dodger the Squirrel" in situations based on real world environmental issues. These included Dodger in a flooded school, a field of failed crops, a heavily polluted area in a city, and a damaged building following a storm. Using these scenarios, children were asked to consider:

What happened?
Which rights were affected?

In doing so, they began to understand the link between a healthy environment and the ability to uphold everyone's dignity.



What We Found

As children explored the idea of dignity, they began to connect it not only to their own rights but also to how people treat each other and the planet. Their discussions opened up important thinking around fairness, environmental change, and the choices people make. The points below, with quotes from the children following, illustrate how children expressed these ideas in more detail, and what dignity means to them in practice.

1

By rooting the work in the concept of dignity, children began making strong links between climate change and fairness. They recognised how environmental problems can make life harder for some children across the world, and how it is all connected to their rights.

"If people don't have clean air or water, how can they be healthy?"

"It's not fair that some children lose their homes because of floods while others don't even know it's happening."

2

When exploring the connection between climate change, environmental action, and children's rights, children began to understand rights as active—something affected by the people, places, and circumstances around them.

"Rights aren't just something you have—they can be affected by what's happening around you and how people treat the planet and each other."

"If your school gets flooded, it's not just water, it's your right to learn"

3

Children showed curiosity about why people make choices that harm the environment. They were interested in understanding people's motivations and actions.

"Do grown-ups know they're causing problems, or do they think someone else will fix it later?"

4

Children spoke about the planet as something that also deserves kindness and respect. They felt that dignity isn't just for people, nature deserves it too.

"The earth should be treated with dignity too—like a person."

"Trees and animals can't talk, but that doesn't mean they don't matter."



Our School Spaces: Focusing on the School Campus

Children's Learning For Sustainability activity is situated across a variety of spaces, both indoors and outdoors. To begin this phase of the work, Children's Parliament supported children to explore two key areas connected to their school spaces.

- How are school buildings and grounds already kind to the environment?
- What do children need from outdoor spaces to help them learn about nature and climate change?



What We Did

Mapping a Sustainable Campus

Children's Parliament took a mantle of the expert approach, framing children as environmental researchers, tasked to research activity or physical things that their school does to be kind and support a healthy planet.

Children in groups were provided with different categories to support them in their explorations and mapping of their school campus. Examples of the categories include animals, energy, waste, and water. These were used thematically to consider how their school buildings and grounds were already kind to the environment, as well as what they might need from outdoor spaces to helpfully learn about nature and climate change.

Children identified spaces or things that connected to this, such as solar panels, bug hotels, and recycling boxes, and documented them on a larger map. From this research, children looked to develop a trail for other members of the school community to explore.

Focusing on Outdoor Spaces

Experiencing spaces physically, emotionally, and relationally, children were asked to think deeply about the different outdoor spaces that form part of their school (including external grounds). They were invited to explore and reflect on one outdoor space they learn within that brings them joy.

Through an invitation to draw, write notes, or document in their own way, they were asked to consider:

What do you do here that helps you learn about the planet?

How do teachers and children act in this space?

What is it about being in this space that gives you joy?



Recording Cave: Outdoor Spaces

Children played an active role in designing and setting up a dedicated space where they could explore and discuss different parts of the project. This involved the creation of a travelling recording cave; a space used to support deeper conversations about what helps learning outdoors.

Inside the cave, children were invited to reflect on their learning environment using prompts that encouraged them to think about what works well, what challenges they face, and what changes could improve their experiences.

What We Found

As children examined their school buildings and outdoor spaces, they reflected on what supports their learning and encourages care for the environment. They identified key features that make these spaces meaningful, engaging, and supportive of sustainability. The following points and quotes outline the aspects they felt were most important.

1

Children highlighted the importance of trust in outdoor spaces. They explained that being trusted by adults helped them feel safe, confident, and more able to take part in shared responsibilities and creative learning.

"I think if adults trust us we don't get worried like we're doing the wrong thing, like it lets us run around on our own and do learning."

"The teacher trusts us to not go beyond the rocks at the beach, they explain why and we know it's because they're trying to keep us safe"

2

Children shared that being involved in shaping their learning environments made them feel a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility.

Within the action of shaping the spaces, children thought more deeply about sustainability, community, and how their actions make a difference.

"[On the chicken coop] When we help design things and are given time to look after it, we take care of it more."

"It feels more like our school when we help make it better for the environment."

3

Learning beyond the school grounds gave children a deeper sense of purpose. They recognised that their actions could have an impact beyond the classroom, strengthening their connection to the wider community and environment.

"Like when we go to the Wetland and we work with people, it's just good because they're wanting to learn and they teach us things we wouldn't know inside."

"We have to see these people around the village, so if we do a bad job then they're going to know."

4

While inclusion and accessibility were seen as essential, children also wanted outdoor spaces to remain engaging. They valued environments that offer safe risks and opportunities to explore, climb, build, and be curious.

"Everyone should be able to join in, but it still needs to be fun and challenging."

"It should be for everyone, but that doesn't mean it has to be boring!"



5

Joy in outdoor learning was often linked to unstructured time, freedom to explore, and repeated visits to the same place. Children expressed that spending time in one location helped them feel more connected to nature and notice the small details that build a sense of belonging.

"I think it brings me joy because we go there a lot and there's lots to discover because it's always changing—it's just fun."

"The more we go, the more we see."



Communities: The People We Work With

As part of the Target 2030 Action Plan, schools are encouraged to build stronger connections with their wider communities, not only to enhance children's learning, but also to support broader collaboration around sustainability.

In this consultation, children were asked to reflect on who they currently learn with, especially in relation to to outdoor learning, nature, and climate related topics.



What We Did Community Cards: Who Helps Us to Be Kind to the Planet?



Children participated in a creative activity where they designed “Top Trump” style cards to represent the people involved in their learning community. Children were invited to create cards that captured:

- People we see every day at school (e.g. teachers, support workers)
- People that visit and support us at school (e.g. parents, carers, members of local organisations)
- People we may see every now and then

The cards showed the person's qualities or skills that help children learn about the environment and climate change. This activity helped children think about the range of relationships that support their learning both inside and outside the classroom.

What Should the People We Work with Be Like to Support Our Learning?

Children then used a Head, Hands, Heart framing to reflect on what they need from those helping them understand climate change and environmental issues. Through drawing on a human body size silhouette, children were asked to consider:

Head – What information or knowledge should they have?

Hands – What activities should they do with you?

Heart – What kind of person should they be?

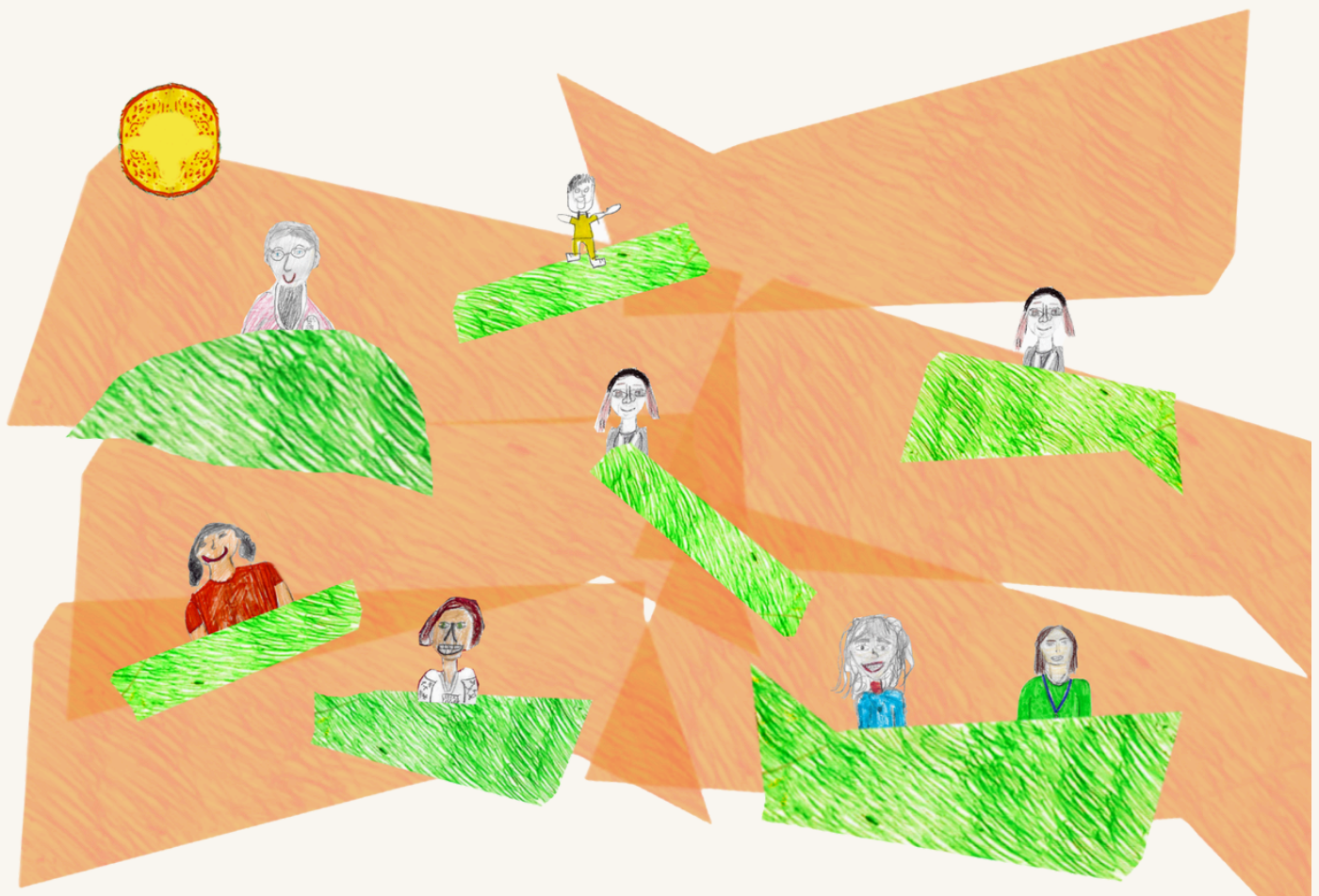
The Recording Cave: Global Citizenship

During discussions about their school communities and learning environments, children were invited to reflect on the diversity of people within their school community and consider whether the people they work with enable learning about different religions, cultures and races. Children were given further space to reflect through using the recording cave again to capture their thoughts. They were asked:

Is it important to learn with and from people who are different from you?

How might this help you learn about other children across the world?

How might your school help you learn from people who are different to you?



What We Found

1

Children talked about the importance of learning from people who care about the environment and know how to help. They said doing things outdoors and hearing real stories, especially from people affected by climate change, makes learning feel more real and meaningful. Their reflections highlighted what helps them learn best, what kind of people support that learning, and why these relationships matter.

“Leswalt’s wee, but we can still learn about the world.”

“It’s good to learn about other people and things because they might do things different to us and we might do things different than them, and we need to know!”

2

Children said they enjoy learning by doing, especially when it means getting outside—planting trees, exploring nature, or working with people who care for the environment like park rangers and volunteers. These real-life experiences made learning about climate change and nature feel more exciting and meaningful.

“It’s way better when we’re outside doing stuff.”

“Mr Daniels knows all about building rope swings and dens and things, we couldn’t do that sitting down, or we could but it would be boring”

3

Children shared that they like learning from people who don’t just know things, but who care, show feelings, and actively listen; it helps too when adults are kind and open, not just experts. Children identified these traits as essential in addressing children’s concerns about the climate.

“We learn more from people who listen to us.”

“It’s easier to learn when the person teaching actually wants to hear what you think.”

4

Children said it is really important to hear from people who are already being affected by climate change. Listening to real stories made the issues feel more real and helped them understand why climate action matters.

“We should hear from folk who are living it.”

“If we hear their stories, we understand why it matters more it’s not just something far away.”



Culture:

How We're Involved

Children have played a key role in shaping the Target 2030 Action Plan through earlier phases of the partnership with Children's Parliament. Children [identified 14 calls for action](#) in relation to outdoor learning, sustainable development, the climate emergency, and global citizenship. Taking this forward, the Target 2020 Action Plan invited children to:

“Tell the government what is important to you, to demand that you have your say in decisions that affect you, and to look for ways to be actively involved in Learning for Sustainability learning and activities in your education setting and communities so that you receive your Learning for Sustainability entitlement.”

Target 2030 Action Plan



The plan also outlines opportunities for children to remain involved within its implementation through involvement within the Scottish Learning For Sustainability Leadership Group, by sharing experiences across schools, and by co designing sustainability indicators and contributing to the national Learning For Sustainability portal.

In this phase of the project, Children's Parliament worked with children to reflect on formal and informal ways within their own learner settings that children are heard, can contribute to and shape both curriculum content and efforts to support their schools to be sustainable.

What We Did

Growing Ideas Through the “Vegetables of Voice”



To do this, children were invited to plant and grow and create their own “Vegetables of Voice,” using pots with prompts to encourage children to think about their role in making their school more sustainable.

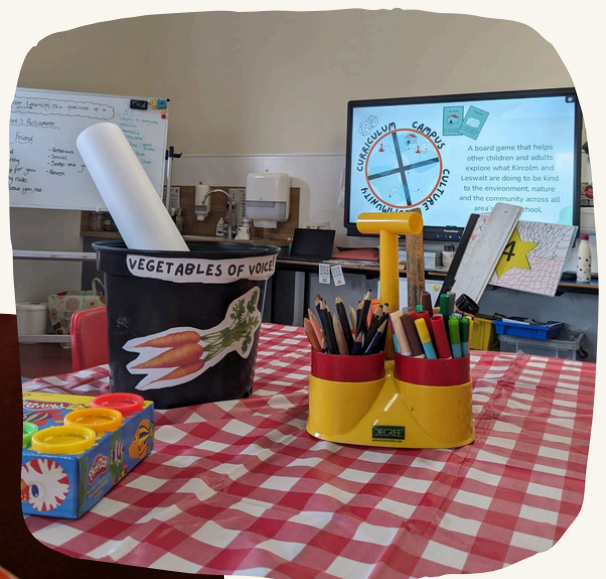
Each planting pot included a reflective question:

How do you help decide what you learn about climate change and the environment?

What do you do each day that helps your school be kind to the environment?

What helps you share your thoughts, ideas, or worries about climate change at school?

After this through the designing of their own seed packets children developed ideas that captured personal ideas for what would make them feel more included in environmental action and broader decision making around sustainability at their school.



What We Found

As part of this phase, children were encouraged to explore how they participate in decisions and actions that promote sustainability within their schools. They reflected on what it means to be truly heard, how their ideas are taken into account, and what makes them feel genuinely involved in learning about and caring for the environment. The following points and quotes highlight their thoughts and experiences on these themes.

1

While children appreciated the idea of eco committees and other formal “pupil voice” structures, many felt that these opportunities only included a small group. Others felt left out or unsure how to contribute meaningfully. They explained that their input was often limited to passive suggestions, such as writing ideas in a box, which didn’t always lead to real change.

"Only the eco committee gets to decide stuff. I care too, but I'm not in it."

"We can put ideas in a box, but I don't know what happens after that."

"The pupil council is different to the eco committee but maybe they should work together to think about how everything we do may effect the planet"

2

Personal projects gave children the chance to explore what they truly cared about—especially topics like animals, farming, and nature. They said they enjoyed sharing their passions and wanted these interests to be more valued and taken seriously as part of school learning.

"I did a project about cows because my gran has a farm. I want to learn more about animals in class too."

"I loved doing my own project—I wish we could do that kind of thing more."

3

Children expressed a strong desire to make their schools more environmentally friendly. They described small, everyday actions like switching off lights, recycling, or following classroom rules linked to sustainability as part of their normal routine. These actions were often influenced by classroom charters or whole school eco initiatives.

"I always turn the lights off when we leave the room—it's just what we do now."

"We've got eco rules in our class and we all try to follow them. It feels normal now."



4

Children questioned the purpose of some environmental tasks, like litter picking when there was no litter to collect. They described these activities as routine or performative rather than meaningful and wanted their efforts to feel like they made a real difference.

"Sometimes we do litter picks but there's no rubbish, so it doesn't feel like it helps."

"It's like we do it because we have to, not because it changes anything."

5

Children valued having time to talk about climate related events happening in their own communities. These discussions helped them understand how their personal experiences connected to bigger environmental issues, making learning feel more relevant and real.

"When there was Storm Ewan near my house, we talked about it in school. Some people were affected more than others but it's good to hear what happened."

"It's good when we learn about things that are happening where we live."

6

Children spoke enthusiastically about opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom. They highlighted partnerships with local places, like the Wetlands, and emphasised the importance of having adults in the community who could help them stay involved, organise events, and support their ongoing engagement.

"We went to the Wetlands and learned loads—it made me want to do more nature stuff."

"I wish there were more people in our town to help us keep doing projects after school."

7 Annual school traditions and working with visitors or project leaders were important and memorable for children. However, many also said they wanted more chances to shape these experiences themselves—to co create new traditions and lead learning in ways that reflect their ideas and interests.

"I love the big event we do every year—it's fun and everyone's involved."

"It would be cool if we could make our own tradition—like something we planned and started ourselves."



Curriculum: What, Why and How We Learn

As part of the Target 2030 Action Plan, children were encouraged to explore how their formal curriculum relates to their local environment, including the places, spaces, and people around them. This exploration also aimed to uncover the types of learning experiences children value most, and how those experiences unfold. The aim was to better understand how formal learning connects with the four learner settings to promote a place-based approach.

To facilitate this, children embarked on a symbolic learning journey that involved

crafting a paper boat, mapping its journey, and eventually launching it into the sea. As part of this process, each child identified a learning experience that they felt was strongly connected to their sense of place. They were then guided through a series of reflective questions on their journey.

What did you learn about?

Why did you learn about it?

How did you learn about it?



What We Found

Children's reflections revealed a range of ideas about what makes learning feel relevant, important, and connected to their lives. They spoke about the kinds of topics that matter to them, how learning relates to the places they live, and how they think it could be improved to reflect both local and global issues. To illustrate their perspectives, the following points and quotes capture the key messages children shared during these discussions.

1

Children spoke about how it is important that learning connects with their everyday environments. For those growing up in rural communities like Kirkcolm and Leswalt, topics such as farming, food growing, local wildlife, and land use are not abstract — they are part of daily life. When these topics are missing from the curriculum, children feel a disconnect between what they learn and what matters locally, showing children want their education to reflect their context.

“I think we should learn about agriculture and farming because it’s all around us – and if you grow up here, how will you know if you’re interested?”

“It makes more sense when we learn about things we actually see every day, like when there was loads of birds that washed up on the beach we learnt about the flu”

2

Children demonstrated an awareness of how climate change affects different people in different places. They spoke about things like changes in the land, extreme weather, or crop failures, and how these impact rural areas first. At the same time, they showed concern about the wider causes of climate change, particularly pollution from urban areas. They believe everyone in Scotland should learn about the same core issues like climate justice, sustainability, and caring for the planet, but that these lessons should also reflect what’s happening in their own communities.

“We should know how climate change affects people in the city, and they should know how it affects us. We’re more likely to feel it first—they need to know how what they do to pollute affects us.”

“If we all learn what’s happening in different parts of Scotland, we can help each other more.”

3

Children spoke about the importance of shared knowledge across all schools, so that everyone understands the basics of climate change and sustainability. They also suggested that each school could become an expert in something unique to their environment. For example, coastal schools might focus on marine life or rising sea levels, while rural schools might specialise in farming or biodiversity. Children spoke about this model to create the bigger picture and celebrate the strengths of each school.

“If all children know some of the same things, we can work together on it—and help tell each other about the specific stuff.”

“So Kirkcolm has chickens and we really want them so maybe we could learn about how they got them and how they look after them.”

Key Messages From Children

Children shared a wide range of ideas about how they experience sustainability in their schools. These themes, drawn from their voices, show what is working well and where there is room to grow. They also reflect how children want to learn and how they see their role in building a fairer, more sustainable future.

Climate Change Is About Fairness

Children see climate change not just as an environmental issue, but as something that affects people's lives and rights. They linked clean air, safe places, and healthy environments to their own well-being and saw climate action as a matter of fairness for everyone.

Help Us Shape Our Spaces

Children care about their school environments—especially when they have helped to create or nurture them. They said that outdoor learning and nature-based activities help them feel more connected to sustainability, and that being trusted in these spaces makes a difference.

Make Learning Real and Local

Children enjoy learning that connects to their everyday lives. They said that working with local people, visiting nearby natural spaces, and hearing from those affected by environmental issues made their learning more engaging and meaningful. In rural areas, children want more focus on local topics like farming, food growing, and wildlife—things that are part of daily life. They also believe all pupils in Scotland should understand how climate change affects different communities. To support this, they suggested schools share knowledge about their own areas so everyone can learn from each other and see how local experiences link to global challenges.

Let Us Have a Say

Children expressed a strong desire to be more meaningfully involved in how their schools approach sustainability. While many schools have structures in place, such as eco committees or pupil councils, children noted that these often involve only a small number of pupils. Many others feel excluded from these processes or are unsure how to contribute their views in a way that will be acknowledged and acted upon.

Some described existing feedback methods, such as suggestion boxes, as passive and disconnected from real decision making. They highlighted a lack of follow-up or transparency about how their input is used, which can lead to feelings of frustration or disengagement. Children want to see clearer pathways between their ideas and actual change within their school communities.

Importantly, children want to move beyond simply being consulted; they wish to be active participants in shaping sustainability practices and learning. This includes contributing to the design of projects, influencing curriculum content, and taking part in decisions about how their school responds to climate and environmental issues.

Children emphasised that meaningful participation should be inclusive and accessible to all pupils—not limited to a select group. They believe that when every child can participate and understand the purpose behind their actions, sustainability education becomes more effective, relevant, and empowering.

Recommendations Reflecting Key Messages from Children

The following recommendations are grounded in children's perspectives and offer practical ways to take forward the ambitions of the Target 2030 Action Plan. Each recommendation builds on what is already happening in schools and highlights what children believe will make sustainability education more meaningful, inclusive, and effective in the years ahead.

1. Frame Climate Education Through Rights and Justice

Schools should approach climate learning through the lens of human rights and social justice, helping children understand that environmental harm affects people's lives unequally. Embedding this perspective across subjects encourages empathy, responsibility, and a clearer sense of why sustainability matters.

2. Place Participation at the Centre of Learning for Sustainability

Every child should have the opportunity to shape how their school approaches sustainability, not only through decision making, but also through learning itself. Schools are encouraged to move beyond symbolic inclusion and provide regular, open ways for all children to contribute ideas, make decisions, and lead initiatives. Importantly, this participation should extend to the taught curriculum. Creating space for children to help shape what and how they learn makes education more relevant and responsive. Educators can work creatively by taking an inquiry-based approach—using children's questions, interests, and local concerns as starting points for learning. This helps ensure that sustainability education stays current, meaningful, and connected to the real world.

3. Involve Children in Shaping Learning Spaces

School grounds and classrooms should reflect a shared commitment to sustainability, physically and culturally. Children should be involved in planning, caring for, and learning from these spaces. Outdoor environments offer powerful opportunities for learning and connection and should be used regularly.

4. Connect Learning to Place and the Real World

To make sustainability education more meaningful, schools should link classroom learning to real-world experiences and local contexts. Partnering with community groups, professionals, and people with lived experience of environmental issues helps bring learning to life and shows children both the challenges and the solutions. At the same time, education should reflect the uniqueness of each school's setting—whether urban, rural, coastal, or otherwise—by exploring local environmental themes and encouraging children to investigate how climate and nature shape their own communities. Creating opportunities for schools to share this knowledge across regions can deepen children's understanding of sustainability and connect local learning to a broader national picture.

Sharing the Findings

To bring together their learning and experiences around Learning For Sustainability, Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) from Kirkcolm and Leswalt Primary Schools co designed a sharing event. The purpose was to create a space where children could talk about their work, highlight the areas they felt were important, and involve others in those discussions.

The event was held at Aldouran Wetland, a community space regularly used by children for outdoor learning. The setting also supports wider engagement through school activities and volunteer opportunities linked to Learning for Sustainability.

A range of guests were invited, including adults the children work with, members of the school and local community, and representatives from local government, Scottish Government, and Education Scotland.

Children chose to structure the event around four key themes—Space, Place, People, and Learning—which they adapted from the Learning for Sustainability framework (Campus, Culture, Community, and Curriculum). Activities

such as pond dipping, bird spotting, rope swing and den building, and arts and crafts were used to support informal discussions. These provided visitors with a view into the types of experiences children associate with Learning For Sustainability, and how these connect to their everyday learning.

Children led each of the activities, explaining both the process and the thinking behind them. This allowed for interaction and conversation between children and adults about what they had explored and how the learning had taken place.

The event served both as a showcase and a discussion space. Alongside sharing their work, children asked attendees to consider how they might further support Learning For Sustainability in schools and communities. This included thinking about outdoor learning opportunities, children's participation in decision making, and how sustainability could be embedded fully across learning settings.



Conclusion

Children from Kirkcolm and Leswalt Primary Schools explored how the Target 2030 Action Plan is understood and experienced in real school settings. Using a rights based and participatory approach, the investigation explored the four key areas of the Action Plan: curriculum, campus, community, and culture—and how these are currently being developed in practice.

Through a series of structured activities, children reflected on their learning environments, their participation in school decision making, and their connections to local and global sustainability issues. The findings highlight that children value hands on, place-based learning that is relevant to their daily lives and communities. They expressed that outdoor learning, involvement in sustainability projects, and working with community members enhance their understanding and engagement.

Children also raised concerns about limited opportunities for wider participation in sustainability related decisions, noting that formal structures such as eco committees can sometimes feel exclusive. They recommended more inclusive and flexible approaches to pupil voice and decision making, particularly in relation to the curriculum and school environment.

The work at Kirkcolm and Leswalt demonstrates how smaller schools can effectively integrate sustainability and rights based learning through existing strengths, partnerships, and a whole school approach. These insights provide practical examples of how the ambitions of the Learning For Sustainability Target 2030 Action Plan can be supported in a meaningful and achievable way.



About Children's Parliament

Established in 1996, Children's Parliament is dedicated to the realisation of children's human rights in Scotland. Our dream is that children grow up in a world of love, happiness and understanding. Our mission is to inspire greater awareness and understanding of the power of children's human rights and to support implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

For more information, please contact info@childrensparliament.org.uk



About Unfearties

Unfearties are individuals who are courageous in discussing children's issues, are making a difference in children's lives, and who are willing to speak up for, and stand alongside, children.

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