

The "Caring for Creation" model

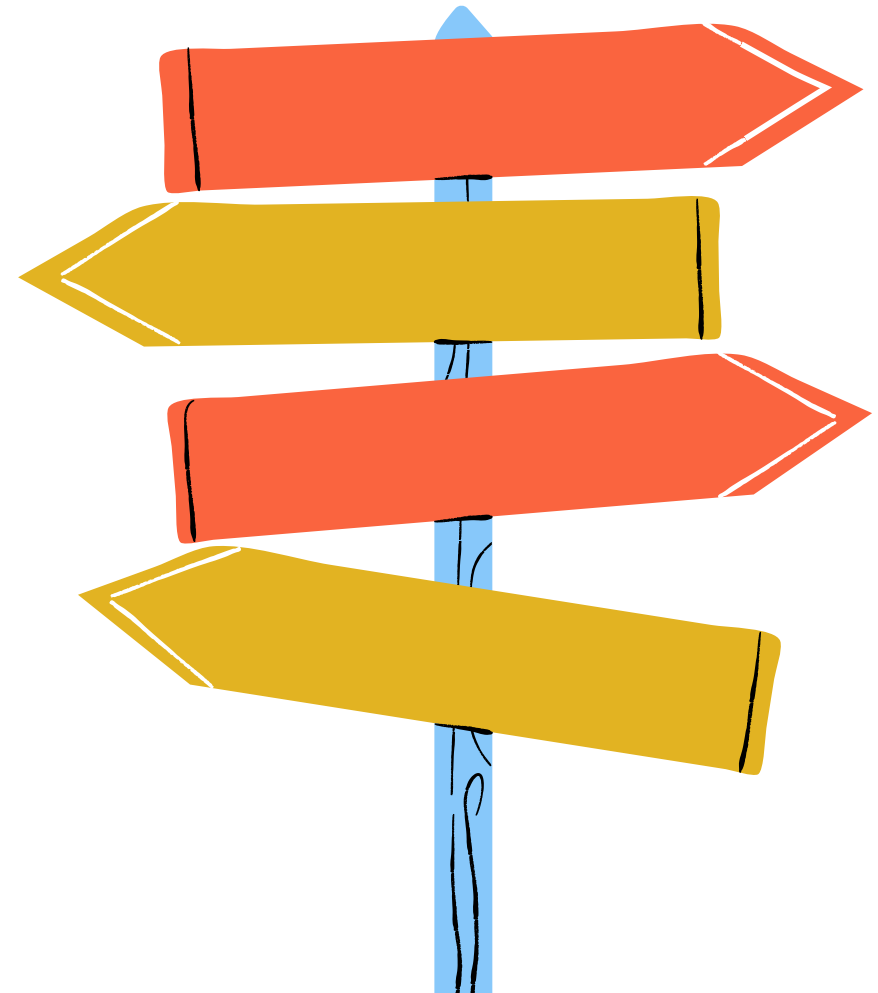
A guide to cultivating whole-school sustainable changes in Catholic settings

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Welcome!

Welcome to this guide for schools seeking to use the "Caring for Creation" model. This model aims to support Catholic schools in developing a whole-school approach to care for our shared planet. From starting a sustainability journey to finding the next steps, you can use this model to help map your school's approach.

What is the "Caring for Creation" model?

"Caring for Creation" offers a flexible framework for Catholic schools to plan how they can look after our common home. It draws on the care of creation as a central principle of Catholic Social Teaching. The model aids schools in their sustainability journey, supported by existing resources. It's also adaptable to each school's unique context, providing a cyclical process of reflection and action.

In doing so, this model aims to help Catholic educators:

- Identify their school's existing practices and progress towards the care of creation
- Map their school's next steps in developing sustainable transformations in a flexible framework
- Reflect on future seeds of action within their educational community

Who is the model for?

The "Caring for Creation" model follows insights from the Guardians of Creation project. They spoke with Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Salford about what they needed to make sustainable changes.

This model was designed with secondary schools in mind. However, educators working with other age groups may find the model's insights useful for their contexts.



Why is sustainability important for Catholic schools?

In 2015, Pope Francis published his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*. It was a pivotal moment for global Catholic communities. The letter connected social and environmental factors in climate change. Since then, the Church has worked to be greener and more sustainable than ever before.

Laudato Si' and other Church documents highlight the role of schools in the care of creation. Pope Francis reminds us that 'young people demand change'. He tasks Catholic educators to grow the next generation's response to the ecological crisis.

To meet this educational challenge, schools need new ways of answering the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Each school community's journey is different, facing unique challenges.

Yet, love and respect for God's creation are foundational to a school's Catholic ethos. Every teacher, pupil, and parent can live as responsible stewards. The "Caring for Creation" model strives to help educators develop this school-wide response.



"We must also take action within our Catholic schools, colleges, and universities, encouraging actions even in simple ways. We must develop our long-term strategic planning to reduce our carbon footprint substantially and, in other respects, contribute to the care of the natural environment."

- The Call of Creation (CBCEW, 2022)



Sowing beauty ✨

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis prays 'that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction'. The image of growing seeds helps us to think about sustainability. Planting seeds is a long-term goal, with our actions today holding the promise of bearing fruit in the future.

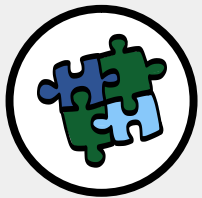
Similarly, the "Caring for Creation" model maps a school's sustainable development with the growth of a tree. A school

begins their journey to care for God's creation in humble ways. Through the love of its community, a school's action grows into something transformative. Nurturing the whole school's responsibility as stewards bears fruit. It gives each student seeds for further action in their life beyond school. Those same seeds offer the school a path of renewal, cultivating an orchard of collective action for the future of our common home.



How does the model work?

"Caring for Creation" joins together several approaches to cultivate whole-school changes in sustainability. The development stages are flexible to each school's needs and contexts. So, your school might not follow the model's stages step-by-step. But, there are some crucial factors to consider in your approach.



Everyone together

Individual actions are essential in addressing climate change. But collective efforts are where the transformations happen. Developing a whole-school approach is vital for sustainability. Making the care of creation part of everyone's daily practice means engaging all areas of school life. This inclusive approach may involve students, teachers, senior leaders, governors, and parents.



Embedding ethos

In Catholic education, a school's ethos and mission reflect the Church's teachings. It impacts the school's character and way of life. So, for Catholic schools seeking to become more sustainable, embedding this aim into its ethos is vital. Incorporating care of creation into the school's faith-based ethos can support this change. It offers an educational and spiritual framework for these sustainable developments.



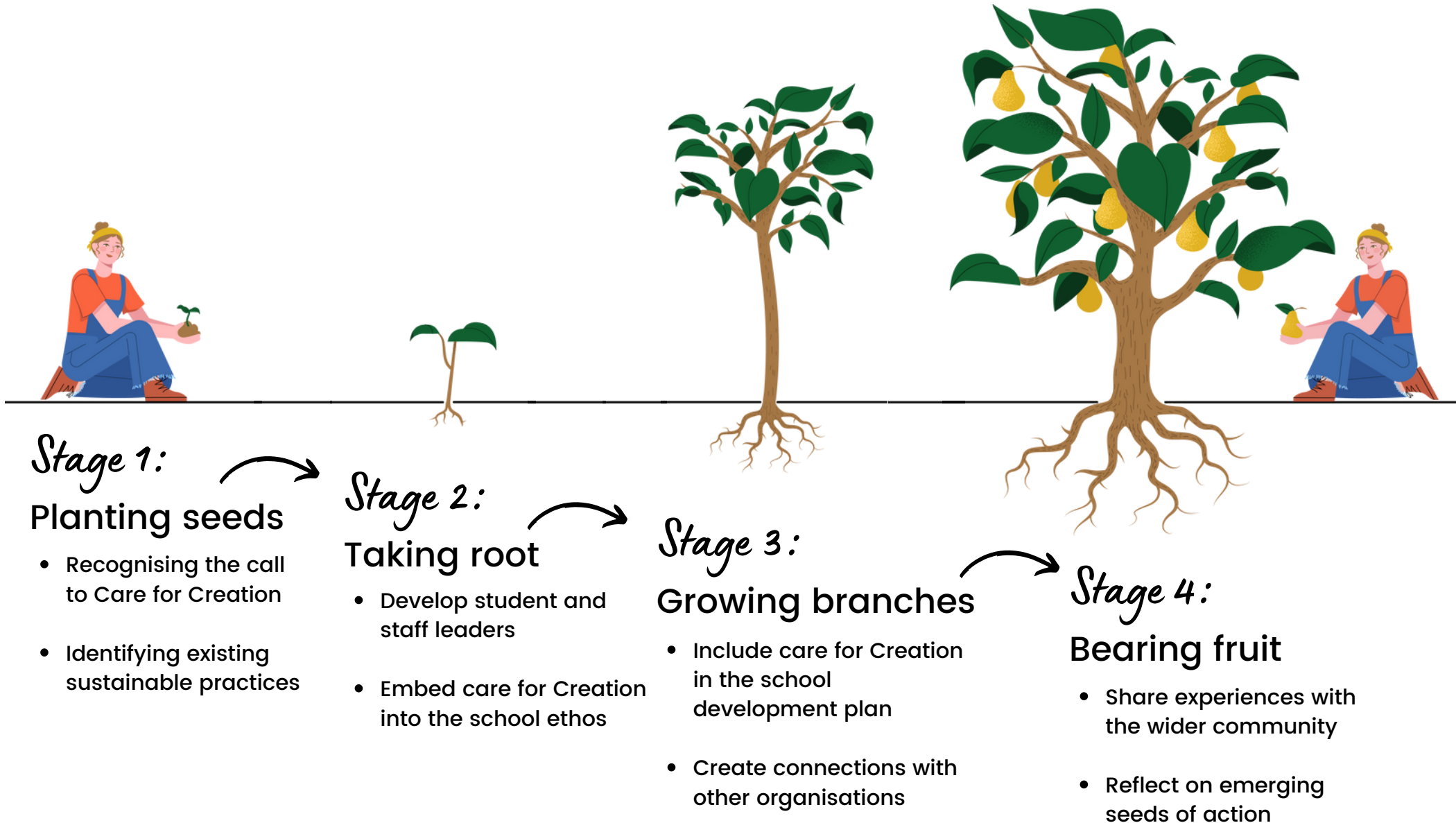
A cyclical process

Nature is never linear. The fruits of one harvest offer the seeds for the next season in a sustainable cycle. In the same way, a school's approach to caring for our common home is cyclical. The outcome of one innovation can offer inspiration for the next idea. This model invites each school to include moments of reflection and renewal in their sustainability journey.

Caring for Creation

A model for cultivating whole-school change in Catholic settings

"that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction"



Stage 1: Planting seeds

Change can only happen when we set an intention to grow. So, to grow as a sustainable community, we first have to plant the seeds of action. This stage is all about recognising the call to care for creation. As a starting point, schools can reflect on their existing sustainable practices. While changes in this stage are often small, they set a clear intention for future actions.

Here are some questions to consider at this stage:



Recognising the call to care for creation

- What inspired your school community to care for creation?
- Why is it important for your school to care for creation?
- Are there any areas you would like to prioritise?

Identifying existing sustainable practices

- What is your school already doing to answer the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor?
- Are there any starting points for further action? (For example, a student-led ecology club, an outdoor learning space, or another existing initiative).

Resources

Building a Caring Community

(The Ecological Conversion Group)

This poster pack helps Catholic schools and communities start their ecological journey. Using the Laudato Si' Goals, the resource can help your community set goals and prioritise areas of action.

Pathways: to education for sustainable development (WWF)

This framework offers a practical toolkit for planning a whole-school approach to sustainability. It includes activities and advice for getting started.

Stage 2: Taking root

In this stage, the seeds of action begin to grow. Strong roots offer concrete foundations for school-wide change, nurturing a connected action network. Part of this stage involves nurturing student and staff leaders. The school can begin making sustainable changes by equipping them with the required knowledge and skillsets. In doing so, caring for our common home becomes part of the school's ethos and in the hearts and minds of the community.

Here are some questions to consider at this stage:

Develop student and staff leaders

- What do students and staff need to be leaders in sustainability?
- How can your school bring student voices into your journey?

Embed care for creation into the school ethos

- How does caring for creation fit with the school's current mission statement? Does this reflect Catholic teachings about the environment?
- How can you spread the message to every person in your school's community?

Resources

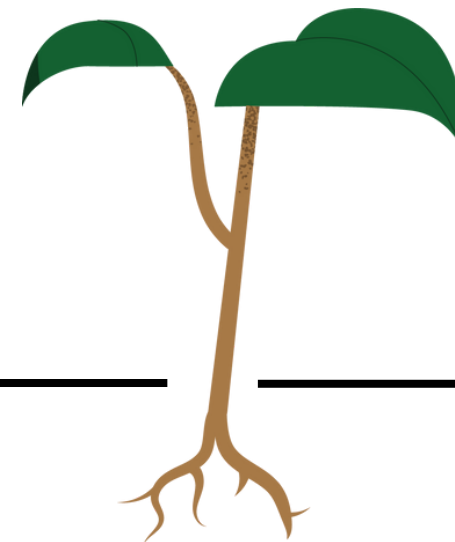
Laudato Si' Champions (Guardians of Creation project)
This toolkit contains six lesson plans aimed at students ages 11-14 about Laudato Si'. They support students in becoming student sustainability leaders through Catholic teachings.

Laudato Si' Animators

This free leadership development course is open to adults looking for ways to live Laudato Si' in their daily lives. It also involves a community-based action project as part of the qualification.

Carbon Literacy Courses

The Carbon Literacy Project offers one-day courses to develop awareness about carbon emissions. The site also provides free toolkits for different sectors to develop their carbon literacy.



Stage 3: Growing branches

With strong foundations, this stage begins to see tangible and significant changes through school life. The branches of sustainable action can grow in unique ways. For example, schools might see behavioural changes or improved infrastructure. The school community may also begin branching out to other groups. Connecting to your school's diocese or local charities can help the whole school grow together. An important

aspect of this stage is the inclusion of care of creation in the school development plan.

Here are some questions to consider at this stage:

Include care of creation in the school development plan

- Which areas of sustainable action will you prioritise in the school's development plan?
- How will your school achieve this development plan? Do you need a sustainability lead or committee?

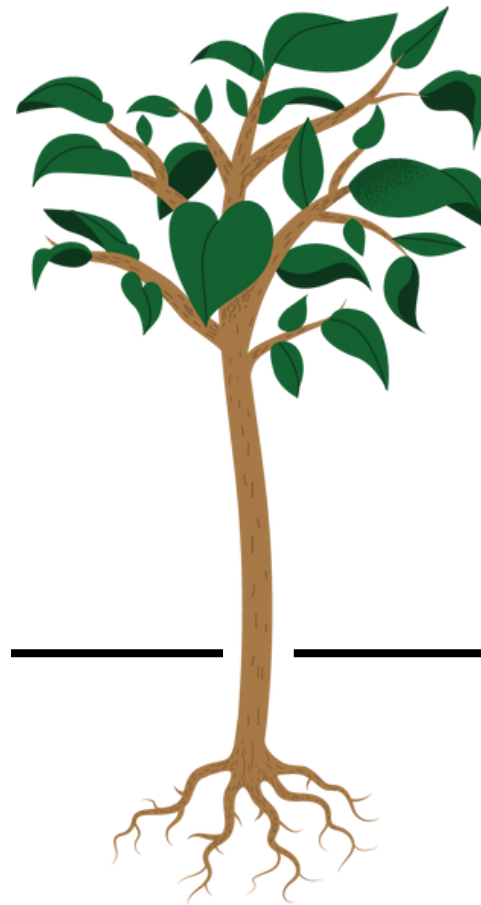
Resources

LiveSimply Award (CAFOD)

This award scheme allows schools to show how they live in simple and sustainable ways. The award also includes questions about living in solidarity with the poorest communities. It invites reflection on Laudato Si' and Catholic Social Teaching in each school's action plan.

The journey of sustainable schools (National College for school leadership)

This report from 2011 offers advice for embedding and developing sustainability in schools. It offers guidance on including sustainability in school development plans alongside further resources.



Create connections with other organisations

- Are there any local or national organisations that can help your school community meet your development plan's goals?
- What can your school offer other organisations to support both of your sustainability journeys?

Stage 4: Bearing fruit

Here, a school's sustainable development starts to bear fruit in transformational changes. There are visible changes that encompass the whole-school community in everyday ways. It offers schools a chance to celebrate their journey, giving thanks to God for the beauty of creation. This stage also acts as a reflection point, empowered by student voices in dialogue with staff leaders. The school can identify new strands of action, which form the new seeds of their action plan.

Here are some questions to consider at this stage:

Share experiences with the wider community

- How can your school share its sustainability journey with local and national communities?
- Are there events, networks, or award schemes your school could join in celebrating your progress?
- Could you partner with another school to learn from one another's sustainable development?

Reflect on emerging seeds of action

- What has your school community learnt about the care of creation through this process?
- Are there areas that your school community would like to develop further? How can you keep the journey going?

Resources

Your diocese

Share your school's success with the local Catholic diocese. They can help you share your school's story and offer support for the next phase of your journey.

Let's Go Zero (Ashden)

This campaign invites schools to commit to being zero carbon by 2030. It offers resources to support this goal and case studies from signed-up schools.

UK Schools Sustainability Network (Transform Our World)

This network connects schools across the UK who want to share ideas and resources about taking climate action. It has spaces for students and staff to collaborate alongside projects and activities.





Where next?

The "Caring for Creation" model is a starting point for educators seeking to develop a whole-school approach to sustainability. It provides a framework for mapping your school's progress and inspiration for possible next steps.

Remember that the stages set out in this model are not linear. It offers a cyclical process of renewal and reflection embedded in *Laudato Si'* and Catholic Social Teaching. Adding care of creation to your school development plan might be the first thing your community does. Contacting your local diocese for support can help at any stage of your journey. Celebration and reflection are not reserved for stage four; they can be part of every change your school makes.

The journey towards a sustainable future where we care for our common home as responsible stewards is complex. Pathways to ecological action are fluid and constantly developing. Yes, as Pope Francis reminds us:

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"God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. [...] For he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward."

(*Laudato Si'*, 245)

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This model offers one framework for schools to further their sustainability journey. In doing so, Catholic educators and student communities can find those new ways forward to care for the earth, our common home.

Recognitions

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