

Y&H Climate Ambassadors

DfE Youth Champion Visits

In early 2026, Eliska Gooch (Department for Education Youth Champion) and Ruth Green (Climate Ambassador Regional Hub Manager) visited four education settings in Yorkshire and Humber. This is what they learned, broken down into the settings top three actions that supported sustainability and climate action, and what their pupils told us.



The Forest Academy, Barnsley.

3 Top Actions:

1. Being part of **Wellspring Academy Trust has supported action**, including managing solar panels (government funded) by the estates team and promoting meat free days from the procurement team.
2. The **Forest Explorers** activities provided by Toni have enabled students to get out into the school's 7 acres of woodland to complete nature-based learning which the children are eager to join in with.
3. **Pupil-led action** recognises and facilitates pupil passion for nature. Katie (Headteacher) noted that the climate action the children lead on permeates back home to their family and into the wider community.

What their pupils say:

- I like the bird watching we did. We counted birds and tried to see what kind of birds they were.
- I protect nature at school.
- I walk to school because cars are polluting the air, and I like to get my steps in.
- Litter causes animals to get stuck and die.
- I like seeing the birds and flowers and making daisy chains.
- I run and do gymnastics on the grass with my friends and enjoy being outside.

Churwell Primary School, Morley.

3 Top Actions:

1. Support and direction from **Resilience Multi Academy Trust has been really impactful**. All sustainability leads gathered at the University Technical College for a full day of inspirational training with Rob Cattrall from Let's Go Zero which really got the Climate Action Plan off the ground.
2. The school is **collaborative**: collaborating with other settings in their trust, collaborating with teaching and non-teaching staff in the school and collaborating with pupils to drive holistic action.
3. Churwell have installed **solar panels** and have seen a massive difference in their energy bills. They used Solar for Schools to enable this, who have provided excellent student activities and engagement sessions.



What their pupils say:

- We try to not waste water and use only what we need, like turning the tap off when we clean our teeth.
- I walk to school instead of driving, but sometimes people have to drive because parents are working or because of bad weather.
- We have different bins for recycling at home and for general waste.
- I turn the lights off all the time at home.
- We are worried about animals going extinct.
- We have Forest School for Year 2 and the eco council made Christmas trees into fences.
- We reuse and recycle, for example refilling the glue pots with PVA glue and using a sponge contained within the Tupperware instead of disposable glue sticks.

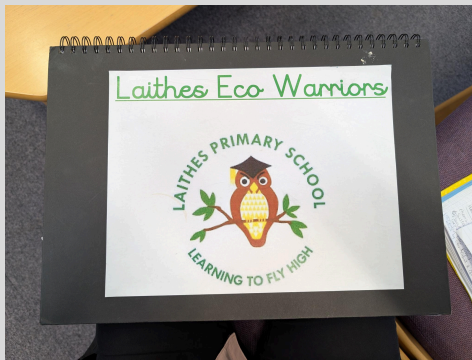
Laithes Primary school, Barnsley.

3 Top Actions:

1. There is **whole school involvement** in the Climate Action Plan, with termly topics for all classes to engage with, stand alone events and collaboration between community stakeholders e.g. Sustainability fair, class pet plants, class pledges, pre-loved uniform rack.
2. **Funding** for projects is always being applied for by school Business Manager Ruslana who meets regularly with class teacher Sophie to bring their ideas to fruition.
3. Engaging with **external partners** has really benefitted Laithes, including Let's Go Zero, National Education Nature Park, Young Marketeers, Living Streets.

What their pupils say:

We visited Snowy Owl class who had written a beautiful poem for us about their duty to care for the world. They also told us about their individual roles in the classroom which support sustainability e.g. monitors for recycling and turning off the lights and board. Students litter pick at lunch time and told us 'being an eco warrior makes me feel proud and happy'.



The Heart of Yorkshire, Wakefield College.

3 Top Actions:

1. One of the 5 strategic aims of the college group is to 'Commit wholeheartedly to the development of sustainability within our communities'. This demonstrates **commitment from leadership** for prioritising sustainability and sends a strong message to the whole community.
2. **Drip feed activities over the year** so there is no one sustainability or climate action week, but year round activities for the college community to be engaged with.
3. **All areas of the college are involved**, not just those who are particularly passionate. The staff body are accountable; sustainability goals are in all staff performance reviews.

What their students say.

Some college students spoke to us about their ongoing sustainability and climate projects which they design and implement.

- One student is doing a crisp packet project, collecting used crisp packets and repurposing them as blankets for homeless people. This involves the student being a driver in all steps of the project including communications strategy, making bins for collection, etc.
- Another student has permission to redevelop a local train station and so is installing flower boxes to improve biodiversity and support pollinators to thrive. There will also be community education opportunities with QR codes the public can use to learn about the flower boxes.
- Other projects are being developed by students, like an anti-light pollution mural and coastal littering prevention. Students were confident, passionate and action focussed about sustainability and climate.
- There were also 'nature baskets' in all wellbeing areas for sensory engagement and mindfulness.



This small snapshot does not come close to the huge amount of work being carried out by all of the settings visited. Eliska and Ruth would like to say thank you to the settings who hosted them. If you would like to know more about any of the actions described, please contact the YH Regional Hub at climateambassadors_yh@leeds.ac.uk.