

# ISA Awards 2024 Case Study: Excellence in Sustainability



## LIBERTY WOODLAND SCHOOL

JUNE 2025

### History of the School

Liberty Woodland School is an independent, co-educational school based in Morden, South London. Founded in 2019 by its proprietor and Head, Leanna Barrett, the school was established with a clear vision: to reimagine education through a nature-based, sustainability-led approach that nurtures the whole child. Recognised as the UK's first fully outdoor school, Liberty Woodland began as a small primary provision in Worcester Park before relocating in September 2021 to the three-acre Morden Lodge Estate.

The move to Morden Lodge marked a significant milestone, enabling the school to embed sustainability and environmental education more deeply into daily practice. Since then, the school has expanded to include senior pupils from September 2022, with plans for a future sixth form. Learning takes place outdoors in all weathers, reinforcing resilience, adaptability, and a strong connection to the natural world.



Head:  
Leanna Barrett

The school's setting – encompassing woodland, meadowland, gardens and river frontage – provides a living classroom. This environment supports a rigorous, project-based curriculum that combines academic challenge with real-world relevance, ensuring pupils are well prepared to meet the social, environmental and economic challenges of the future.

From its inception, Liberty Woodland School has been shaped by a commitment to inclusion, wellbeing and innovation. The school was designed in response to growing evidence around the benefits of outdoor learning for mental health, engagement and resilience, particularly for children who may not thrive in conventional classroom settings. By prioritising movement, curiosity and experiential learning, the school has created an environment in which pupils feel safe to take risks, develop independence and rediscover a love of learning. As the school has grown, its ethos has remained firmly rooted in purposeful, values-led education. Expansion into senior provision has been carefully planned to ensure that the founding principles of sustainability, holistic development and environmental responsibility continue seamlessly into adolescence.



<https://www.libertywoodlandschool.com>

## Aims

Liberty Woodland School's vision is to nurture future changemakers through an education rooted in sustainability, environmental responsibility and holistic development.

- To provide a nature-centred education that places sustainability at the heart of school life.
- To support pupils to become the best versions of themselves, equipped to thrive in the 21st century.
- To promote outdoor learning by recognising the strong link between nature, wellbeing and engagement.
- To foster a deep love, respect and admiration for the natural world.
- To equip pupils with the skills, tools and knowledge needed to mitigate the impact of human activity on the environment.
- To champion sustainable living through everyday practice, including waste reduction, ethical consumption and responsible resource use.
- To empower pupils to understand their capacity to create meaningful environmental change, both locally and globally.

## Sustainability in practice

Environmental education at Liberty Woodland School is not an add-on; it is integral to the curriculum and culture. Pupils learn in, about and for the environment through immersive, hands-on experiences that deepen understanding and inspire action.



Learning is enquiry-led and project-based. Pupils undertake ecological surveys, outdoor experiments and environmental research, applying academic knowledge to real-world contexts. Topics such as climate change, biodiversity, food systems and ocean conservation are explored through cross-curricular projects that develop critical thinking, collaboration and problem-solving skills. The school's commitment to sustainability is further reflected in its operations and infrastructure:

- Ground source heat pumps provide heating and hot water, significantly reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- Solar panels generate renewable electricity across the site.
- Rainwater harvesting systems reduce water consumption and support irrigation and outdoor play.
- Growing tunnels and garden beds enable pupils to grow food, promoting sustainable agriculture and food literacy.
- A predominantly plant-based food offer, with composting of all food waste, reinforces low-impact, ethical eating.

The campus itself acts as a living model of sustainable practice, demonstrating to pupils how environmental responsibility can be embedded into everyday life. Pupil voice and leadership are central to Liberty Woodland School's sustainability journey. The student-led Eco-Committee carries out environmental reviews, develops action plans and leads initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, improve waste management and enhance biodiversity on site.

A flagship example of pupil leadership is the annual 'Save Our Futures' Eco Festival. This event follows a whole-school environmental deep-dive project and opens the school to the wider community. Hundreds of local families attend each year to take part in student-led talks, workshops and exhibitions focused on sustainability and environmental action. Pupils present research, innovations and creative responses to environmental challenges, demonstrating both knowledge and advocacy. Projects extend beyond the school gates. Pupils have worked with the local council to secure funding for habitat restoration in nearby nature reserves, including the regeneration of a wet meadow area. As part of this work, pupils designed and wrote educational signage for the site, combining environmental stewardship with persuasive and informative writing skills.

### **Recognition and impact**

Liberty Woodland School's commitment to sustainability has been recognised through a range of external awards and accreditations, including:

- Green Flag Status (2023)
- Primary Award for Green Education in Schools – Regional and UK Champions
- City Kids Green Awards – Silver Award Winners
- Shortlisting for the Sustainable City Awards

The impact of this work is evident in both pupil outcomes and school culture. Pupils demonstrate high levels of environmental literacy, confidence and agency. They understand complex global issues and are motivated to take practical action. Staff and pupils report improved wellbeing, resilience and engagement as a result of learning in nature and working towards shared, values-driven goals. Importantly, the school's sustainability initiatives inspire change beyond the immediate community. Visitors to events such as Save Our Futures consistently pledge to adopt more sustainable practices, evidencing the wider influence of pupil-led environmental advocacy.



## OUTCOMES

The impact of Liberty Woodland School's commitment to sustainability is wide-ranging and deeply embedded across pupil experience, school culture and the wider community. Outcomes extend beyond environmental knowledge alone, encompassing wellbeing, academic engagement, leadership and real-world action.

Through sustained immersion in nature, pupil-led initiatives and whole-school sustainable practice, the school has achieved meaningful, measurable change, evidenced in the following outcomes:

- Pupils develop a strong connection to nature and a sense of responsibility for protecting it.
- Environmental education enhances wellbeing, mental health and academic engagement.
- Pupils gain practical skills, leadership experience and confidence as environmental advocates.
- Sustainable systems and daily practices significantly reduce the school's environmental footprint.
- The wider community is positively influenced through outreach, partnerships and events.

## NEXT STEPS

Liberty Woodland School remains committed to continuous improvement in sustainability. Future priorities include further reducing carbon emissions, expanding biodiversity projects, and supporting pupils to undertake increasingly ambitious environmental initiatives. As the school grows, sustainability will remain central to decision-making, curriculum design and community engagement.

By embedding environmental responsibility into every aspect of school life, Liberty Woodland School is preparing pupils not only to succeed academically, but to lead with integrity, compassion and purpose in a rapidly changing world.

**Contact:** Leanna Barrett *Head* [leanna@libertywoodlandschool.com](mailto:leanna@libertywoodlandschool.com)

