

Pupil attitudes towards and experiences of environmental sustainability in schools 2019-20 | Research brief for schools

About the research

This year, a range of organisations from across the education and environment sectors are working together on research to better understand the views and experiences of pupils on environmental sustainability in their school. NUS and its new sustainability focused charity, Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK), are working with Green Schools Project, RSPB, Friends of the Earth and Friends of the Earth Scotland, WWF and the UK Student Climate Network are continuing research started by NUS and Green Schools Project in 2018-19.

NUS has been carrying out [research](#) with students in higher and further education (aged 16 and over) for the past 8 years on the same topic (in relation to their university or college) and this approach is being continued by [SOS-UK](#), NUS' new sustainability-focused charity. Through this research we'd like to see how younger students experiences and views on the issue compare, as well as more generally establishing the importance of sustainability to young people in primary and secondary schools.

In the first year of the research, 2018-19, 2990 2990 pupils across England in year 5 and 6 in primary school and across all years in secondary and sixth form college level told us:

- 56% said they have learnt lots or quite a bit about the environment at their current school or college
- 68% said interested in learning more about the environment
- 86% agreed that all schools and colleges should be doing things to help the environment
- 85% agreed that all schools and colleges should be encouraging and helping pupils like me to do things to help the environment
- 49% said they would like to be involved with projects or activities at their school or college that help the environment
- 54% said they are very or fairly concerned about climate change
- 80% said it is fairly or very important for world leaders to do more to tackle climate change
- 22% said they had heard of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals
- 46% said they would like to spend more time in nature if they had the chance

You can read our full report [here](#).

It is intended that the survey will become a longitudinal study that allows for the tracking of changes in attitudes towards sustainability over time.

How you can participate in the study

We're asking teachers and schools to support the research, by overseeing completion of a short survey with pupils, designed to capture information on their views of their school and their learning in relation to sustainable development and the environment.

To thank teachers and schools for their support with the research, we will provide each school that receives over 50 responses with a bespoke report with the data from their pupils.

There will also be an opportunity to receive a cash prize as part of a prize draw. There will be two prize draws, one for primary schools and one for schools or colleges offering secondary education, reflecting the different capacity to participate in the study (i.e. only two year groups are eligible from primary education). The prize draw for primary schools will randomly select two winners of £250 from all schools that receive 40 responses or more. The prizes for secondary schools will be based on responses achieved as a proportion of overall school population, with prizes also being two £250 for the top two scoring schools. These prizes can be used to deliver sustainability projects within the school or college.

Research consent

The research is being carried out in compliance with the [Market Research Society](#) Code of Conduct, and also with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018). **We are required to secure consent from a responsible adult in order for pupils to be able to participate in the research.** This might be the headteacher, or a nominated staff representative. The following information sets out the information we will collect, as well as how we will store and process the data.

Key topics

- Demographics (year group, school name, subjects and qualifications (years 12 and 13 or equivalent only))
- Perceptions of learning about the environment
- Perceptions of and desire for school action for the environment
- Concerns about the environment
- Experience of the environment in their spare time

A full copy of the survey has also been sent with this document.

Data protection

- All responses are anonymous – participants are not asked to provide their name at any stage of the survey.
- No contact details are collected from participants at any point during the survey.
- Other information that could be used to identify participants individually (e.g. school, year group, gender, ethnicity) will only be seen by the research staff at NUS who will be completing the analysis.
- In reporting the research, no named identifiers will be used (e.g. school name). The responses from pupils across the UK will be accumulated and reported together. We may report against other factors (e.g. year group, gender) but again this will be presented as data from across the UK.

To provide your consent for the study to take place in your class / school / college, please visit this [online form](#). This form must be completed before undertaking the survey with your pupils.

We will also ask individual pupils for their consent at the start of the survey, before they progress to any questions. Pupils have the option of not completing the survey if they do not feel comfortable doing so after having read the information provided to them about how the information they provide will be used. They will also be given the opportunity to retract their data at the end of the survey if they wish.

Completing the survey with pupils

The survey can be completed with all pupils in year 5 and above. It is not suitable for pupils in year 4 and below, and anyone completing from these year groups will be routed out of the survey.

The survey can be completed as part of a lesson, with IT lessons being an ideal opportunity, though each school can decide what is most appropriate for them and their pupils. The survey will take between **5 and 15 minutes** to complete, depending on the age of the pupils. The survey is described as being about their school and the things they have learnt during their time there.

The survey can be found online here: <https://bit.ly/2m7bUgd>

It can be completed on desktop or laptop computers, tablets or smartphone devices.

Key dates

Deadline	Activity
Now – 20 th December 2019	Fieldwork period – surveys completed by pupils. All schools must confirm participation in the research through completion of the online consent form. Regular updates on responses achieved will be sent to all contacts who have completed the online consent form.
31 st January 2020	Winners announced, and individual school/college reports sent.
March 2020	National report published.

Contact

If you have any questions about the research, including how data will be used and processed, please contact Rachel Drayson, head of research and impact at SOS-UK (rachel.drayson@sos-uk.org).