

Climate emergency

In the UK, the summer of 2022 was on par with that of the 'long hot summer' of 1976, except that projections suggest that such heat-waves and droughts in Britain will all too soon become familiar, rather than the exception. Elsewhere in the world, our polar icecaps continue to melt, Pakistan suffered the most severe flooding in a generation, causing untold human tragedy, and the devastation of raging wildfires in the Mediterranean, USA and Australia seem an all too familiar story on our newsfeed. One year on from COP26, education continues to be held as a key element in helping to assuage the worst excesses of environmental degradation. This is probably now truer than ever, especially at a time many consider to be not just a time of projected climate issues, but of immediate climate emergency.

With all of this in mind, this issue has 'climate emergency' as its theme. It is packed full of ideas for generating discussion and emboldening ideas for enacting practice to help children and their teachers contribute positively to the challenge of climate change through primary science. First, we meet Robin Minchom, UK Project Manager for Climate Fresk, one of the world's fastest-growing initiatives in addressing public understanding of climate change. Now widespread in over 40 countries worldwide and having engaged almost half a million participants in climate education since its inception in 2018, its collaborative and dialogic pedagogical approach is both accessible and sustainable. In interview, Robin explains how he was even inspired to change career to help support public understanding of the current climate emergency. In discussing his own journey, the initiative's approach and his hopes for the future, he not only informs but inspires as to how every person – young or old – has a part to play and can become an ambassador for the climate.

Following on from Robin's testimony, Emily Hunt offers similar insight into how fostering a sense of global citizenship in children may be beneficial to countering climate change, and offers an overview together with two pragmatic approaches she has found useful in the classroom. Cath Corkery too offers insight into climate awareness-raising activities, but this time from a wider whole-school perspective. There is much to be taken on board from Cath's work and all is delivered with a sense of positivity and engagement – lobster suits and all!

The greenhouse effect is often prominent in any discussion about climate change. Ben Roger's article offers a brief overview of the history and detail of the science behind the metaphor, introducing a welcome synopsis to curricular links. Ben touches on the theme of climate anxiety in children and this is explored in more depth in Caroline Alliston's piece, where she also reports on the impetus and detail of the resource she has devised to assist primary teachers in approaching climate education with children. Fostering enhanced subject knowledge on climate and improving agency in children in respect of this is also a key theme in work by Amy Strachan and Jemima Davey. Both lecturers from St Mary's University in Twickenham, they offer insight into the accessible resource they have devised to do just that. All three articles resonate very much with practitioner desire not only to engage children with the subject of climate education, but for insight into the rationale and development of resources aligned to challenging the current climate emergency with children.

Enactment for change is the thread running through the final two articles. From her own extensive work on the benefits of creating outdoor learning environments in schools – regardless of size, space and budget – Susie Burr invokes how engagement with primary science can not only assist scientific attainment, but also be of value for mental health and well-being as well as supporting nature. Finally, in its third decade of operation, William Yeomans discusses the long-term success of his 'Clyde in the Classroom' project. Here, he evidences that, with the support of schools and generations of children and teachers, there is some hope for environmental change – the key being commitment, sustainability and the will to care for the environment.

It has been a particular pleasure to collate the work of the authors involved in this issue. Although I think all, quite correctly, identify that we are undoubtedly in a time of climate emergency, it is encouraging to realise the fantastic depth and range of ongoing work of primary schools, their teachers and children. I think that you will find from reading this issue that, as always, primary science across the UK remains ready to offer a genuine response to such an ongoing challenge.

I hope you enjoy Issue 175!

Robert Collins