ACCREDITATION REPORT

Oundle School

September 2024

Executive Summary

Oundle School and Laxton Junior School provide 4-18 co-education and are situated in Oundle, located in Northamptonshire. The School welcomes both day pupils and boarders. Developing solutions to environmental sustainability challenges across the School can be difficult due to the older building stock, which includes listed buildings, heating systems without individual radiator temperature control, difficulties accessing meters and accurate data, and the movement of students with year groups graduating and joining each year. Despite this, the Sustainability Leads and overall team have shown strong determination to introduce a wide range of changes in every area possible, and have built an Environmental Management System (EMS) that strengthens each year.

Data availability has limited the regularity and specificity of data reviews, however effective actions have been implemented, and waste data is well understood and monitored, with large scale meter installations addressing energy data issues. The Sustainability Leads have brought knowledge from both the academic and support staff together, and facilitated and inspired the enthusiasm of the students to really bring the different areas of the School together towards Oundle School's environmental goals: they should be particularly commended for this, as should the ELT for their contributions, the staff who have taken ownership of tasks, from larger scale projects to personal appraisal objectives, and the students who have provided ideas and commitment across the years to engage their peers. As it is evident sustainability is becoming embedded into multiple areas such as procurement, waste management, site development, and travel incentives, Oundle School has been awarded Green Level Accreditation.

Before a Net Zero roadmap and strategy can be fully developed, data collection should be further refined, using the new meters installed for higher reliability. However, in areas where data reliability is stronger, such as with waste, longer-term targets can begin to take shape. This would set good foundations for the School to then work to develop a Net Zero roadmap and strategy, which should include dated milestones linked to resource usage targets and action completion. Resourcing in regards to time should be further widened to enable this work.

Highlights

- Communication channels are strong, with reports, meetings, online channels, social media and external summaries utilised.
- Waste management has strengthened, particularly around food waste and procurement, and there has been an reduction in overall waste produced.
- Project work has been exemplary: projects are used also for engagement purposes, cover all three areas (resource efficiency, biodiversity and environment, and social and wellbeing), and exceed the number required for Green Level.

Improvements

- Access to reliable data should continue to be a focus, to form solid baselines, and enable half-yearly or termly data reviews. The new meters should be used for more in-depth performance analysis and reporting. As done so far, where data is difficult to access regularly or at all, actions should continue to be implemented to manage resources, for example around water usage.
- To further expand the Travel Plan, a staff travel survey should be undertaken.
- A draft framework for a Net Zero roadmap and transition plan should be developed which includes milestones and interim targets against which to measure long-term performance.

Score

Investors in the Environment is pleased to confirm that, having recently completed the audit process, Oundle School has achieved the Green Level accreditation with a score of 78%.

To achieve Green level accreditation, an organisation is required to demonstrate continual improvement through the implementation of their Environmental Management System, working towards a minimum 2% efficiency improvement year-on-year. At Green level, the organisation is focusing on driving wider sustainability development throughout and is starting to consider their value chain with the implementation of sustainable procurement practices, and associated carbon emissions.

About the audit

The Investors in the Environment (iiE) accreditation requires an organisation to provide evidence that it has met a range of pre-defined criteria, set targets to reduce its environmental impact and taken action to improve its performance whilst enhancing the community in which it operates. Evidence is presented at an annual audit and this report provides an evaluation of the organisation's performance as well as offers advice on the next steps for continued improvement.

The Investors in the Environment annual audit assesses five key areas of an organisation's Environmental Management System (EMS). These areas include:

- Environmental policy
- Resource management and monitoring
- Progress against targets
- Action planning including social/ environmental projects
- Communication

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate the organisation's EMS and make suggestions relating to its performance. Future opportunities and risks to the organisation's environmental practices may also be identified as a result.

The audit consisted of an examination of documentation evidence, and an interview and site visit with key personnel on Tuesday 10th September 2024, with final evidence submitted on Thursday 12th September 2024.

Evidence submitted included:

- Updated Environmental Policy
- Procurement Policy and Code of Conduct
- Updated EMS Reporting Pack
- Resource usage data, including waste and travel data
- Environmental Action Plans
- Communication examples, both internally and externally
- Evidence and detail of projects undertaken

Summary Results Table

Audit category	Score
Section 1 - Leadership and Governance (Policy)	86%
Section 2 - Resource Use, Data, & Monitoring	55%
Section 3 - Performance, Action, & Targets	79%
Section 4 - Carbon Management	75%
Section 5 - Waste Management & Materials	88%
Section 6 – Transport & Travel Planning	67%
Section 7 - Environmental & Social Projects	100%
Section 8 – Communication & Engagement	83%
Overall Score	**78%**

Audit Scoring

Each section of the organisation's Environmental Management System (EMS) is scored as detailed below. Full reference to scoring can be found separately in the organisation's audit sheet upon request, including auditor comments against specific criteria.

Fail	**0 Points**: A failing score means that this criterion has not been met nor is any progress demonstrated. *No progress or commitment has been made in this area.*
Action Needed	**1 point:** Action is needed to improve and should be considered in alignment with the auditor's comments and an appropriate timeline. These will be discussed during quarterly support calls to help improve. *The organisation is considering developing this area, but no formal process has been established or meaningful progress has not been made.*
Pass / Compliant	**2 points**: The criteria have been met, though there may also be suggestions to improve. *The organisation is beginning or improving this area, is broadly compliant with the iiE criteria, and may be showing processes that support improvements.*
Outstanding	**3 points**: This criterion has been exceeded as measured against the basic iiE criteria and may demonstrate a significant improvement since the previous year or may highlight best practice. *The organisation is succeeding with supportive target achievement and may be leading or supporting others in their sector or influence to achieve improvements.*

Leadership & Governance (Environmental Policy)

86%

The process of developing an environmental policy includes a review of the environmental aspects of an organisation and the impacts these have on the wider environment. This should consider material use and consumption, energy use, water management, waste minimisation, etc.

The policy is the main driver for environmental performance improvements and needs to be led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). It should be reviewed annually, alongside environmental performance updates.

In time, wider strategies and long-term objectives should be considered by the organisation and used to inform the commitments outlined in the policy. The policy should be communicated to staff and made available for all to review, both internally and publicly.

Strengths

- The Environmental Policy is reviewed at multiple leadership levels with opportunities for input at each stage.
- The School has expanded its work around sustainable procurement, with environmental considerations included at decision-making level. This approach is particularly evident within the supply chain for food purchases.
- Environmental sustainability is included in inductions for both academic and support staff, and is communicated to students termly: for students, this includes engaging pieces they can relate to such as campaigns relating to COP summits.
- A public version of the updated policy is available on the School website, alongside a dedicated section on the school's progress and aims, with a video demonstrating commitment from the School Head.
- Within appraisals for support staff, environmental sustainability is incorporated into personal goals – this is cascaded down from management level to enable ownership to be taken, thus embedding sustainability within staff responsibilities at all levels.

Actions for review

- Update the website's sustainability page with the School's achievement of Green Accreditation and consider including particularly work around biodiversity as progress in this area could make for a good visual communication piece.
- To support work towards the Net Zero goal, consider these training options to upskill ahead of developing a roadmap or transition plan:
    - The Pathways to Net Zero course for a key staff member, to support the ambitions of the Group in achieving its Net Zero goal.
    - The Energy Managers Association (EMA) also provides courses on Net Zero, from an energy management perspective, alongside a raft of energy management workshops, events and courses.
- To implement sustainability actions, further time resource should be assigned to this area, enabling key staff members to report to a central figure who has dedicated protected time.
- The Sustainability Leads proposed an idea for a multi-department focus group in which both staff and students could be represented: look into this idea to further engagement and develop action ideas.
- To support work on procurement, the upcoming free iiE webinar entitled 'How can responsible procurement improve sustainability performance' delivered by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply could be helpful.
- To influence further within the School's supply chains, consider encouraging suppliers to work towards an accreditation scheme.

Resource Use & Data Monitoring

55%

Resource use and data monitoring is pivotal for any organisation to ensure good management of performance. Within this section of the EMS, an organisation is required to develop robust data recording procedures and set a process for data revision that aligns with general performance reviews – which could be monthly, quarterly, or even half yearly, depending on the measured resource and planned activity.

To support the monitoring of data, a review of operations and processes across the organisation needs to be carried out to understand how and why resources are used and where opportunities for improvement exist.

As part of resource management, prioritisation is key, to ensure activities and resources focused on efficiency gains are deployed in areas which can have the biggest impact.

Strengths

- Although the score for this section of the audit is relatively low, this area is considered acceptable for overall achievement of Green Level accreditation due to strong understanding and awareness of the issues and challenges around data access and review. Further, plans are in place to address this, and significant work has been achieved recently with extensive energy meter installations: this will provide more specific and reliable data for the coming year.
- Understanding of data has developed from previous years, with data reviewed regularly in regards to efficiency and to address any functioning issues across the building stock. As close to half-yearly reviews as is possible have been undertaken.
- Solar PV generation is monitored, with plans for potential future installations.
- A long-term plan for the refitting of each building housing students' living areas is in place for when the new building has been completed: this will be particularly impactful for energy management and temperature control.

Actions for review

- Due to lack of control ability around heating, consider the lagging of radiator pipes and installation of radiator reflectors in relevant areas: reflectors are most effective on exterior walls or where the wall is shared with a space with significant airflow for example a corridor with an external entrance.
- Granular data from new meter readings should provide more reliable insight, and should be incorporated into termly data reviews.
- Continue to work on improving water data collection. Although this has a low relative carbon contribution, it is an important resource and could help focus actions on loss areas.
- Normalisation of data to view trends and fluctuations within the context of the School should be addressed within the next steps of data analysis.
- Data for holiday periods ideally should be included, reducing reliance on extrapolation of data as this is likely to paint an inaccurate picture.

Performance, Action & Targets

79%

Targeting provides an opportunity to measure performance against planned activities. Where performance is short of achieving targets, it can help to refine any activities or projects underway to make improvements while they are being completed, to ensure set out goals are achieved.

Targets can be set against activity metrics to analyse how annual changes to business activity will affect performance, with the aim to always improve efficiency where absolute reductions are not achievable.

Action plans should record intended activities and support the review of performance, with the aim to achieving the set targets. Organisations are required to demonstrate activity through well managed action plans, which are clear and easy to follow. Actions introduced should support achievement of set targets.

Strengths

- Oundle School has achieved reductions in some resources this year, for example in total waste, particularly in the food waste stream, with gradual adjustments made to meal service to help achieve this.
- Evaluation of performance is detailed and in-depth, despite certain data gaps, and the Sustainability Leads show strong understanding of available data and the factors affecting this.
- Action plans clearly record what has been achieved, who leads on each action and include detailed updates and follow-up actions. These plans are effectively used as live documents throughout the year, with progress check-ins undertaken at ELT meetings.

Actions for review

- Granularity of data, or lack of, makes target setting difficult. Once energy data is more accessible through the new meters, this can feed directly into developing more specific and targeted actions.
- To create department-specific targets, consider defining specific and relevant levels of accountability for staff members (particularly within the academic staff where scope of action can be less clear), as done within support staff appraisals.

Carbon Management

75%

With increased focus on working towards Net Zero and the importance of Climate Action, carbon management is a key element of the iiE accreditation process. Organisations are required to calculate their footprint starting at buildings level (energy consumed within the buildings), then water, travel, and finally including additional aspects of business activity, such as waste, etc.

Carbon Management provides an opportunity for an organisation to consider which resources or operations need to be prioritised to decarbonise as quickly as possible, in line with Climate Science. The output from a carbon footprint calculation should be used to inform these decisions, which is another reason data capture and accurate data reporting is necessary.

The carbon footprint calculation for Oundle School (illustrated by the chart below) uses data from the year period of January – December 2023 for energy usage and the academic year from 2022-2023 for waste and fleet mileage data. The carbon footprint includes energy (electricity and gas), waste (general, recycling, and food waste), and travel (School fleet mileage). As the data follows different time periods, and includes extrapolated data, this figure should be used only as an estimate.

2023
2991.76 tCO$_2$e

- General Waste, 0.001%
- Travel, 4.706%
- Electricity, 33.363%
- Gas Fuels, 61.929%
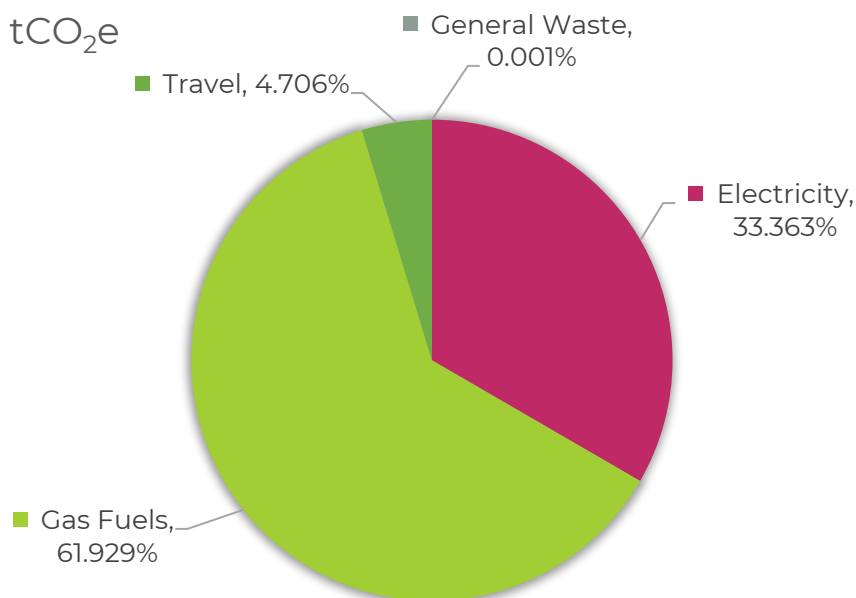
Strengths

- The School has moved financial investments to be in more sustainable areas. Further information on this and how decisions are made could be included within audit evidence in future.
- Solar PV has been installed, with plans for further installations: energy produced is monitored.

- EV alternatives within the School's fleet are considered and included where possible.
- Although the carbon footprint is higher than in the previous year, the calculation now includes business travel – without this, a reduction in tCO_2e would have been achieved.
- A carbon equivalent per pupil figure has been calculated which can be used to communicate the School's sustainability journey each year.
- Substantial work has been undertaken around the catering menu: emissions from red meat consumption are significantly reduced. This work also displays the School's commitment to approaching emission reduction within its supply chain.

Actions for review

- As gas is a high emission area for the School, plans to fit different systems for more specific temperature control should be included within any long term decarbonisation plan.
- The scope of the carbon footprint should continue to be widened in future years, for example ascertaining an estimate of commuter mileage. This gives a more detailed representation of the School's overall usage, even in areas of less control.

Waste Management & Materials

88%

Organisations are required to review and improve upon waste management. This should start with how waste is managed on site and ultimately disposed of to ensure the correct processes are followed.

From Silver level onwards, thought should be given to procurement and how waste is generated on site, from the materials purchased that end up in the waste stream, through to the activities on site that create waste.

Finally, circular economy concepts and thinking should be introduced, with the waste hierarchy leading to decision making, opting for elimination as the priority, followed by choosing products that can be reused or repaired.

Strengths

- A good waste management system is in place; waste is segregated into general waste, recycling, food waste, and specific streams where there is need, for example glass bins for lab technicians in the science department.
- A process is in place to process IT waste, with hardware recycled where possible.
- The School have utilised a range of competitive and engagement project elements to raise awareness amongst the student population, with many ideas generated from the student Green Team.
- Staff awareness of waste processes such as recycling has improved.
- Bin checks are in place, with students assisting with these.
- Digital methods are utilised to reduce paper usage, resulting in a 24% reduction over the past year. Where paper is used, more sustainable options are procured.
- More granular detail about food waste has been obtained and is supporting work to achieve further reductions, with numerous actions introduced already.

Actions for review

- As waste processing evolves, continue to seek a contractor who will process soft plastics to further recycling efforts.
- The waste management system at the School is strong, and the Sustainability Lead overseeing this work shows excellent and in-depth understanding of the challenges and potential solutions: planned further efficiency gains and binfrastructure reviews should be undertaken, with a capability to score 100% in this area next year with this subsequent work.

Transport & Travel Planning

67%

A travel plan must consider the travel needs for an organisation, including access, availability of public services, and safety of travel where relevant. Travel is the single largest contributor to UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and can be a challenging area to manage, given the need for transport within any operation.

The plan should aim to remove barriers for individuals to choose active / shared transport over single car occupancy, and then to consider electrification of vehicles over internal combustion engines.

Surveys are a useful tool to engage with individuals around travel habits and to support identification and implementation of barrier removals, to improve good travel habits.

Strengths

- Oundle School's Travel Plan is extensive and encompasses all forms of travel undertaken by, and linked to, the School's operations. Specific goals and targets are in place as part of the Plan, with actions and future ideas present to support target achievement.
- Incentives in place are clearly described and communicated well, particularly to staff, with more uptake on the EV salary sacrifice scheme seen this year.
- Greater uptake of group coach travel to and from the School to relevant airports for students travelling internationally has been seen, particularly from newer students and guardians.
- The School is in the process of facilitating a car share scheme for staff.

Actions for review

- To increase the score in this area, undertake a staff travel survey to further understand the travel modes used, and the barriers to staff choosing alternative methods. Collating views on incentives that may help in overcoming certain barriers can inform future actions in this area. A similar survey could be undertaken with students and/or guardians.
- Where alternative modes may not be accessible due for example to limited public transport options, consider actions to manage the impact of car travel, such as sharing eco-driving tips and holding an interactive session on the basics of car maintenance.

- To support further uptake of the EV scheme consider running a Q&A session, with staff who have experience of driving an EV available to answer questions. This can encourage others to consider this change.
- Those thinking of investing in an EV may also wish to consult the local Facebook group: Oundle EV Drivers. Consider also sharing ZapMap which enables EV drivers to identify charging points, and is particularly useful for longer journeys.

Environmental & Social Projects

100%

All organisations need to consider their corporate responsibility, both for social, community and wellbeing impacts, and for environmental impacts through biodiversity or conservation efforts.

This section requires organisations to undertake a range of projects that not only aim to achieve impacts, but to also encourage individual participation and engagement – to raise conversation and encourage individuals to consider what they can do outside of the organisation as well.

It is strongly encouraged that organisations undertake projects in all three areas, Resource Efficiency, Biodiversity / Conservation, and Social / Community.

Strengths

- Oundle School has undertaken numerous projects this past year, and has surpassed the number required for Green Level, therefore scoring outstanding in this sub-section of the audit.
- Projects covered all three project areas, and have been utilised effectively to boost engagement with students, particularly with biodiversity-related projects.
- Work on biodiversity in particular has been excellent, and included habitat creation, participating in monitoring surveys, and developing wildflower meadows to support pollinators.

Actions for review

- Continue to use projects to both widen the scope of the School's environmental work and as an engagement tool, as has been done thus far.
- As before, collate evidence from upcoming projects, including those that are a continuation of current projects, and new ideas such as the prom outfit project.
- It is strongly recommended that the School enters the the iiE Awards. Consider entering the Natural Environment Champion award. Benefit to nature and supporting a range of species, as well as how this has aided engagement with students could be highlighted within the submission. Achievement can be demonstrated through evidence of actions and data – photos can be sent on as supporting evidence.
  - Tickets for the event itself can be found here – attendance is free and covers themed workshops, networking opportunities over lunch, a keynote speech by Mark Shayler and the awards ceremony itself.

Communication & Engagement

83%

The scheme requires that active and engaged communication happens at all levels, as sustainability cannot only happen within the Senior Team or only happen at ground level but requires a collaborative approach. Regular and consistent communication and engagement is therefore pivotal to ensuring objectives are achieved.

In addition, regular reporting is necessary to highlight the success of activities and improvements achieved. These should be produced both for the SLT, but also for wider staff to celebrate success and recognise efforts they have made through participation.

In time, reports should be made available publicly alongside the environmental policy to further demonstrate the commitment and celebrate the achievements of the organisation.

Strengths

- There is strong student engagement, with a range directly involved within Green Group activities. Students can take ownership of projects, and communicate to their peers through multiple mediums such as posters and the Instagram account. Student enthusiasm for sustainability is fostered and supported.
- Student surveys are utilised to understand student awareness and the actions they would be open to supporting to aid in the School's overall aims. Awareness of the environmental policy and sustainability efforts has increased significantly from last year.
- The ELT supports actions, with members taking on direct ownership of relevant areas. Regular updates are provided through live use of action plans and meetings at multiple management levels. Sustainability is a standing agenda item in these meetings.
- Sustainability is included within the overall School annual summary.

Actions for review

- A report centring on environmental work which includes progress against targets and updates in relation to areas such as waste management, student and staff engagement, and biodiversity could be used to update staff at all levels on progress with more granular detail than what would be included publicly.

Next Steps

To continue to develop sustainability within Oundle School, the following steps should be considered and prioritised:

- Set a target date for when a more reliable baseline year of energy data will be accessible: this can then be used as the foundation for developing the energy element of a Net Zero roadmap which includes milestones and associated actions.
- Continue work to formalise data reviews: these should ideally occur termly. Normalisation of data to view trends and fluctuations within the context of the school should be within the next steps of data analysis and will support work to track progress long-term against milestones, towards the Net Zero target.
- Being able to report directly to one person whose main role centres on sustainability at the School would be helpful. Complementing this with defining specific and relevant levels of accountability for other staff members (particularly within the academic staff where scope of action can be less clear), as done within support staff appraisals, could offer wider support to the lead role.
- Undertake a staff travel survey to further understand the travel modes used, and the barriers to staff choosing alternative methods. Collating views on incentives that may help in overcoming certain barriers can inform future actions in this area. A similar survey could be undertaken with students and/or guardians.

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