



Pearson



Ask the Expert

How can the food schools offer affect their climate impact?

“Agriculture is one of the biggest contributors to climate change so the food that we eat every day is critical to reducing our climate impact.”



Richard Dunne

The [Harmony Project](#) Lead and former headteacher shares his top tips.

1. Review your menus

Can you make changes to ensure you're buying seasonal fruit and veg and UK-produced food wherever possible? If you eat meat, can it be grass-fed or from nature-friendly systems? Many industrially produced meat production systems are not good for the environment. At the school where I was headteacher, we limited choice on our menus and got creative about reducing waste and cost. It's good to question your practices, for example, do you need a salad bar in the middle of winter, or could you offer seasonal soups instead? As we look to create more regenerative farming systems, finding ways to introduce more organic produce is worth exploring, too.

2. Encourage green fingers

Do you have any space on your site to grow your own vegetables? Or in urban areas, you could speak to local allotment growers or community gardens. Starting on a small scale with a raised bed is a great step. If you have more land, such as a school field, can you convert a section round the edge? There are many people in our communities who have a lot of knowledge about food growing. It is well worth asking around to see how they could support.

3. Reduce food waste

Do you know how much food you throw away every day? Have you ever weighed it and analysed what is being thrown away? Involve your pupils by getting them to measure with a bucket and scales what is going in the bin and then log the food that is left at the end of every lunchtime. It will also help the kitchen make more informed decisions on what pupils like and dislike. Even moving from offering starters rather than deserts can save waste and money. The goal is to produce no waste because the food is so delicious, and everyone takes just what they need.

4. Give power to the pupils

Make them active participants in becoming a more sustainable school community. Assign each year group a sustainability project to manage, e.g., reducing water consumption, helping to identify the seasonal produce for the food menu, monitoring energy, etc. The message of this is really powerful and pupils will soon see themselves as being leaders of sustainability.

5. Don't stop at food

You could take a whole-school approach to energy, too. At my former school we set daily targets on energy consumption in each building and our pupils then monitored and managed consumption through a software system called [ecoDriver](#). They managed our energy systems for over 10 years and established school-wide rewards and celebrations each week when the school met its goals. It kept the interest going and, of course, saved us a lot of money!

