

Virginia College Sustainability Policy 2025



Policy name	Virginia College Sustainability Policy Statement
School name	Virginia College
Date of ratification of policy by the board of management	15 th May 2025
Date of scheduled review of policy by board of management	May 2026
Signature chair board of management	
Engagement with student council	
Engagement with parents (association)	
Engagement with staff	1 st May 2025
Faithful to our motto, Virginia College is committed to providing quality teaching in a safe and positive learning environment. Whilst fostering academic and personal achievement, we aim to nurture an educational community of informed, responsible and caring citizens for an ever-changing world.	

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Policy Statement Overview

All public service bodies are required under the Climate Action Plan to adhere to the Public Service Climate Action Mandate -- and to develop Climate Action Roadmaps setting out how they will deliver on their energy efficiency and emission reduction targets.

Schools now have a separate Climate Action Mandate under which they are required to adopt a Sustainability Policy Statement. The School Sector Climate Action Mandate can be read in full here: gov.ie - School Sector Climate Action Mandate (www.gov.ie)

The second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development -- ESD to 2030 also informs the content of the following Sustainability Policy Statement template.

ESD aims to ensure that "by 2030, all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development". (Sustainable Development Goal 4.7)

The following has been prepared as part the School Sector Climate Action Mandate, and in keeping with the principles and themes of ESD to 2030 and has been accepted by the Board of Management of our school.

Purpose

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy Statement is to outline how our school promotes sustainability and climate action, through our actions and activities.

Sustainability can be defined as the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future.

Scope

Sustainability is a community issue and applies to all students, teachers and employees of our school. Parents and guardians should note, and where possible, promote, the Statement. The Board of Management of the school will ensure that decisions made in respect of the school align with the Statement.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Virginia College is justifiably proud of its reputation for excellence in education. In keeping with the ethos of the Education Act 1998, Virginia College is committed to the intellectual, physical, social, personal, spiritual, moral and aesthetic development of all its students.

Life within the school community reflects its mission statement:

Virginia College is committed to providing quality teaching in a safe and positive learning environment. Whilst fostering academic and personal achievement, we aim to nurture an educational community of informed, responsible and caring for an ever-changing world.

School Aims

- To create a positive environment for teaching and learning.
- To encourage respect for self, others and the environment.
- To engender self-discipline, motivation and responsibility.
- To nurture the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

We emphasize the importance of quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), climate action (SDG 13), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10) in all aspects of our curriculum and community engagement.



Whole School Approach to Sustainability

- Our school has adopted this Sustainability Policy Statement. It clearly details the aims and objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in our school, its relationship to the vision and mission of the school.
- Our school recognises Education for Sustainable Development as a cross-curricular theme.
- Opportunities are identified to introduce and address sustainability in the classroom, across all subjects.
- Our school is a member of the Irish Schools Sustainability Network.
- Our school keeps up to date with developments in ESD including by being registered for the quarterly ESD Newsletter.

Environmental Sustainability



Green-Schools is an international environmental education programme, offering a well-defined, controllable way for schools to take environmental issues from the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of their school.

- Our school is part of the Green Schools Programme and were awarded our first Green Flag award in 2011 for Litter and Waste Management. This flag lapsed but in 2023 we restarted the programme and our school is currently working towards re obtaining the Green Schools Flag for Litter and waste management.
- Our school has a comprehensive and cohesive recycling policy in place and uses recycled and recyclable materials whenever possible, for example recycled paper for the photocopier.
- All classrooms, corridors and the staffroom have recycling bins and waste sorting opportunities. This was partially funded by an ESD grant applied for obtained in 2023.
- Battery recycling boxes are located on the corridor for whole school use.

- The school introduced a very successful Deposit Return Scheme bin in Sep 24 to encourage recycling of plastic bottles and cans. The money the school raises from this is used for charitable or educational purposes within the school.
- Students engage in recycling and upcycling projects, for example Junk Korture.
- Green Team students manage recycling and separate rubbish daily.
- Our students engage in litter picking in school, in the community and actively promote recycling and waste management strategies, for example through the tutor notices and notice board.
- In academic year 25/26, the school will have some compost facilities for food waste.
- Our school engages with the [SEAI Energy in Education](#) resources.
- Our school is currently being refurbished to LED Lighting.
- Our new building will be built in a Passive Structure.
- Our building has been insulated and windows and doors updated to conserve energy.
- Magnetic signs near entrance to every classroom reminding teachers at the end of the day to- Switch off lights, Turn off computers and projectors and close windows.
- Intercom announcements of reminders at the end of the school day.
- Recently obtained solar panels on 2006 building.
- Our school engages with SEAI, WWGS, Concern and ECO UNESCO in the area of sustainable development.
- Water fountains are available on our corridors and reusable Virginia College water bottles are provided and promoted, for example when VSware positive points are met.
- Cisterns have Dual flush systems.
- Our school environment clearly displays information on sustainability and sustainable practices on the main school corridors and in our classrooms and teachers highlight initiatives during tutor period. There is a Green Schools Notice in reception with the slogan 'Beauty dies where litter lies'.
- Our school actively promotes and fosters an attitude of care and responsibility towards the natural environment and engages with programs that support and promote Environmental education, e.g GLOBE programme.
- Parents association run a uniform swap to recycle uniforms back into circulation that are no longer needed by students/families.
- Our school promotes and facilitates outdoor learning through the development of our school garden where we have planted pollinator friendly flowers to increase awareness around self-sufficiency and sustainability.
- Our school promotes and facilitates biodiversity in our No Mow Areas.
- The school engages with the Heritage Council each year to provide workshops and are part of the Heritage in Schools TY Programme.
- Our School hosts events to highlight key events such as ECO Week, Climate Action Week, International Women's Day, May Day for Sustainability, and other initiatives.

Social Sustainability`



- Our school ethos recognises the importance of and is sensitive to issues surrounding gender equity and every year celebrates LGBTQ+ week.
- Our students are provided with opportunities to develop and use their skills to participate in the solving of community problems at local level working with Innovating Communities, An Gaisce, The Big Idea, Green Schools, WWGS among others.
- Our school is very sensitive to promoting positive mental health and was awarded the Pieta House amber flag in 2024 in recognition of our promotion of positive mental health.
- Virginia College is very cognizant of the fact we have a number of students from different backgrounds and ethnicities. We have hosted different food culture days and weeks such modern foreign languages week.
- Our school ethos strives to prepare students for life as citizens of a global community.
- Our school is currently engaging with Global Citizenship Education programmes such as World Wise Global Schools and is striving towards the Diplomatic Passport Award.
- The needs of all students in recognition of differentiated physical or learning abilities, are taken into consideration and accommodated.
- Our school implements a positive code of behaviour strategy.
- A friends for Life is offered to students who struggle socially and with making friends, promoting social wellbeing.
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Economic Sustainability

- A non-competitive ethos of co-operation and sharing of resources is modelled in our school's allocation of its resources.
- Students are involved in the decision-making process on resource allocation within our school through our Student Council.
- Students are provided with opportunities to learn small business skills completing the Student Enterprise Programme, hosting a Christmas Cultural Market and through enterprising initiatives within the school.
- Our school's fund-raising activities reflect and actively demonstrate ethical and sustainable principles.

Cultural Sustainability



- Our school ethos aims to foster students' self-esteem, along with a mutual regard and respect for fellow students, and positive social interaction and relationships.
- Virginia College is involved in LAEP (local arts in education project). Through the Arts, Virginia College wants to continue to be inclusive of all cultures and ethnicity. We celebrate diversity and challenge racism and discrimination.
- Our school uses restorative practice and positive behavioural policies.
- Our school ethos, in tandem with the curriculum, strives to prepare students for life in an increasingly multicultural society.
- Our school is currently working towards a yellow flag- A practical programme that supports secondary schools to become more inclusive of all cultures and ethnicities. We celebrate Culture Day in May.
- Our school demonstrates a commitment to community engagement and encourages the community's involvement with the school. This has been done in various ways, for example TY students visiting primary schools, helping facilitating sports day and organizing blitzes through the Future Leaders programme.
- Our school has an active role in supporting cultural diversity both within the school itself, and in the wider school community. Virginia College has a number of international students enrolled every academic year.

Teacher Competence

- Our Teachers are supported in building their own capacity in the area of ESD. e.g, Take1 Programme, WWGS, SEAI, Concern, Stand Up Programme, and other providers of CPD programmes working in this area.

Student Competence

- Our students are encouraged and supported to participate in peer to peer learning activities, group work and project based assessment.
- The prefect system is in operation to have a student link for 1st years. The prefects have overseen the very successful lunchtime clubs in academic year 24/25 which has helped transition from primary to post primary for many students.
- Our students are encouraged and supported to undertake action orientated projects.
- Our students work with TY Mini Business.
- Our TY students undertake a sustainability module to create an awareness and an appreciation for sustainability.
- Our school has a Student Council and Green Schools committee team who are involved in decisions about all aspects of school decision making.
- Our students are encouraged to volunteer for local community action on sustainability projects working with the Local Development Association, Tidy Towns and GAA on sustainability and heritage projects.
- Students from 5th got training and implemented a cyberbullying talk to all 1st and 2nd years and also held a cyberbullying awareness week to increase awareness of the importance of staying safe online and being kind online.
- Many charitable initiatives has been undertaken by our students, for example SVP food hampers, food bank collections, a colour run in aid of Pieta House amongst others.
- Our schools are involved in project-based learning around real-life problems in the local community with initiatives such as Innovating Communities, The Big Idea and an Gaisce.

Goals

- Our school will aim to achieve a Green Flag for Litter and Waste by 2026
- Our school will aim to achieve a Green Flag for Water by 2028
- Our school will actively promote the SDG's and review our policy documents so that they are all aligned to the Principles of Sustainable Development by 2026
- Continue to strive to be a leading school in all aspects of sustainability by reviewing what we are doing and implementing best practice standards on a yearly basis

Implementation and Review

This Statement was implemented on 10/05/2025. To ensure our school strives to improve its work within sustainability and climate action, the Statement will be reviewed every 2 years.

This Policy was ratified on _____

Signed Chairperson BOM: _____

Signed Secretary BOM: _____