Climate Action Plan

Baseline Report - January 2026

Freman College

Prepared By: School Consulting Ltd

School Consulting Ltd

Overview

Purpose

This baseline report has been developed as an essential step in preparing the school's Climate Action Plan. It provides a clear picture of the **current** environmental impact, covering carbon emissions, energy use, waste, water consumption, and transport habits. This starting point allows us to set realistic, measurable goals and monitor progress over time.

The Climate Action Plan, informed by this report, and found as an appendix, addresses the four key areas identified by the Department of Education: **decarbonisation, adaptation and resilience, environment and biodiversity, and climate education and green careers**. Together, these areas will guide informed decision-making and meaningful action, strengthening the school's commitment to sustainability and shaping a more environmentally conscious future.

Scope

In this first report, we have reviewed:

- Scope 1: Direct emissions owned or controlled by the school
- Scope 2: Indirect emissions from purchased energy

Currently, as no scope 3 calculations have been generated, ***an assumption has been made, based on national averages, that supply chain emissions account for 45% of overall CO_2 emissions.***

In order to compare to other schools, a footprint has been provided in the report for both operational (scopes 1 & 2) emissions and an ***estimated*** full impact.

Executive Summary

Freman College's baseline sustainability assessment shows a school performing broadly in line with secondary-school benchmarks, with clear opportunities for targeted improvement. Energy use for electricity and heating is within expected ranges, and water consumption per student is below the national benchmark, indicating generally effective management of core utilities. Waste-related emissions are relatively low in comparison with other areas, supported by food-waste separation and recycling provision, although staff habits around printing and reusable materials suggest scope for further reduction through improved consistency.

Travel is the largest contributor to the school's operational carbon footprint, reflecting a wide catchment and practical reliance on buses and car travel. While this presents a challenge, parent responses show a generally positive appetite for more sustainable travel options if safety, reliability and distance constraints can be addressed. Food emissions are material but already benefit from vegetarian provision and meat-free days, which deliver measurable carbon savings under current assumptions.

The school has existing foundations on which to build, including on-site renewable energy generation and engagement structures such as the school council. Staff attitudes towards environmental protection are strongly positive, even where willingness to take on additional roles is more mixed. Overall, this baseline highlights transport as the most significant opportunity for carbon reduction, alongside incremental gains through behaviour-led waste reduction and continued development of renewable energy, providing a clear evidence base to inform future sustainability priorities.

Mission Statement

Freman College is committed to reducing its environmental impact and aligning with national and local government sustainability policies. Our goal is to create a greener, healthier learning environment while fostering environmental responsibility among pupils, staff, and the wider community. We strive to meet government climate targets by implementing sustainable practices, reducing carbon emissions, and integrating environmental education into our curriculum.

School Profile

School Name: Freman College

School Type: Secondary

Location: Buntingford

Number of Pupils on Roll: 1056

Number of Staff: 103

Size of Site: 76,667m_2

Indoor Space: 5,309m_2

School Facilities:

The school is **56** years old and is made up of **8** buildings. The **Academy Trust Board** is responsible for approving funding and any building changes. The school **is not** in a conservation area.

Key Stakeholders and their role

Role	Name
Headteacher	**Lisa Jones**

Provides strategic leadership and vision; champions whole-school commitment to climate action; ensures alignment with school values and improvement plans.

Sustainability Lead **Sam Hebditch**

Coordinates the Climate Action Plan; monitors progress; engages staff, students, and community; integrates sustainability into curriculum and daily school life.

Assistant Headteachers **Will Abell, Mike New, Matt Shearn, Zoe Smith, Steve Thornewill**

Leads specific action areas (e.g. transport, food); supports implementation across key stages or departments; assists in staff training and resource planning.

School Business Manager **Sam Hebditch**

Manages funding, procurement, and building projects to align with sustainability goals; embeds climate priorities in finance, contracts, and resource planning.

Office Manager **Lindsey Ricketts**

Supports communication with parents and suppliers; assists with data tracking (e.g. energy use); encourages eco-friendly office practices.

Caretaker / Site Managers **Paul Dyson, Martin Day, Jess Allan**

Oversees building maintenance, energy use, waste, and grounds; implements practical sustainability measures (e.g. recycling, energy efficiency, biodiversity projects).

Chair of Governors **Jackie Martin**

Ensures climate action is part of school governance; holds leadership accountable; advocates for long-term sustainability planning and compliance.

Teaching staff

Delivers climate education across the curriculum; supports student-led projects; role-models sustainable behaviours in the classroom.

Other school staff

Participates in sustainability practices (e.g. reducing waste, energy-saving); supports students and leadership in delivering Climate Action Plan actions.

Students

Participate in green initiatives (e.g. eco-council, litter picks); share ideas and promote behaviour change among peers and families.

Parents
Support sustainable travel, lunches, and home behaviours; contribute to consultations or volunteering for Climate Action Plan projects; reinforce messages outside school.

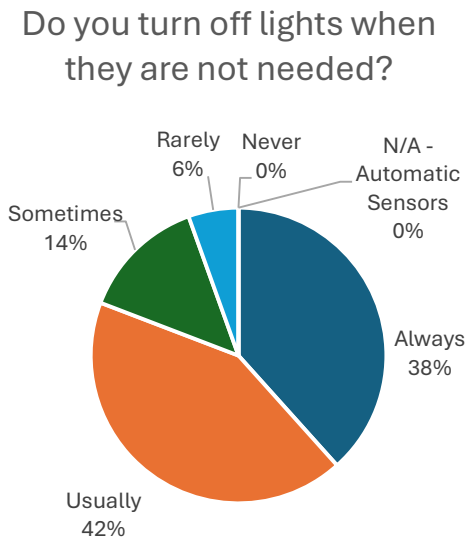
Carbon Footprint Assessment

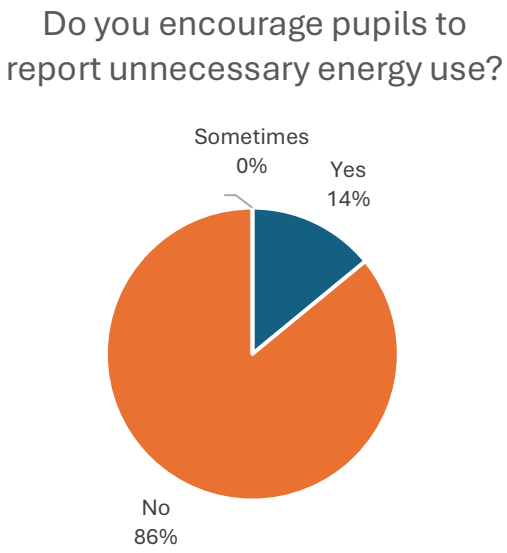
Energy Use

Electricity and gas are supplied by **British Gas**. The school reports that it is on a **green energy tariff**. **286,854 kWh** of electricity was used over the year, equating to **54 kWh/m^2**, which sits within the benchmark range of 40–60 kWh/m^2. This suggests electricity demand is broadly efficient for a secondary school, but the absolute level of use remains substantial given the scale of the site, so continued focus on reducing avoidable consumption is still worthwhile. **962,021 kWh** of gas was used over the year, equating to **181 kWh/m^2**, which is at the lower end of the 180–200 kWh/m^2 benchmark range. This indicates heating energy use is broadly in line with expectations and does not point to extreme inefficiency, although there may still be opportunities through controls, fabric improvements, and consistent day-to-day behaviours. In year two data collection, more analysis will need to be carried out to understand the positive impact of the green tariff and solar array.

Staff responses show many energy-saving habits are already well embedded, particularly around lighting and equipment shutdown. For example, **80%** of staff report that they always or usually turn off classroom lights when they are not needed, and **83%** say they ensure computers and other electronic devices are switched off at the end of the day. Heating-related behaviours are more mixed: while **76%** report that windows and doors are closed properly to maintain heating efficiency, a further **21%** say this only happens sometimes, suggesting a clear opportunity for greater consistency in reducing heat loss during colder periods.

A specific behaviour that appears underdeveloped is encouraging pupils to report unnecessary energy use. **86%** of staff say they do not currently encourage pupils to flag issues such as lights being left on or computers running unnecessarily. This represents a practical opportunity, because small, pupil-led prompts can reinforce good habits across classrooms and corridors without requiring significant investment.





Water Usage

3,818 m^3 of water was used over the year. This equates to **3.6 m^3 per pupil per year**, which is below the benchmark of 4 m^3 per pupil per year for secondary schools. Overall, this suggests water consumption is broadly well controlled, with no immediate signal of excessive use. Maintaining this position will depend on continued monitoring for leaks and keeping everyday behaviours strong in high-usage areas such as toilets, science rooms and changing facilities.

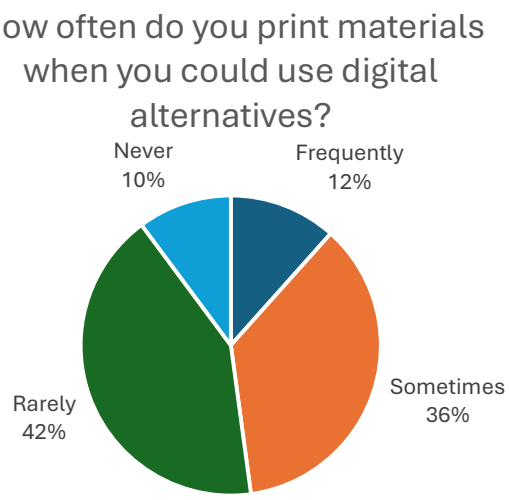
Waste Management

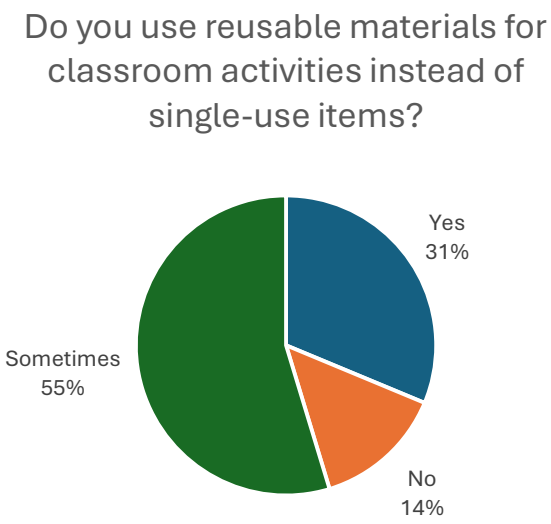
The school's waste collection is managed by a number of contractors, with systems in place to separate general waste and mixed recycling across the site. In addition, the school operates **separate food-waste bins**. The presence of recycling bins alongside general waste bins supports day-to-day separation, particularly in classrooms and shared spaces, although the effectiveness of this relies on consistent use and clear signage. Overall, the waste infrastructure provides a solid baseline, with the main opportunity lying in ensuring consistent use across all areas and reducing contamination between waste streams.

As the school has not provided data on the amount of waste removed from site, an average has been used to estimate waste arisings, based on **35 kg of landfill waste and 10 kg of recycled waste per student**. Using this approach, waste-related emissions are estimated at **16.85 tCO_2 per year**. This indicates that waste is a relatively small contributor to the

school's overall operational carbon footprint compared with energy and travel, but it remains a meaningful area for improvement. Maintaining food-waste separation and strengthening recycling practices could therefore deliver modest but achievable emissions reductions without significant cost or disruption.

Staff responses indicate generally positive waste-related habits, particularly around recycling. A majority report that they recycle materials whenever possible, suggesting that recycling is a well-established norm across much of the school. Printing behaviours are more mixed, with a significant proportion of staff still printing materials regularly, even where digital alternatives could be used. This points to an opportunity to reduce paper use further through shared expectations, improved access to digital resources and default double-sided printing. Use of reusable materials in classrooms is also variable, indicating scope to normalise reusables and reduce reliance on single-use items. Collectively, these behaviour-based changes would complement the existing waste systems and help reduce overall waste volumes over time.



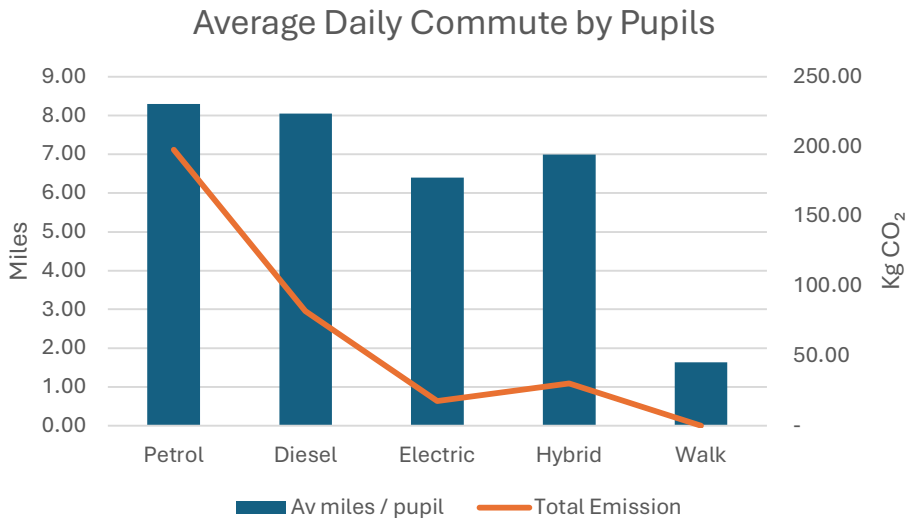


Transport

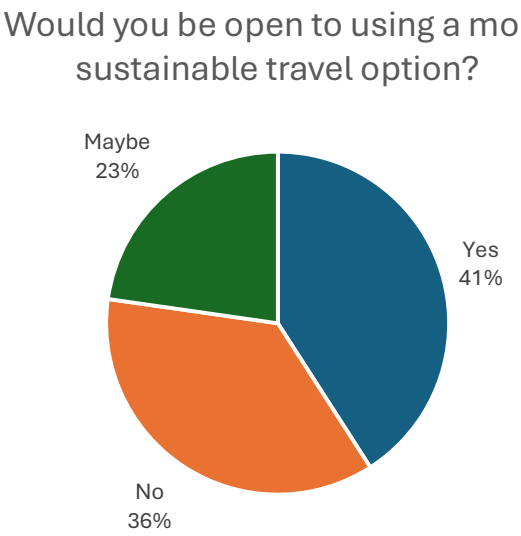
Responses were received from **68%** of students, and emissions have been scaled up to represent the full student population and a complete school year. Walking accounts for **29%** of journeys, bus travel for **45%**, and car travel for **26%**, with train use negligible. The estimated annual student travel emissions are **172 tCO_2**, which represents a substantial contribution to the school's operational footprint. This travel profile is typical of a

secondary school serving a wider catchment, where reliance on buses and private vehicles is more common than in primary settings.

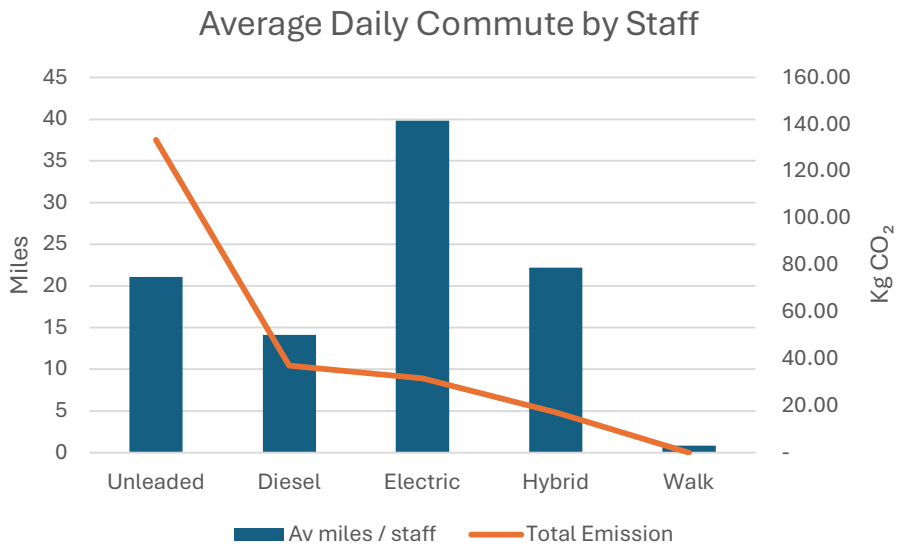
Students report that the primary reason for car use is distance, with **62%** stating that the journey is too far for walking or cycling. A further **33%** cite convenience or time constraints, while **9%** point to the lack of safe walking or cycling routes. A smaller proportion indicate concerns about travelling independently. Overall, these responses suggest that car use is largely driven by practical constraints rather than preference alone, which is important when considering realistic alternatives.



Suggested sustainable travel options focus strongly on improved bus provision, including greater reliability, capacity and route coverage. Safer walking and cycling routes are also frequently mentioned. When asked whether they would consider more sustainable travel options if they were safe and practical, responses are generally positive, with **41%** saying yes and **23%** saying maybe, compared with **36%** saying no. This indicates a meaningful opportunity to reduce travel-related emissions if practical barriers can be addressed.



Staff travel data shows a response rate of **74%**, with total staff travel emissions estimated at **41.7 tCO_2** per year. Emissions have been calculated based on reported travel modes and distances and scaled to represent the full staff population and school year. Most staff report consistent travel patterns across the week, suggesting limited day-to-day flexibility but also providing a stable basis for targeted measures such as car sharing, public transport support or active-travel incentives.



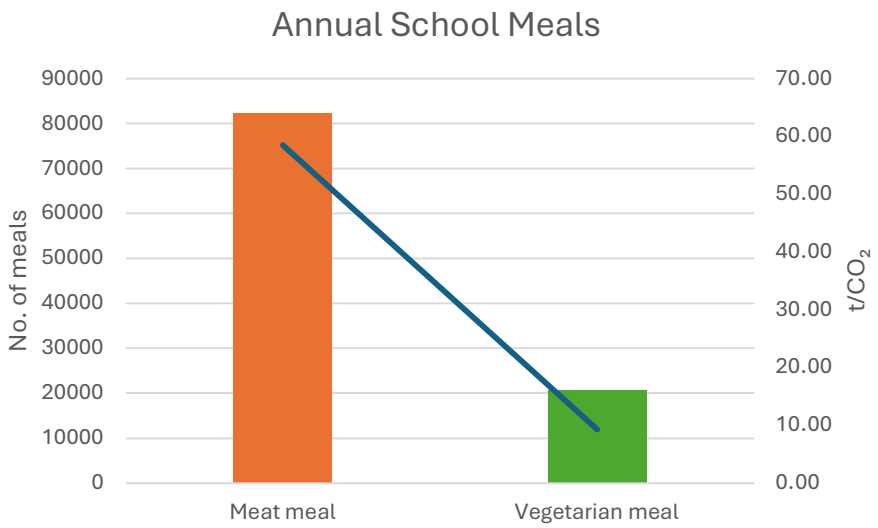
Overall, travel is estimated to account for **40%** of the school's operational carbon footprint. For a secondary school, this is relatively high but not unusual where catchment

areas are wide and travel distances are longer, reinforcing the importance of transport as a key focus area for future sustainability action.

Food

Catering is provided in-house and they operate a meat-free day each week. Annual food emissions are estimated at **67.7 tCO_2**, based on **102,960 meals per year**. The current split assumes **82,368** meat meals and **20,592** vegetarian meals annually, reflecting a weekly meat-free day approach within the modelling. Compared with an all-meat scenario, this mix reduces food-related emissions by approximately **7%**, demonstrating that a weekly meat-free day can make a measurable difference even without wider dietary change across the week.

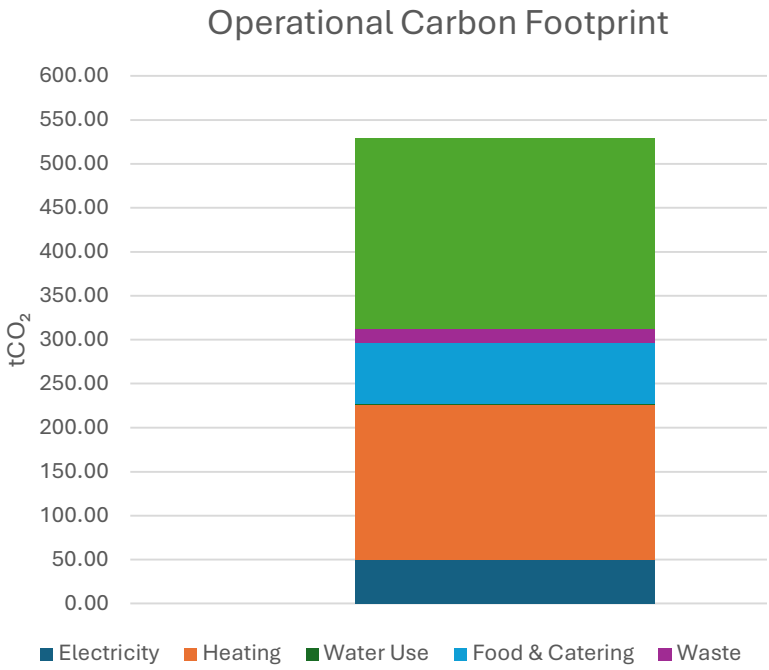
An assumption has been made that non-vegetarian students choose a meat option four days a week, therefore showing a worst-case scenario.

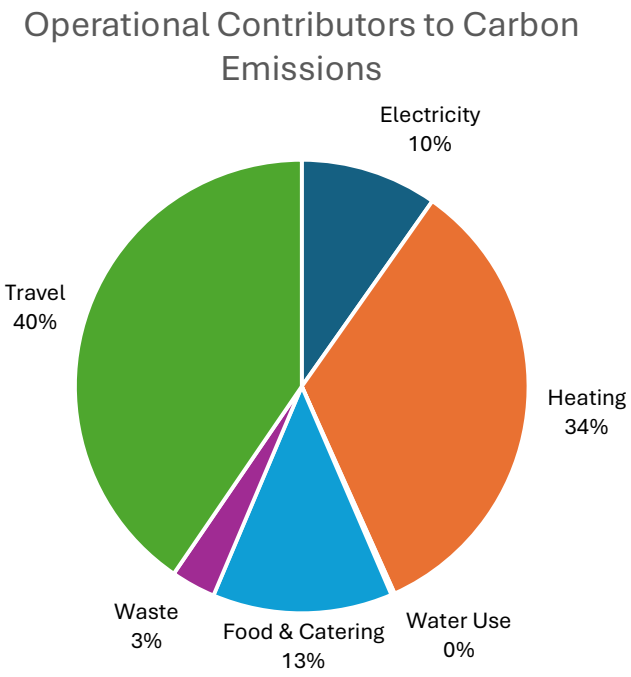


Carbon Footprint

As of December 2025, the carbon footprint for Freman College is estimated to be:

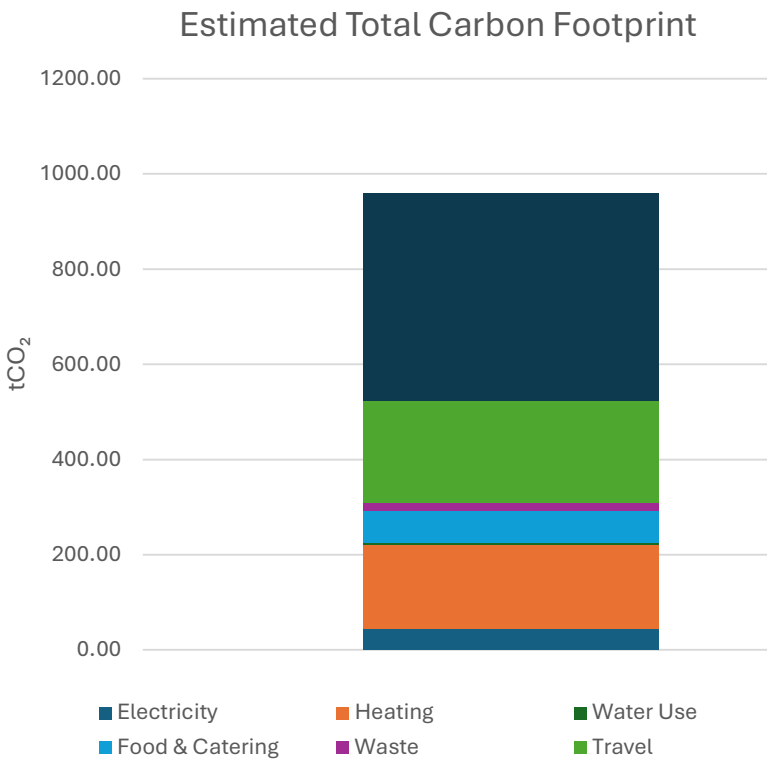
Scope 1 & 2 Only (Operational)

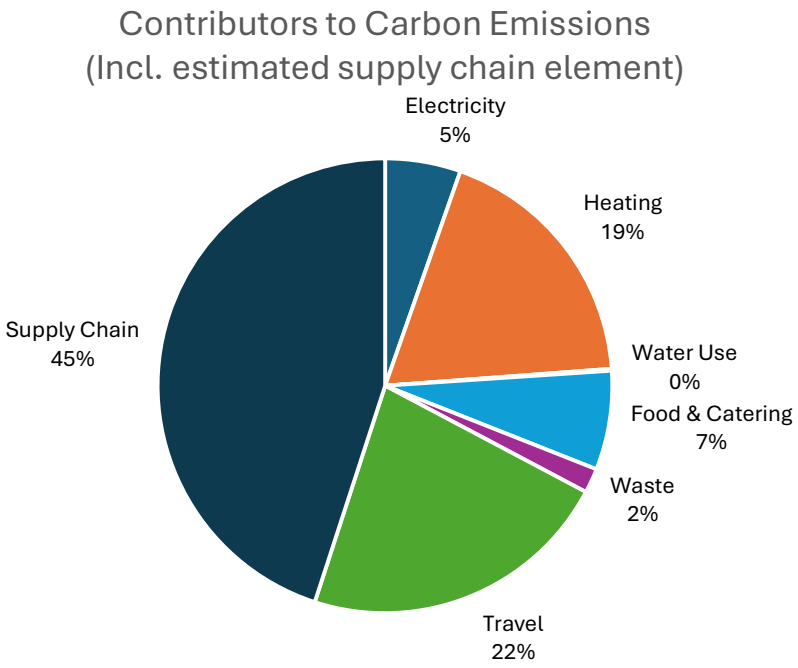


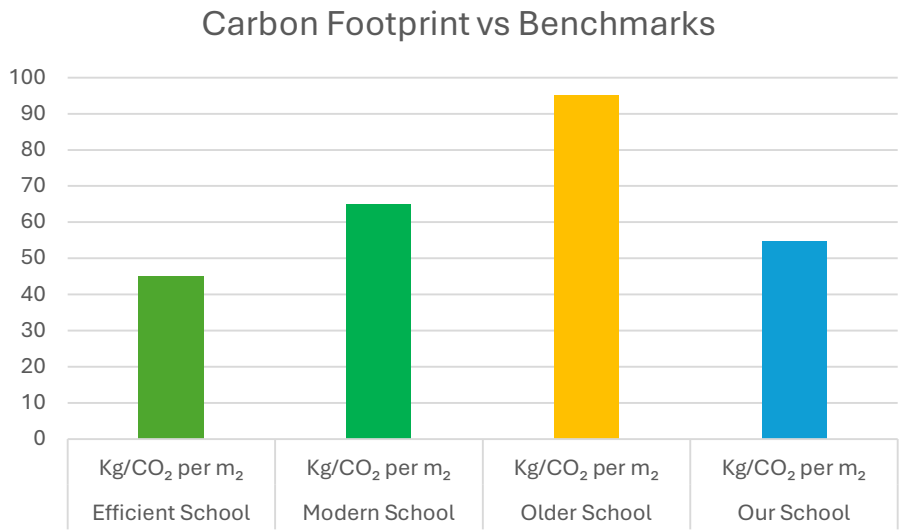


Estimate Total Carbon Footprint

(including average of 45% supply chain contribution)







Against the benchmarked secondary-school ranges, Freman College's operational emissions intensity is **54.7 kg CO_2 per m^2 per year**. This sits above the 'efficient school' benchmark of 45 kg CO_2 per m^2, but below the 'modern school' benchmark of 65 kg CO_2 per m^2 and well below the 'older school' benchmark of 95 kg CO_2 per m^2. This suggests that the school's overall performance is broadly comparable with a reasonably performing secondary school, with clear headroom to move toward 'efficient' performance over time. Looking at the category split, travel is the largest driver of operational emissions, followed by heating and then electricity. Water and waste are relatively small contributors, while food remains material and is sensitive to the balance of meal types.

Existing Climate Action Initiatives

The school already has a number of climate-related measures in place that provide a practical foundation for further action. Renewable energy is already contributing to the site through the presence of solar panels, which help reduce reliance on grid electricity and support the school's stated interest in renewable energy. Recycling facilities are available across the site, and food-waste separation is in place, helping to divert material away from landfill. The school also promotes walking to school and incorporates environmental themes within teaching, embedding sustainability awareness within everyday learning rather than treating it as a standalone activity.

Staff responses reinforce this baseline of activity. Many staff report consistent switching off of lights and electronic equipment when not in use, supporting reductions in avoidable energy consumption. A significant proportion also indicate that environmental topics are included within lessons, either regularly or occasionally, helping to normalise sustainability as part of the wider school culture. Together, these existing initiatives and behaviours demonstrate that the school is not starting from zero, and that future progress can build on systems and habits that are already familiar to staff and students.

Pupil & Community Engagement

The school has a school council in place, which provides an established mechanism through which student voice can contribute to sustainability discussions and initiatives. This structure could be used to support communication, gather feedback and help promote agreed actions across the student body. Perceptions of engagement suggest that leadership involvement is relatively strong, while engagement among students, staff and parents is more mixed, indicating that wider participation could be strengthened over time.

Ideas from students and staff focus on practical and achievable actions rather than broad policy changes. Student suggestions are heavily weighted towards improving transport sustainability, particularly around bus reliability, route availability and safer walking and cycling routes. Staff suggestions emphasise reducing energy and waste through improved consistency and awareness, rather than introducing complex new systems, suggesting a preference for changes that fit within existing routines.

A small number of parents have indicated a willingness to actively support sustainability initiatives via their students. While this represents a limited group, it provides a potential starting point for targeted involvement, such as supporting specific projects or helping to promote initiatives within the wider community. Staff attitudes towards environmental protection are generally positive, although willingness to take on a more active role is more mixed, suggesting that clearer roles and leadership would be helpful in translating support into sustained action.

Target Areas

The school's stated sustainability priority is **renewable energy**. Given that funding and significant building decisions sit with the academy trust board, active support from the

academy trust board may be needed for any major changes that require capital investment or approvals.

Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan issued alongside this baseline report has been developed as a five-year plan, focusing on immediate priorities and achievable quick wins, while also embedding climate education across the school community in the earlier years. It sets out clear actions to raise awareness, reduce environmental impact, and engage pupils, staff, and families in meaningful change. The plan will be regularly monitored to track progress, with a commitment to continuous improvement. Formal annual reviews will be conducted to assess outcomes, update data, and establish objectives for the following rolling year, ensuring the plan remains responsive and effective over time.

Note that additional actions have been provided in Pupil and Site Manager audit checklists to enable them to initiate activities and therefore take some ownership.

See Separate Climate Action Plan Document.

Conclusion

Freman College presents a clear and credible baseline position, with several aspects of operational performance sitting broadly in line with expectations for a secondary school of its size and context. Energy use for both electricity and gas falls within benchmark ranges, indicating that the school is not operating inefficiently from an energy perspective, even though overall consumption remains significant due to the scale and complexity of the site. Water use per student is below the secondary-school benchmark, suggesting that controls and day-to-day behaviours are generally effective, with no immediate indication of excessive consumption or leakage.

Waste management shows a mix of strengths and opportunities. The separation of food waste and the availability of recycling bins across the site provide a solid infrastructure, and estimated waste-related emissions are relatively modest compared with other sources. However, staff habits around printing and reusable materials remain mixed, indicating that further reductions could be achieved through improved consistency rather than new systems. Travel is the most significant contributor to the school's operational carbon footprint, driven largely by distance, catchment size and reliance on buses and

private vehicles. While this presents a structural challenge, responses from parents indicate a generally positive willingness to consider more sustainable options where practical barriers can be addressed.

Food-related emissions remain a meaningful component of the overall footprint, and current assumptions indicate that vegetarian provision and meat-free days already deliver measurable carbon savings. Existing initiatives, including renewable energy generation through solar panels and established waste systems, demonstrate that the school is not starting from zero. Engagement structures such as the school council and broadly positive staff attitudes towards environmental protection provide a foundation for future action. Taken together, this baseline suggests that the most effective next steps are likely to focus on transport, behaviour-led waste reduction and building on existing renewable energy provision, supported by clear leadership and realistic, evidence-led priorities.