



**Alpha Plus**  
group

the **Gold Standard** in education

# ESG Impact Report

1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

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# About Alpha Plus Group

Alpha Plus Group owns and manages 17 schools and nurseries as well as three sixth form colleges. We are one of the largest private school providers in London and we also operate two schools and two colleges outside of London: in Cambridge, Manchester, Tonbridge, and Coventry.

We have one simple aim: we seek to give every child in our care the best possible start in life. To achieve this aim, all our schools have signed up to deliver the “Gold Standard”. This is about strong leadership and governance, having high aspirations and expectations of staff and pupils, and maintaining effective partnerships with parents, whilst recognising that excellence is a never-ending pursuit.

This quest for excellence extends to our commitment to being a leader in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance within the education sector. We are working

in partnership with Sustainable Advantage, a leading ESG consultancy to make sustainability a long-term cumulative process and not a one-off initiative. We have committed to tackle the climate emergency, the ecological crisis, and the pressing social and environmental issues facing our local communities. We want to make operating in a sustainable and socially responsible way the new normal by fully integrating sustainability in our planning, processes, and culture within each school. Our pupils will go on to be the leaders of tomorrow; we commit to empower every pupil to champion sustainability during their time at our schools, and to lead by example.

In the pages that follow, we outline the environmental and social impacts resulting from the schools' everyday activities and communicate our sustainability and governance initiatives, performance, and impact.

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# A comment from Richard Jones, our ESG Committee Chairman

**I am pleased to introduce our second environmental, social, and governance (ESG) impact report. Inevitably, over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact our operations. As last year, some of our usual activities were unable to proceed as planned, while data relating to our energy, waste, water, and transport may have been skewed by unusual working patterns and school closures. Thus, progress on the environmental targets we set in last year's ESG report was largely positive, but we still have more to achieve. We anticipate a return to some degree of normality this year and are planning exciting activities to help us along our path to net zero carbon emissions.**

Over the past two years, the social aspects of ESG have become even more important. To reflect this, we have broadened the scope of this year's report to include more on our stakeholder engagement, people processes, and sustainability in the classroom. We have expanded our measurable targets beyond the environmental to include social and governance specific targets. As such, in this year's report, we describe our approach to managing and developing our most important asset: our staff.

Aside from developing online delivery for many of our teaching and learning programmes, we increased our outreach to families to ensure we were supporting them to the best of our ability. We strove to support our staff in navigating the additional challenges posed to key workers. Beyond adding depth to the report and enabling us to cover additional topics, we hope the decision to engage more of our colleagues in collecting data will help to

embed our ESG objectives more broadly across the organisation.

In light of COP26 and the increasing urgency surrounding climate change, loss of biodiversity, and the need for action on myriad environmental issues, it is more important than ever to focus on the ways we work with our pupils to embed ethical and responsible attitudes through action. Young people today are already switched on to the problem of climate change, and I have no doubt that some of the innovators and eco champions of tomorrow are in our classrooms today. Our schools do a huge amount to nurture these interests in our pupils. This year, we ran a survey to enable our schools and colleges to tell us about the brilliant initiatives they are running locally, and these have been embedded throughout the report. Next year, we will expand this survey to ensure all our schools and colleges are included. Alongside curriculum content, extracurricular

programmes, and awards that further our pupils' understanding of pressing environmental issues, we seek to develop a sense of social justice through our fundraising efforts and provision of learning opportunities for disadvantaged young people.

I would like to thank our colleagues who contributed to this report, sharing their expertise and perspectives. I also want to thank our staff and pupils who have embedded sustainability in multiple ways in their schools and daily lives, helping to create a culture of responsibility and a positive impact across our organisation and in our wider communities. Finally, thanks to all our stakeholders who continue to support our goal of becoming a leader in the ESG space. Only by working together will be able to confront the many issues facing our world today.

**Richard Jones**  
Director of Property

# ESG Objectives

## Environment

As an organisation, we have a range of environmental impacts which we work to mitigate. The first step towards reducing our impact is to understand it, and as such we are constantly expanding the data that we gather and report on, including mapping our carbon footprint and reducing our emissions as far as possible. This year, we have improved our data collection by undertaking independent third-party surveys for staff transport and a proportion of our supply chain. Beyond understanding our impacts, we work to reduce them through implementing best practice regarding waste disposal, energy, and water consumption, and considering staff transport options and supply chain vetting to align with our environmental objectives. Our schools lead on localised initiatives to reduce waste, energy, and water impacts and to involve pupils and families in improving biodiversity at schools and awareness of global issues.

## Social

In our pursuit of excellence in education, the impact we have on our pupils shapes all of our decisions. As such, we have included in this report an overview of the ways we embed ESG in our classrooms. This includes undertaking charitable work in our communities and providing opportunities for less privileged

pupils to learn with us. It also means working with our pupils' families to overcome challenges posed by COVID-19, and beyond. We couldn't provide the quality of learning environment that we do without our staff, and we see their health and wellbeing as a top priority. As such, we offer extensive support in this area, and are offering new training opportunities for staff to model wellbeing with pupils.

## Governance

Governance is a framework which structures how an organisation meets and delivers its requirements, standards, and practices. It provides a platform to enable the organisation and its stakeholders to ensure effective, accurate, and legally compliant delivery of services. Our organisation relies on the academic and non-teaching staff who have chosen us as their employer. As such, we continuously evolve our policies and procedures to reflect best practice and to ensure all stakeholders within our organisation are well supported, managed, and treated fairly. The Alpha Plus Board is responsible for ensuring that the activities of the company and its schools are conducted in compliance with the applicable laws, regulatory requirements, and good practice. In this year's report we have included a summary of some of our key policies.



# Supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Developed by the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 overarching goals that provide a global framework for peace and prosperity in consideration of the environment. We aspire to use our position in society to be a force for good, helping to create better outcomes for millions of people every day, securing the future of the Earth, and being responsible custodians of a planet our children will inherit.



We have identified the five UN SDGs below to work towards and have integrated the SDGs throughout our ESG Impact Report, demonstrating our contribution and alignment in 2020/2021.

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL	UN TARGET	OUR CONTRIBUTION
 <p><b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> <p>Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.</p>	<p><b>3.9</b> Strengthen the capacity for early warning, risk reduction, and management of global and national health risks.</p>	<p>We support our staff's mental and physical health through our Wellbeing Leads, Mental Health and Wellbeing Forums, Health and Wellbeing policies, and employee assistance programme.</p> <p>Senior leadership has access to mental health and wellbeing workshops as part of this year's annual conference.</p> <p>Our pilot mindfulness professional development programme gives teachers skills for supporting pupils to develop mindfulness practice.</p>
 <p><b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION</p> <p>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p>	<p>We partner with the Gold Standard Charitable Trust who provides means-tested bursaries to pupils whose circumstances would otherwise put an independent school education out of their reach, and to support current pupils whose families experience unforeseen financial difficulty.</p> <p>We have supported training and development for IT and Nursery School apprentices.</p>

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL	UN TARGET	OUR CONTRIBUTION
 <p>Reduce inequality within and among countries.</p>	<p><b>10.2</b> By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.</p>	<p>We embed diversity in our recruitment, staff training, and governance and our Board is responsible for our Equality and Inclusion policy. At least one person on every recruitment selection panel must have undertaken Fair Selection training, and all staff must undertake diversity training within their first three months of employment.</p> <p>We have a Diversity Council with staff representation from across the Group.</p> <p>Each of our schools and colleges participates in a School Council created specifically to develop ideas for events, community awareness programmes, and promoting the value of diverse and inclusive schools.</p> <p>Every year, the Alpha Plus Group supports many national and international charities. For the year ended 31st August 2021, we raised £586,115 for charities ranging from local community charities to those providing bursarial support.</p>
 <p>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.</p>	<p><b>12.5</b> By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse.</p> <p><b>12.6</b> Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.</p>	<p>Our schools and PTAs run local waste reduction initiatives, including second-hand uniform shops and donation programmes for unwanted items. Many of our schools and colleges have recycling points for batteries and have removed single-use plastic from water fountains and cafeterias. Others segregate and compost food waste.</p> <p>Themed assemblies in schools cover a wide variety of sustainability topics such as the effect of plastics on the environment and how to reduce these.</p> <p>We survey our top suppliers about their ESG impacts and share our ESG report to encourage alignment with our goals. Our procurement priorities include substantially reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse.</p>
 <p>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.</p>	<p><b>13.3</b> Improve education, awareness-raising, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.</p>	<p>We procure 100% renewable electricity and reduce our energy consumption wherever possible.</p> <p>We gather monthly data about our energy consumption and use this knowledge to improve efficiency through measures like LED lighting, boiler upgrades, loft insulation, and double glazing of windows.</p>



**Environment**

Table 1

	01/09/19 – 31/08/20		01/09/20 – 31/08/21	
	kWh	tCO <sub>2</sub> e	kWh	tCO <sub>2</sub> e
Electricity	1,393,871	325.0	2,526,751	536.5
Gas	5,790,760	1,179.8	4,542,216	832.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,184,631</b>	<b>1,504.8</b>	<b>7,068,967</b>	<b>1,368.5</b>

## Review of the year

In this reporting period we reduced our overall energy consumption by 2% compared to last year, as outlined in Table 1. This includes a significant increase in the proportion of our energy that comes from electricity, which is 100% renewable, and a decrease in our use of gas, which is not from renewable sources.

We continue to procure 100% renewable electricity across all sites and to review our buildings and property for climate change resilience and implementation adaption measures such as LED lighting upgrades. In the past two years we have replaced approximately 30% of lights across our estate with LED. We continue to use an online reporting tool which enables us to gather data about individual sites' energy consumption.

However, due to the unusual opening patterns of our schools over the past two years, data concerning our energy usage may not be reflective of our normal consumption and it is difficult to assess what portion of the reduction is due to measures we have implemented. Periods of school closure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our schools in last year's reporting period for approximately three months from March – May 2020. In our second year of reporting, our operations were less impacted. Nearly all our schools remained at least partially open during periods of national school closure, from January to March 2021. In some cases, this was due to nursery-age schools remaining open by government sanction, while some schools remained open at a reduced capacity, to care for children of key workers.

Our schools continue to implement interventions and initiatives to reduce energy consumption and to teach pupils about the importance of conserving energy. Some of our schools' and colleges' initiatives include:

- **Abbey College Cambridge** has timers for all lights, which switch off in the event of no movement. They have introduced hot water boilers in staff rooms, removing the use of individual kettles.
- **Chepstow House** takes part in Switch Off Fortnight – encouraging staff and pupils to reduce energy waste.
- **Pembridge Hall** ran Power Down Hour to raise awareness regarding energy reduction.

## Plan for next year

We still have a way to go to achieve our goal of reducing energy consumption by 10% over two years. One way we believe we can significantly reduce our energy consumption is by ensuring we are not using heat and lighting unnecessarily during the warmer summer months, when schools are not in use. In the coming year we will engage with schools to determine necessary and unnecessary energy use, and where possible, encourage summer switch-offs. We will also undertake a cost analysis and aim to procure 25% of our gas from renewable sources (in addition to 100% of our electricity).

We will review lighting across all properties to determine gaps in LED lighting and plan to replace the remaining estimated 70% of standard lights with LED across all schools by the end of the reporting period.



Table 2

Waste treatment	01/09/19 – 31/08/20		01/09/20 – 31/08/21	
	kg	% of total	kg	% of total
Incineration /waste to energy	367,957	56%	351,879	53%
Landfill	12,276	2%	16,252	2%
Recycled	282,430	43%	301,413	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>662,663</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>669,544</b>	<b>–</b>

## Review of the year

Waste disposal and recycling is an area of focus for Alpha Plus Group. Unsustainable resource extraction, cheap and disposable plastic and other materials, and insufficient reuse and recycling of goods and materials are major problems for ecosystems. Globally the aim is to achieve a circular economy where there is limited waste, and where the products of today are also the raw materials of tomorrow.

We work with a third-party waste broker to gather waste performance data via an online portal, allowing us to understand our consumption patterns and introduce efficiencies where possible. We gather monthly data on the volume of waste generated per waste stream for each school. We also track the way each waste stream is disposed of, ensuring that a minimum of waste ends up in landfill.

In our second year of reporting, our waste was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our overall waste volume increased slightly, as shown in Table 2. This was largely due to introducing safe waste treatment for personal protective equipment (PPE), and in the case of localised waste disposal following any COVID-19 cases in schools.

We also produce nappy waste through one of our nurseries. Across the UK, an estimated three billion nappies are thrown away every year. Unfortunately, there is currently no option for diverting nappy waste from landfill in England. We would be keen to support any initiatives to change this, but until the option exists, we will be unable to divert 100% of our waste from landfill.

However, both at the Group and the individual school level, we continue to implement measures to divert waste from landfill wherever possible. Some recent initiatives include:

- Four of our schools and colleges segregate and compost their food waste, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill.
- Some of our schools' Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) run second-hand uniform shops. Families can donate old uniforms for other pupils to buy at a reduced cost. This both cuts back on fabric waste and enables families to save money. It also raises money for the PTA. Other schools and colleges donate unwanted pupil items to various charities which they in turn re-use, upcycle, or sell on for profit.
- Many of our schools and colleges have recycling points for batteries and have removed single-use plastic from water fountains and cafeterias.
- Themed assemblies in schools cover a wide variety of sustainability topics such as the effect of plastics on the environment and how to reduce these.
- **Abbey College Cambridge** uses refillable bottles for cleaning supplies and hand sanitisers. Wiping materials are either cloths that are laundered each week and re-used or are made from recycled paper. Reusable 'igloo' boxes are used to deliver food to pupils in quarantine, which are then sterilised and reused. Cooking oil from the dining room is recycled. They have introduced a composting system for all green waste including groundskeeping.

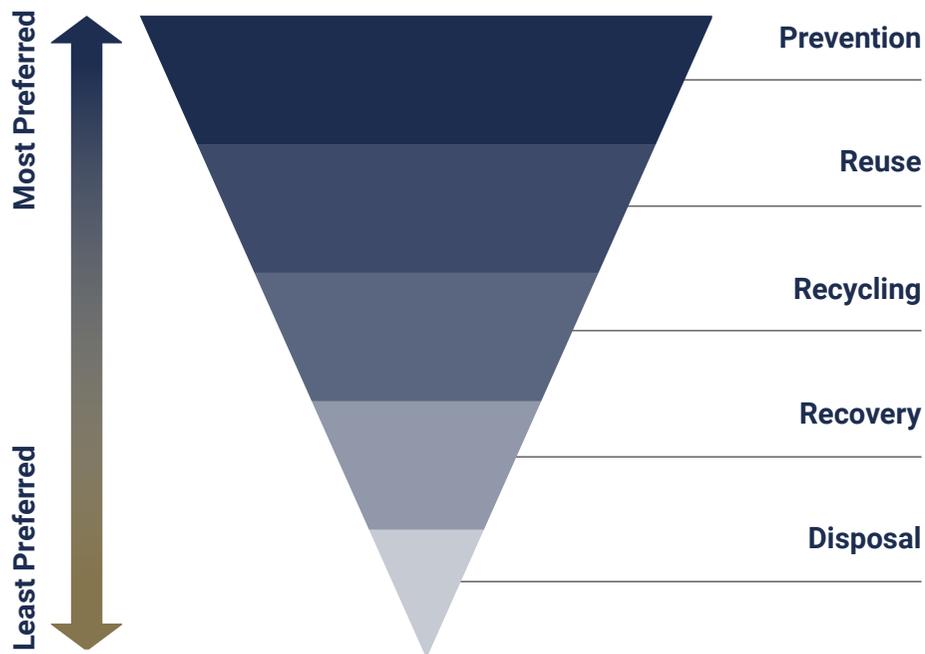
- **Chepstow House** encourages pupils to create posters to remind everyone what to put in the recycling bins in all classrooms and have held focus sessions to make events such as Halloween more sustainable.
- **Falcons School for Girls** run creative activities with recycled materials such as for D.T. days and making poppies, and hold charity drives to reuse items. They invite guest speakers to present on sustainability themes, including waste.
- **Hilden Grange** recycles crisp packets, staff coffee pods, and batteries. Last year, their student Green Team led the school in supporting the Great British September Clean by putting together an online assembly and holding a litter-picking competition in their local neighbourhoods. The assembly was followed by small group discussion in classes about why people littered, and what suggestions the children had to help the environment.
- **Pembridge Hall** holds Meat Free Mondays to raise awareness regarding sustainable farming and food waste and holds events such as clothes swaps organised by the school council and the Green Girl initiative.
- **Portland Place** has banned plastic cups and made it compulsory to use reusable bottles, creating their own PPS reusable bottles. Last year, pupils led a whole school assembly to talk about plastic and its toll on the environment.
- **Wetherby Senior School** participates in the Smarter Recycling Initiative, a preferred supplier scheme which helps cut vehicle emissions by reducing the number of waste collection companies servicing the Baker Street Quarter. Since its introduction in 2016, the Initiative has reduced waste vehicle trips by 63% and reduced monthly CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 40%.



## Plan for next year

While most of our schools are well-stocked with recycling bins, we are looking at ways to encourage more recycling next year. One way we plan to do this is by increasing the support we offer to our schools' Eco Champions. We will work with the Champions to set waste recycling targets per school. We will also bring the Champions together to share best practice across the areas of environmental focus. We are looking into upcycling opportunities for schools to locally donate unneeded furniture and other goods.

## Waste hierarchy



**Prevention**  
Waste Prevention is the most sustainable and highly pushed form of waste management, as it minimises the generation of waste products right from the offset. It often results in the least environmental and economic life cycle costs.

**Reuse**  
The reuse of waste is next on the list and refers to the continued use of items for which they were initially intended. Often this involves minimal processing – checking, cleaning, repairing, and refurbishing entire products or parts.

**Recycling**  
Recycling takes the next priority, and refers to the collection of used, reused or unused items, otherwise considered waste and turning them back into raw materials, ready to be used for another product.

**Recovery**  
The recovery of waste is split into 2 categories: minerals and energy. The better of the two options (for the environment and cost) is considered before either minerals or energy from the waste is extracted.

**Disposal**  
Disposal of waste is the least favourable option and should be thought of as a last resort in sorting of waste. Disposal such as landfill should only be considered once all other options have been explored and dismissed.

# Water and Biodiversity

Table 3

01/09/20 – 31/08/21	
Schools and colleges	2,365m <sup>3</sup>

## Review of the year

Water is a global concern in terms of access to water and sanitation in the context of climate change. Our schools use water for hygiene and hydration, and for groundskeeping.

Plans to undertake a complete benchmarking of water use and biodiversity across our schools were put on hold last year due to the pandemic. However, in April 2021, we streamlined our water contracts across our schools and colleges to benefit from one supplier, monthly billing, and more accurate readings. Based on available data, we have estimated our water consumption for this reporting period across our 17 schools and 3 colleges to be 2,365 m<sup>3</sup>, as outlined in Table 3.

We use water to maintain green space at our schools and colleges, an area we see as vital to our pupils' health and wellbeing. Plenty of research shows the positive links between child development and mental health, and spending time in green space. Initiatives to reduce water consumption and/or increase biodiversity include:

- Some of our schools have created gardens where pupils can learn gardening skills, with the produce eaten in schools.
- **Abbey College Cambridge** has installed timed taps across the site which switch off automatically after a short time. They also use aerators on taps to give lower flow and have low-flush options on toilets.



- **Chepstow House** has a Wild Area which they make use of whenever possible, with children often choosing to have Golden Time outside on a Friday afternoon. Class groups can sign up for gardening sessions with their school gardener, and last year their focus was on planting things to support bees. As part of their 'Green Flag' status, they identify focus areas each year (including marine life, energy, and waste) and develop initiatives to support these.
- **Falcons School for Girls** has a hedgehog sanctuary and hedgehog highway to the park behind the school, and teachers at the school have run biodiversity campaigns.
- **Hilden Grange School** undertakes regular filming of a badger sett in the school grounds with films of the three cubs playing outside the sett entrance. Their Green Team obtained 16 saplings and planted them along with some wildflower seeds in the school grounds. They learnt about biodiversity and made bird feeders from upcycling plastic bottles. Year 2 classes take part in the Junior Forester Award to develop knowledge about woodland management and careers in Forestry. Year 4 visits a sustainable local farm, powered by solar panels, to learn about soil conservation and other sustainable farming practices.
- **Pembridge Hall** holds a gardening competition for parents and Year 6 pupils can apply to be Head or Deputy Green Girl representatives, who meet every half term to discuss environmental initiatives and voice their peers' views on sustainability topics.
- **Portland Place** has increased the use of pot plants in classrooms and around their schools and have several Enrichment activities and clubs that give students opportunities to be outside enjoying green space, for example Take a Hike, zoo visits which include talks about biodiversity, horse riding, Ultimate Frisbee and running club.

## Plan for next year

In the coming year, we plan to gather a more complete dataset of our water usage which includes our head office and our residential properties. We will analyse our quarterly water data to determine areas of high usage. This will make clear if we have any leakage or other issues with inefficiency, which in turn will help determine places we need to install water saving technologies.

We will begin planning a full review of our green and outdoor spaces, including species of flora and fauna present, current usage by our staff and pupils, and opportunities to increase biodiversity and use of green spaces.



# Transport

Table 4

	01/09/20 – 31/08/21
	<b>tCO<sub>2</sub>e</b>
Company vehicles	11.4
Staff commuting	141.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>153.3</b>

Table 5

Method of transport	Number of staff who use this method for part or all of their journey	Percentage of staff who use this method for part or all of their journey
Car	164	30.3%
Car-share (not as driver)	20	3.7%
Underground	152	28.1%
Train	149	27.5%
Bus	94	17.4%
Motorcycle	19	3.5%
Bicycle	111	20.5%
Walk	156	28.8%



## Review of the year

This year, as with energy and waste, our transport was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Across cars and vans owned and leased by Alpha Plus Group, our emissions increased from 9.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2019-2020 to 11.4 in 2020-2021. In the 2019-2020 reporting period, our schools were closed for longer periods due to COVID-19 than in 2020-2021, meaning less use of company vehicles. This likely accounts for the lower mileage in last year's report.

To improve reporting of our transport-based emissions, this year we employed a third party to run a staff survey across the whole portfolio to gain data about how our employees travel to work. The results of the survey are shown in Table 5. Nearly 70% of our full-time staff completed the survey. Of the 548 respondents, approximately 70% use more sustainable methods of transport, while 30% commute to work partly or entirely by car.

Our total transport emissions for the reporting period, across Alpha Plus Group owned vehicles plus emissions from staff commuting (including estimated emissions across employees who did not respond to the survey), were 153.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

Vehicle emissions contribute to air pollution, which can have significantly negative health impacts, particularly for young children who are at an increased risk due to the immaturity of their lungs and immune system. We continue to engage with WSP, a leading engineering professional services firm, to monitor air pollutants at some of our sites. The data is presented in report format designed for non-specialist audiences, to allow pupils' families, regardless of prior knowledge, to gain an understanding of the air pollution risks in their local school area.

Table 6

School	2019 Accreditation	2021 Accreditation
St Anthony's Prep (Boys)	Gold	Gold (2023)
St Anthony's School for Girls	Bronze	Bronze (2022)
Chepstow House School	Gold	Gold (2023)
Pembridge Hall School	Gold	Gold (2022)
Portland Place	Bronze	Silver (2022)
Wetherby Prep School	Gold	Gold (2023)
Wetherby Kensington	Bronze	Silver (2023)
Wetherby School	Bronze	Bronze (2022)
Wetherby Senior School	Bronze	Bronze (2022)



**In 2019, nine of our schools received a Sustainable Travel Active, Responsible, Safe (STARS) accreditation from Transport for London (TfL). Founded in 2007, STARS is TfL's flagship school travel accreditation scheme, inspiring young Londoners to think differently about travel and its impact on their health, wellbeing, and the environment. It recognises organisations for their efforts in promoting active and safer travel. Although 2020 awards were paused due to COVID-19, the scheme resumed in 2021. All nine of our participating schools at a minimum maintained their accreditation level from 2019, with two schools improving from Bronze to Silver, as shown in Table 6.**

### Plan for next year

Our staff commuting survey found that car users' average annual carbon footprint for commuting is 0.49 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, while across other types of transport, the average is 0.08 per person. Switching from commuting by car to an eco-friendlier option can thus make a big difference to individuals' carbon footprint, and to that of Alpha Plus Group as a whole. We will seek in the coming year to implement an incentives programme to encourage our staff to consider other forms of transport aside from driving, or where this is not possible, to switch their car to an electric or hybrid vehicle.

We will continue to work with schools into 2022 to ensure STARS accreditations are retained and improved upon. Additionally, we plan to review our outsourced bussing routes, for example where we move pupils back and forth from schools to sports grounds, to rationalise the journeys into fewer vehicles where possible. We plan to present our school air quality reports on the schools' websites and continue working with WSP to undertake a similar monitoring programme at all schools and colleges.

# Supply Chain

✓ Increase supply chain engagement to >25%

## Review of the year

In preparation for the UK's transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, Alpha Plus Group has begun to look more closely at our upstream impacts. This process requires that we engage with current and potential suppliers to make clear that we prioritise ESG, both by sharing our own targets in these areas, and by enquiring about their ESG credentials. By engaging our suppliers, we are encouraging decision-making that supports positive impact within our supply chain.

In our last report, we set a two-year target of increasing our supply chain engagement to 25% of our material suppliers. Since our last reporting period, we have begun this process by surveying six of our top suppliers, who together account for more than £40,000,000 of our annual expenditure. We have focussed on our catering, cleaning, and transport contracts as these are the areas where we believe we can have the most positive impact. Questions included in the survey were about carbon emissions, energy, transport, and waste; policies; and employee management and wellbeing practices.

Our results showed that 50% of respondents produce an annual ESG report. All respondents either currently vet their own supply chain from an ESG perspective, or plan to begin doing so within the next 18 months.

## Plan for next year

We recently hired a procurement manager who, in the coming year, will be reviewing and updating our new supplier forms, codes of conduct, and evaluation processes for existing suppliers. This will include evaluating ESG criteria for possible inclusion in new supplier tenders. We will continue to survey our current suppliers up to and beyond our goal of 25%.



# Carbon Footprint

Table 7	01/09/19 – 31/08/20		01/09/20 – 31/08/21	
	tCO <sub>2</sub> e	%	tCO <sub>2</sub> e	%
<b>Scope 1</b>				
Natural gas	1,179.8	78%	832.0	55%
Company vehicles	9.1	1%	11.4	1%
<b>Scope 2</b>				
Electricity	325.0	21%	536.5	35%
<b>Scope 3</b>				
Staff transport	2.3	<1%	141.9	9%
<b>Gross Total Emissions</b>	<b>1,516.2</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,521.8</b>	<b>100%</b>
Renewable electricity	(325.0)	–	(536.5)	–
<b>Net Total Emissions</b>	<b>1,191.2</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>985.3</b>	<b>–</b>

## Review of the year

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are the leading cause of the planet's rapidly changing climate. At Alpha Plus Group, we take our responsibility to reduce our emissions very seriously.

In 2019, the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education advised that all universities and colleges should aim for net zero GHG emissions for Scope 1 and Scope 2 by 2030 as a minimum, as per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommendations. We are not currently aware of a similar agenda specifically aimed at the compulsory education sector, but we are

nevertheless determined to play our part in achieving this goal and hopefully in advance of the deadline.

As such, we are tracking our carbon emissions year-on-year, to understand where we need to increase efficiency and invest in carbon reduction measures. As in last year's report, we have followed the GHG Reporting Protocol in calculating our carbon footprint. Specifically, we use the Corporate Standard for company reporting, to identify and report relevant energy and GHG emissions over which we had operational control for the year ending 31st August 2021. As shown in Table 7, our emissions reporting includes:

- Scope 1 emissions, which are the direct emissions that we as a group of schools can control, including energy from gas, and company vehicles
- Scope 2 emissions, which include the indirect emissions from electricity purchased and used by our schools
- We are also reporting on partial Scope 3 emissions, including emissions produced by our staff commuting to work (staff transport).

Through this calculation our gross carbon emissions for the year, expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, were found to be 1,521.8 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.





While we included staff transport in last year's report, the data source – staff mileage reclaim – did not accurately reflect all emissions produced by our staff transport. This is partly because not all staff claim mileage, and partly because most staff do not travel to work by car. Additionally, last year's staff transport was reduced overall through school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, while this year, schools largely remained open. This year, we ran a survey to gather a more in-depth and accurate dataset for staff transport. For these reasons, our Scope 3 emissions have increased.

School and office closures last reporting period also likely account for the slight increase this year in emissions from company owned and leased vehicles. However, our Scope 1 emissions have decreased overall, due to the reduced use of natural gas for energy.

### **The Journey to Net Zero**

As we work towards responsible practices and reduce our waste and energy consumption, we are taking various actions to mitigate our immediate effect upon the environment. We recognise that the most effective contribution we can make towards the fight against climate change is to reduce our carbon emissions.

Indirect emissions, aside from electricity, are classified as Scope 3. Within the education sector, these emissions largely come from upstream activities, including catering, cleaning, and uniform suppliers, as well as leased assets and employee commuting. In the coming year, we plan to undertake an in-depth review of our Scope 3 emissions. This will enable us to source goods and services from companies that are working to minimise their own impact.

In addition to 100% renewable electricity, we plan to source 25% renewable gas, depending on the outcome of our tender. We will continue to install energy-saving technologies as and when the opportunity arises, such as LED lighting. To reduce transport emissions, we will review and promote opportunities for our Head Office staff to work virtually and consider offering incentives for all staff to make eco-friendly transport choices.



**Social**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Social in ESG has been more important than ever. Our efforts in this area have focused on responding to new challenges posed to our families and employees during the pandemic. This includes extra support for teaching and learning. Beyond and preceding the crisis, Alpha Plus Group supports the health and wellbeing of our employees, pupils, and their families in everyday life. We also have a long history of supporting charitable fundraising in our schools' local communities, and this did not stop during the pandemic, although some planned activities were not able to proceed. Last but certainly not least, our core work as an organisation involves teaching the next generation of leaders and citizens to be responsible, ethical, and knowledgeable about sustainability.

As we continue to review and develop staff health and wellbeing support, an additional priority in the coming year will be to assess requirements for sustainability training for our staff.

## Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The UK's education sector was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with school closures and changing government guidance meaning much of the sector's resources were taken up with coping and adapting. The sector continues to be impacted into the present with localised outbreaks and school absences a regular occurrence across the country.

At Alpha Plus Group schools, our top priority during this challenging time has been providing our pupils with an excellent standard of education. Doing so requires making sure families and our staff have access to resources, clear communications, and extra support where needed. In response to the pandemic, we provided all our schools with guidance on remote teaching and learning. We undertook surveys to track parents' satisfaction with online learning and adapted our provision in response to feedback. We developed an education hub as a repository for sharing good practice and resources, and for facilitating

communication with Heads of Department (HODs) and Deputy Heads. Templates were provided for schools to develop local COVID-19 and Safeguarding policies, in line with each school's individual requirements. Risk assessments have been updated at least three times per school, in response to the different phases of the pandemic.

## Health and Wellbeing

Our employees work hard to support their pupils' learning and development, and we work hard to ensure our staff are happy and healthy so they can perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. We offer a complete employee assistance programme (EAP) for our staff members and their families through Health Assured. This includes free access to resources supporting health, including mental health and wellbeing. Each Alpha Plus Group school is provided with a template Health and Wellbeing policy and relevant guidance, which they are then supported to personalise with their own aims and objectives. Every school has a Wellbeing Lead, who attends the termly meeting of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum. At each meeting, an expert in the field is invited to give a presentation on a different topic, often relating to children's wellbeing.

We believe that happy staff equals happy children. In October 2021, we are partnering with the University of Oxford Mindfulness Centre to run a series of professional development sessions over eight weeks, with a capacity of 12 participants. The programme will teach attendees how best to model the development of mindfulness approaches to our pupils.

This year's annual conference for senior leaders has the theme 'Leading Through a Crisis'. It will include a roster of speakers giving examples of resilience in their professional as well as personal lives and will include mental health and wellbeing workshops. Additionally, In November 2021, we will begin running quarterly staff wellbeing and satisfaction surveys.





## Charity Support

Thanks to the enormous generosity and the hard work of pupils and parents in our schools, every year we support many charities, both local and international. Despite continuing challenges presented by the pandemic, fundraising and community activities continued to enrich the lives of our schools. For the year ended 31st August 2021, the Alpha Plus family of schools and parents raised an amazing £586,115 for charities and bursarial support.

We partner with the Gold Standard Charitable Trust who provides means-tested bursaries to pupils whose circumstances would otherwise put an independent school education out of their reach, and to support current pupils whose families experience unforeseen financial difficulty.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It is our priority to lead our diversity and inclusion programme from the very top of the organisation by empowering and promoting social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status, within our schools and beyond. To achieve this, Alpha Plus Group is launching a Diversity Council comprising 10 members from across our head office and a selection of our schools. The Council plans to meet once a term, with the first meeting scheduled for November 2021 to brainstorm objectives and measurable outcomes to achieve in the coming academic year. For each meeting, the Council will produce minutes and circulate these to the Council electors.

Additionally, each of our schools and colleges has been encouraged to develop a Diversity Forum and will be expected to report to the Board on its frequency and schedule of meeting, any actions arising, and details of any diversity-focussed work in the school or college. Some of our schools and colleges have developed a Diversity Charter created by the pupil council, which is shared with pupils and staff. Many also celebrate Black History Month with pupil presentations in assemblies and information boards.



APG is required to report annually on our gender pay gap. Using a snapshot date of 5th April 2020, women's mean (average) hourly pay was 17.3% lower than men's, while their median hourly pay was 13.3% lower than men's. This is similar to the national average. We are committed to address pay fairness and to offer all jobs, promotions, and salary increases in line with individual merit and without bias.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Communication is vital to developing positive, mutually beneficial, and enduring relationships with our stakeholders. Most of our schools have weekly newsletters which keep families and staff informed about happenings at their school, including environmental and social sustainability activities, tips and facts, etc. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we increased outreach to families, undertaking pulse surveys to understand how they were coping with the pandemic and how best our schools could support them during this challenging time.

Engaging our staff through training and development opportunities is a key part of employee satisfaction. Each of our employees currently undertakes an average of just over five training events per year. We offer a multiplicity of school and college specific local training opportunities. In the past, we have engaged IT apprentices, one of whom we offered the role of Junior IT Engineer following the apprenticeship. As the pandemic situation eases, we plan to revisit bringing in another two apprentices. We will have five or six Nursery School apprentices by January 2022. Additionally, we have 18 Group-wide forums which offer staff the opportunity to feed into the Group's strategy and decision-making.

## Sustainability in the Classroom

Quality education is central to who we are as an organisation. We will always ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all our pupils. This includes teaching our pupils about key contemporary issues through our curriculum, including environmental stewardship and the importance of diversity, as well as embedding a strong sense of ethical responsibility through modelling behaviours in the classroom. This year, we conducted a survey to request information from schools about the work they do to embed sustainability. Schools responded with a huge range of fantastic initiatives covering a breadth of topics, both within the curriculum and extra-curricular, for pupils to participate in throughout the year.

These included Wellbeing Working Parties, Eco Clubs and Committees, and Eco Warrior meetings, which empower pupils to come up with ideas to run at their school. Teachers lead campaigns throughout the year, and many of our schools and colleges participate in national and international events including Earth Day, Eco Week, Healthy Minds and Healthy Bodies Week, Anti-Bullying Week, Black History Month, Switch off Fortnight and Power Down Hour, 'eco at home' challenges, etc. These programmes include a range of activities for pupils and staff, and many are run with the leadership and support of pupils. Parents are often invited to take part in challenges and activities. Prior to the pandemic, parents at some schools were invited to give talks on environmental topics linked to their work and interests.

## Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing for our pupils is a critical part of our role as education providers, and we take our pastoral responsibilities very seriously. Over the course of the pandemic, extra support for mental health and wellbeing was a particular priority. Our schools and colleges run local initiatives including Zones of Regulation to encourage pupils to reflect on their feelings, staff training in Mental Health First Aid, drop-in wellbeing sessions, wellbeing webinars, and individual

sessions with counsellors or coaches. Some schools have implemented additional measures such as parent-led yoga sessions, buddy systems, social skills sessions, Draw and Talk sessions, coaching training for pupils, and parent learning sessions on topics including eSafety and Raising Girls.

## Curriculum

Alpha Plus Group pupils learn about sustainability, social ethics, and the environment from Reception straight through to college. Subject areas with a focus on these topics include Geography, Art, Science, and PSHE/PSHCE. For many of our schools and colleges, curriculum during Eco Week has an additional cross-subject focus on the environment. Lessons cover sustainability topics including electricity and energy, greenhouse gases and global warming, sustainable fishing and farming, 'food miles' and local/seasonal diets, populations and settlement, transport and industry, deforestation, eco-tourism, flood defence etc. Our schools hold themed assemblies on a range of sustainability topics, often with pupils' involvement and leadership.

Many of our Reception classes do Forest School during the summer term, meaning a focus on outdoor learning. In these sessions, children learn about the habitats within the school grounds and the wildlife that it sustains. By caring for these habitats, they are also caring for the wildlife that lives in and alongside the school.

## Awards

We encourage schools' participation in external awards and accreditation programmes to recognise the work they do to improve sustainability. In addition to the TfL STARS award outlined in the Transport section of this report, award programmes our schools and colleges have participated in include the Eco Schools programme, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, the Royal Forestry Society's Junior Forester Award, and the Green Flag accreditation programme. In next year's report, we plan to share an overview of sustainability award achievement across our schools and colleges.



**Governance**

# Governance

✓ Hold ESG Committee meeting x2 per year

✓ Update Board twice a year on ESG progress

At Alpha Plus Group, we believe in the importance of supporting our schools and colleges by providing strong leadership and governance. Our Board consists of 13 members and meets eight times per year to consider major operational and strategic matters. It reviews various reports, including the CEO's executive summary, a financial report, and summary progress reports prepared by each Director. These contain academic, pastoral, and operational performance data and commentary for each school and college, as well as safeguarding and compliance issues, and inspection outcomes. Additionally, each Head/Principal is required to periodically attend a Board meeting to make a formal presentation regarding their school or college's progress, performance, priorities, and issues.

The Group also benefits from the Alpha Plus Council, which advises on the educational direction of the Group. The Council meets termly, reviews all educational and business aspects of the schools and colleges, and its advice is noted by the Board. Our Senior Management Team consists of our directors and CEO. The CEO and other Executive Directors attend Council meetings, and three of our Board meetings include our five Council members, ensuring good communication and joined-up leadership.

The CEO ensures that the Council is regularly updated on all appropriate school and college matters including standards, budget management, premises, health and safety, safeguarding, pupil welfare, and wellbeing. Council members receive a detailed annual report of pupil achievement and progress, and this is discussed at their meetings.

The functions of Educational Governance, Operational and Line Management are all accountable to the Board of Alpha Plus Holdings plc. The CEO, Executive Deputy Chairman, and non-executive Chairman of Alpha Plus Holdings are also Governors. There are several other non-executive Directors who are not Governors. Governors carry out the governance responsibilities required of the proprietor of every school and college.

The three key responsibilities of the Governors are:

1. To ensure that schools and colleges have clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
2. To hold the Head/Principal to account for:
  - a. the educational performance of the school/college and its pupils
  - b. child welfare and protection
  - c. the performance management and wellbeing of staff
3. To oversee the financial performance of the school/college, and to ensure that resources and facilities are responsibly and effectively deployed and continually reviewed.





## Policies

Alpha Plus Group have a broad range of policies in place that span environmental and social spheres. We develop group-wide policies for some of our key areas of operation. For other areas, schools are provided template policies and guidance and are responsible for developing a policy relevant to their own needs. Having appropriate policies in place means that our approach to excellence is mirrored at each school. Directors regularly visit each school and college to ensure these policies are in place and adhered to. Every summer, the schools review each of their policies, with additional reviews upon changes to legislation. Staff are updated on changes during staff briefings and can access all policies on the internal portal. Parents can access public-facing policies from the public portal on their school's website. Schools receive a mandatory training list from HR of policies which must be included in training and induction. We have outlined below some of the policy areas that are of key importance to Alpha Plus Group.

### Whistleblowing and Safeguarding

Alpha Plus Group takes our child protection responsibilities very seriously. The Group's Safeguarding Policy, which is reviewed on an annual basis, incorporates our Whistleblowing Policy. All staff undertake a programme of training in these areas and are required to undertake an annual refresher and to sign an annual affirmation form once they have done so. We have Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) for each school and college, who receive a more intensive level of training and who undergo a rigorous annual review. We also have a Safeguarding Governor. We are advised on our Safeguarding responsibilities by a lawyer who specialises in changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE): statutory guidance which is provided by the Department for Education.

### Health and Safety

Beyond our commitment to protecting the children in our care, our ethos requires that all our employees have a safe and healthy working environment. We have a health and safety (H&S) section on our staff portal which defines our policies and safety arrangements, as well as guidance notes for all staff to access. The policies are updated yearly by our external H&S advisors, Law at Work (L@W). As with other key policies, we have a main H&S group policy which all schools and colleges expand upon individually, as relevant to their requirements. L@W visit each school and college twice a year to do a H&S walkaround and a document check, and to produce a report. Additionally, each of our schools and colleges has a health and safety committee which meets at least once a term. The minutes of these meetings are reviewed and recorded by Head Office. Accidents are recorded at the location where they occurred, and any major accidents are reported to Alpha Plus Group's Director of Property. All staff have access to online H&S training with the sector provider Educare. There is a mandatory training table for staff to complete the training. Each school requires a specific number of First Aiders and H&S officers, relevant to the number of pupils. When anyone in these roles leaves the school, the gap is flagged to the Human Resources team to prioritise filling.

## **Risk and Compliance**

Alpha Plus Group have a risk committee that meets three times a year. Schools have their own risk registers that are submitted and reviewed at Head Office. Our risk assessment policy and register were updated in summer 2021 to reflect a more rigorous approach to our Red Amber Green (RAG) system. We also have a group wide risk register that notes risk on:

- Corporate Value
- Compliance
- Education
- Safety and Welfare
- Financial Management
- Recruitment
- Technology
- PR and Marketing

## **Information Security/GDPR**

Alpha Plus Group processes personal data relating to parents, pupils, staff, governors, visitors, and others, and therefore is a data controller. The Group (which includes Head Office and all the schools and colleges in the Group) ensures that all personal data collected about staff, pupils, parents, governors, visitors, and other individuals is collected, stored, and processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). Our policy is based on guidance published by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) on the UK GDPR and the ICO's code of practice for subject access requests. It applies to all staff employed by Alpha Plus Group, and

to external organisations or individuals working on our behalf. Staff who do not comply with this policy may face disciplinary action.

## **Anti-Bribery and Corruption**

We are committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct, integrity, and fairness in all aspects of the operation of our schools and colleges, and in all our relationships. In accordance with the UK Bribery Act 2010, we will not tolerate any form of bribery by, or of, our employees, agents, or consultants, or any person or body acting on our behalf. Senior management is committed to implementing and maintaining effective measures to prevent bribery. All employees and directors are expected to maintain the highest standards of business conduct, and any breach of this policy is likely to constitute a serious disciplinary, contractual, and potentially criminal matter. The policy covers: what bribery is – gifts, donations, and hospitality; unacceptable conduct; employees' responsibilities; record keeping; how to raise a concern; protection; training and communication.

## **Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking**

Consistent with our commitment to act ethically in all our relationships, and our zero tolerance of unethical or exploitative employment practices, we are committed to doing whatever we can to combat slavery and human trafficking. We will not engage in business with any party whom we deem to present a risk of participating in slavery or human trafficking. For certain key outsourced services, such as catering, information technology, and building maintenance, we use a small number of key suppliers whose staff are regularly present on our premises. Consistent with these processes, we now also require these suppliers to give us assurances (where they don't produce their own Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement) that they have controls and processes in place to ensure that they do not engage in slavery and human-trafficking, and that they will not engage with any other party who presents a risk of engaging in such activities.

### Code of Conduct

We are a values-led organisation that maintains high expectations of its own conduct and of those with whom we work. Our code of ethical and professional conduct is an integral part of our Gold Standard of educational excellence. We take pride in its reputation and recognise that its values are just as important as the services it provides. We are rigorous in the recruitment and development of our valued staff and in the selection and management of suppliers. We expect Directors and all other employees, along with suppliers, to act with the highest levels of professionalism and integrity, and within the law. The principles of our code apply to all dealings with those who interact with, or may be affected by, the activities of our schools and colleges. This includes pupils, parents, employees, customers, suppliers, inspectors and regulators, shareholders, local communities, and the environment in which we operate.

The Group Code of Conduct covers guiding principles, governance and support, compliance with laws and regulations, safeguarding, professional integrity, workplace and environment, and compliance with the code and disclosure of breaches. Each school and college has an additional policy which may cover areas such as attendance, time-keeping, communication protocol, dress code and personal appearance, vigilance, flexibility, supervision, teamwork, interacting with parents, security, extra duties, pupil relations, setting an example, conduct outside work, and social contact.





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