



Hampshire
County Council

Improvement and
Advisory Service

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

RE:

The Climate Crisis and Sustainability

Chris May
February 2025
Final version

© Hampshire County Council

Overview

This document contains guidance and suggestions to support further embedding climate and sustainability education within the RE curriculum.

Points to consider when using this resource

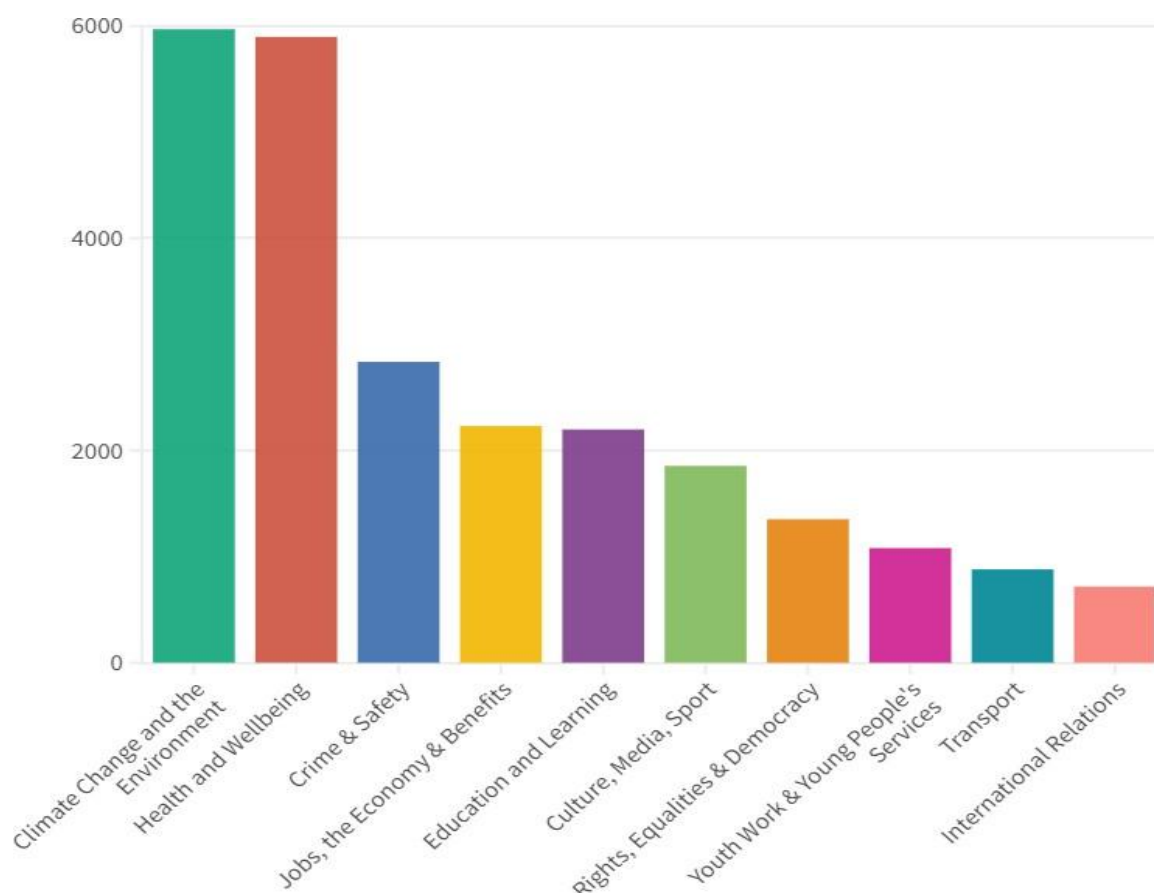
This resource intends to make the case for including climate education in the RE curriculum and to support curriculum makers in developing lessons and resources to explore issues surrounding the climate crisis and sustainability. Information included was correct at the time of publication but should be quality assured to check information is still up to date before using in the classroom. All links to external sources should be checked for suitability before use in the classroom.

Climate change – the need for action

The potentially existential threat of human caused climate change is an increasing worry to people in the UK. The evidence of extreme weather events around the world along with flooding in the UK ([UK and Global extreme events – Heavy rainfall and floods - Met Office](#)), the ENDS Report, for example, highlighting the river Itchen in Southampton reached double its highest ever recorded flow in December 2023 ([Rivers saw record flows in December ahead of widespread flooding](#)) are making these concerns more visible.

The biggest ever standalone public opinion survey on climate change, the [Peoples' Climate Vote 2024](#), shows 80 percent – or four out of five – people globally want their governments to take stronger action to tackle the climate crisis. In the UK, this is 84% (Source: [United Nations Development Programme](#)). The report additionally highlights that in the UK, just over half of respondents reported they are more concerned about climate change then they were last year. The remaining respondents were about the same with only 4% saying they were less worried. In relation to education, 71% of UK respondents felt that schools should do more to teach about climate change, with only 3% responding less.

In Hampshire, earlier this year, Hampshire's young people voted climate change and the environment as their top concern. More than 25,000 young people across Hampshire took part in '[Make Your Mark](#)', the UK's biggest youth consultation.



The Make Your Mark 2024 Hampshire Survey Results

Source: [Make Your Mark | Hampshire Youth Parliament \(hampshireyp.org\)](#)

Clearly there is real concern generally and among young people specifically. These concerns are recognised and reflected by the DfE which produced its vision for addressing the challenge of climate change and sustainability.

DFE Sustainability and Climate Change for Schools Guidance

The [2022 policy paper from the Department for Education](#) (DfE) set an ambitious vision of the UK becoming the world's leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030 (DfE, 2022) as outlined in below:

“Vision: the United Kingdom is the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030.

In England, we will achieve this through the following strategic aims:

- 1. Excellence in education and skills for a changing world: preparing all young people for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.*
- 2. Net zero: reducing direct and indirect emissions from education and care buildings, driving innovation to meet legislative targets and providing opportunities for children and young people to engage practically in the transition to net zero.*
- 3. Resilience to climate change: adapting our education and care buildings and system to prepare for the effects of climate change.*
- 4. A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings.”*

Source: Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

This guidance is not statutory. Instead, it set out a key initiative for all schools to have a **nominated sustainability lead and a climate action plan in place for 2025**. The guidance breaks down the vision to provide **five areas** where schools and educators should focus:

- 1. Climate education**
2. Green skills and careers
3. Educational estate and digital infrastructure
4. Operation and supply chains
5. International

Climate Crisis Education in RE

Climate education is not specified as a requirement within Living Difference IV; however, many Hampshire schools do include units that explore issues of climate and sustainability. Commonly, this might involve topics on 'Stewardship' within a unit on Christian traditions for example. The graph above highlights that this issue is of significant concern to young people, and RE is perhaps in a unique position to approach this from a range of perspectives.

The purpose statement in Living Difference IV includes the following:

“Religious education in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton intends to play an educational part in the lives of children and young people as they come to speak, think and act in the world. This entails teachers bringing children and young people first to attend to their own experience and that of others, to engage intellectually with material that is new and to discern with others what is valuable with regard to living a religious life or one informed by a non-religious or other perspective.”

Source: [Living Difference IV - The Agreed Syllabus for Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton, November 2021](#)

The results of the above survey highlight that what is important in young people's experience is the climate crisis. RE therefore has a responsibility to address this and to offer space for young people to discern what might matter in this issue, what might be discovered that is valuable in addressing this challenge within religious and non-religious traditions.

Alternative ways of existing in and with the world

While there is continuing debate about the best ways and speed needed to address the challenges we face, what is less often considered is the role that more marginalized voices might play. There is a plethora of scientific research and commentary easily available, but as Mike Hulme, Professor of Human Geography at Cambridge, argues, the climate crisis will not be solved by science alone (Hulme, M (2009). *Why we Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*). Instead, he argues that it should be viewed as a social, cultural and political issue. He has argued that the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is ignoring the voice and potential of religion in how we face the issue. He suggests that science has no primacy in thinking about how we will, or should, deal with it. Without religion, he claims, the current narrative is reductionist, ignoring those aspects that make it relatable to us as human beings. While acknowledging that organised religion is doing little to confront the crisis, Hulme argues that context specific examples of the impact of belief on action can help showcase the power that belief systems can have on how we view the issue.

Clearly, it is not the responsibility of RE teachers to solve the climate crisis alone. It is perhaps though incumbent on us to contribute to equipping young people with the tools to face this challenge themselves. While religious attitudes towards the crisis might be dismissed as irrelevant by some due to their non-scientific basis, Robin Kimmerer points out that this is a short-sighted way of looking at the problem. As a scientist herself she has spent time exploring the links between indigenous Native American ways of knowing and her rational scientific training. Kimmerer is both Teaching Professor of Environmental and Forest Biology and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She argues that local knowledge and ecological understanding is significant, but something that mass agriculture and a purely economic drive is eroding. Kimmerer argues that actually, scientific rationality and indigenous ways of knowing not only can, but must, work in harmony, and that it is this potential for the discerning of why our rational knowledge might matter in shaping the sort of future we might want that is so important (Kimmerer, 2013). This is also at the core of what the Living Difference approach to education is all about.

As explicit in the purpose statement it is a question of discernment, a consideration of why and how knowledge might matter in our lives and in the world.

Kimmerer explores the idea of reciprocity as a way of understanding our place in the world. This encompasses both a gratitude and respect for the natural world and the resources that it provides, but also for its role as teacher and source of wisdom. Building on this, she brings out what this might mean for human interaction with the world, which for her is centered around stewardship and sustainable living, benefiting both people and the wider natural world of which we are a part. Our interconnectedness is something she seeks to emphasise. Kimmerer sees humans as part of a wider natural whole. Her key message is a call to action based on a sense of connection and responsibility using scientific rationality, but not driven by it, seeing it as a means not an end. It is the call to live in a more sustainable way that considers more than human economic needs in how this relationship is formulated.

Such views provide rich opportunities for exploration in RE. Hulme gives us as teachers a clear rationale for the need to consider issues of sustainability and climate change in the curriculum and Kimmerer offers practical examples from a faith tradition that could be incorporated into lessons. But ultimately, what both do is show why religious education has something distinct to offer in terms of climate education that not only can but should be used to complement the learning in other subject areas. RE offers to chance to open up new ways of seeing the world and the climate crisis allowing for the consideration of creative new ways forward. It gives young people the space to begin to discern their vision for our shared future.

What might this look like in practice?

Kimmerer in particular offers a range of examples, stories and opportunities to explore human relationships with the world. A thematic unit on the environment could include sections from her book (*Braiding Sweetgrass*) to support the learning. This could also be used within a unit exploring American Indigenous traditions. There are many examples of climate activism among indigenous communities across the North American continent, where often, they have been at the forefront to protect the natural world from exploitation.

Closer to home, there are examples of religious leaders joining the campaign to fight climate change from Rabbi Jeffrey Newman's arrest as part of an Extinction Rebellion protest to statements from former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams supporting pupils taking strike action to protest over climate change.

Below are two examples of plans for cycles of enquiry that could be used. One for primary and one for secondary. Both available with further resources through the Hampshire RE Moodle.

Primary example:

Year: 5/6	Theme/Unit: <i>Creation</i> Key concept: <i>Stewardship / khalifah</i> (guardian of the world)	RE KS2
Intended learning outcomes: Children will be able to: Step 3 describe/explain what <i>stewardship</i> is Step 4 describe/explain how <i>stewardship</i> is expressed by Muslims Step 5 evaluate by describing/explaining the importance and relevance of <i>stewardship</i> to Muslims and to themselves Step 1 describe/express a personal response to the concept of <i>stewardship</i> Step 2 describe/explain how the concept can be applied in their own and others' lives. Informed by end of Year 6 age-related expectations With thanks to Jo Rigby, RE Leader at Castle Primary School.	Sequence of activities: Step 1 – Communicate - Discuss with children: <i>Have you ever looked after something precious? How would you treat it? Discuss how you might be even more careful if you are looking after something for somebody else.</i> - Write an instruction leaflet for somebody else to explain how to look after something of yours eg a pet. Step 2 – Apply - Discuss with children: <i>Is it always good to look after other people's things? How do you feel about it? Eg responsible, worried, privileged. What if something breaks while you are looking after it? How would you feel if someone else looked after your special thing?</i> Step 3 – Enquire - Watch <i>Blue planet 2: pollution awareness</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLx4fVYdTI - Look at Joe Miller's Earth diameter poem (1975) reproduced here: https://earthkeeper.org.za/if-the-earth-were-only-a-few-feet-in-diameter/ - Make own inspirational poster on looking after the world. Step 4 – Contextualise - Look at what Muslims believe about creation with the children. Explain that Muslims will look to the Qur'an for guidance and that there is no single story about creation as there is in the Bible, but instead there are references to creation throughout the Qur'an. From these references, Muslims know that Allah created the world and all living creatures in six days. As part of this, Allah also created the first human Adam and the first woman, Eve. Ask the children: <i>can they see the similarities with the story of creation they have encountered in their Christianity RE units?</i> - Introduce the idea of <i>khalifah</i> and state that for Muslims the concept means <i>a guardian of the world</i> and that it is the job of everyone to look after the world. <i>Stewardship (khalifah)</i> – looking after something that does not belong to you, thinking of future generations. - Discuss: <i>what does this concept mean to Muslims and what does it say about how Muslims should look after the world?</i> (This True Tube clip will help teacher's subject knowledge but note that it is aimed at KS1 children https://www.truetube.co.uk/film/charlie-and-blue-talk-about-allah-and-creation). Step 5 – Evaluate - Discuss: <i>What will happen if we don't look after our world? Is it important?</i> - Debate a motion such as: <i>There's no point in looking after the world as I won't be here in 100 years' time or I can't make any difference – I'm just one person.</i> Have a panel of speakers for and against motion. Children sit on the side they support and get up and move any time they change their ideas during the debate.	Opportunities for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development: Spiritual: providing an opportunity for enjoyment and fascination about their own lives and those of others. Using imagination and creativity in their learning. Moral: developing an interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and the ability to understand the viewpoint of others. Social: sharing our own experiences and respond to the experiences of others. Working and <u>socialising</u> with others in a range of learning opportunities. Cultural: willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical and cultural opportunities. Giving children an interest in and an opportunity to explore different faiths and beliefs.
Assessment opportunities: Evidence can be gathered when children: 1 debate 2 make posters 3 writing about <i>stewardship</i>.	Resources: <i>Earth diameter</i> poem (Joe Miller 1975) <i>Blue planet 2: pollution awareness</i> - Inspirational posters for examples. <i>Creation</i> topic box from RE Centre	Cross-curricular links: Art Using art opportunities to develop children's thoughts about <i>stewardship</i>. Consideration of art to express people's ideas about <i>stewardship</i>. Philosophy for children (P4C) Conducting an enquiry into the meaning of <i>stewardship</i> or its value as a concept with peers. Literacy Opportunities to listen and respond to ideas about creation in Islam and to consider the meaning of the ideas. Writing their own thoughts out about <i>stewardship</i>. Considering and writing their definitions of <i>stewardship</i>.

Secondary example:

Year: 7	Theme/Unit: <i>Creation</i> Key concept: <i>Stewardship</i>	RE KS3
Intended learning outcomes: Pupils will be able to: Step 1 Respond creatively as well as offer explanations for their response to their own experiences or stewardship Step 2 Explain examples of how their responses relate to events in their own and other people's lives and wider society Step 3 and 4 Accurately explain meanings of stewardship in the traditions encountered and accurately explain the ways stewardship impacts the lives of those in the traditions with examples. Appreciate how the concept interacts with prior concepts to influence the way people think and speak and act in the world Step 1 Discern value of stewardship in the lives of those living in the traditions encountered as well as recognising some of the issues this might raise articulating the value of their interconnections. Discern possible value for their own lives and communities and how this might influence how they speak, think and act in the world (not usually assessed through summative assessment). Informed by end of Year 7 age-related expectations	Sequence of activities: Step 1 – Communicate - Give pupils a post-it-note and ask them to write down what they care most about. - Discuss in threes/fours – are there any similarities or differences in what they have said? - Discuss in threes/fours – what would it feel like if these things were not treated with respect by others? Step 2 – Apply - Pupils watch the clip 'Killed by Plastic Pollution: Unknown animal washes up on Cornwall beach. (This is freely available on YouTube and is produced by 'Surfers Against Sewage'.) - Pupils could be given time to discuss their own initial response to the clip. - Questions could be provided to prompt discussion linked to the previous task. For example: - How does this clip help us to think about our personal response in a bigger way? - How does the clip demonstrate examples of care and lack of care in society today? - Why do many of us show care in some situations but not others? - Why do people who care about the environment drop litter? - What does the school environment tell us about how the school community feels about care for the environment? - Is there anything all of us should care about? Step 3 – Inquire - Give pupils an extract from Genesis. Arrange for pupils to analyse this text. This could be through a guided reading task. - Ask them to identify what it might teach Christians about different Christian attitudes towards the environment. This could also be an opportunity to explore different interpretations of Biblical authority. - Give pupils a range of quotes from prominent Humanists (for example, Colin Blakemore 'The oceans are already rising. Either we sink, separately or swim together'), or use the information available on the Humanists UK website. Pupils draw out what this might tell them about Humanist attitudes towards care for the environment. - Pupils identify similarities and differences between the views- this could be in the form of a Venn diagram. - Pupils could link this to prior learning if they have previously encountered Christian and Humanist traditions. For example, through considering Genesis in the light of other Christian teachings such as The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Step 4 – Contextualise - Use examples of individuals involved in Extinction Rebellion who have joined as a consequence of their religious belief (There are useful interviews with former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams for example) or their non-religious standpoint. There are Humanist examples easily accessible. Pupils explain how these individuals are demonstrating care in light of the particular religious and non-religious traditions. - Discuss why others might disagree with these actions. Pupils could also look at examples of student action in relation to the climate crisis Step 5 – Evaluate - Discuss: <i>What will happen if we don't look after our world? Is it important?</i> - Debate a motion such as: <i>Religious belief has an important role in tackling the climate crisis.</i> Have a panel of speakers for and against motion. Pupils sit on the side they support and get up and move any time they change their ideas during the debate.	Opportunities for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development: Spiritual: providing an opportunity for enjoyment and fascination about their own lives and those of others. Using imagination and creativity in their learning. Moral: developing an interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and the ability to understand the viewpoint of others. Social: sharing our own experiences and respond to the experiences of others. Working and socialising with others in a range of learning opportunities. Cultural: willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical and cultural opportunities. Giving children an interest in and an opportunity to explore different faiths and beliefs. Cross-curricular links: Art Using art opportunities to develop children's thoughts about stewardship. Consideration of art to express people's ideas about stewardship. Philosophy for children (P4C) Conducting an enquiry into the concept of stewardship, or other aspects of their learning within this topic. Literacy Guided reading and written response to this task. Resources: <i>Surfers Against Sewage clip-</i> Killed by Plastic Pollution: Unknown animal washes up on Cornwall beach - Extract from Genesis (1:26-28 or a longer extract) - Examples of religious responses to the climate crisis (see list of websites below)
Assessment opportunities: Pupil work could be assessed through: - Debate at the evaluate step - Genesis guided reading task - Written response to the final question		

Alongside common treatment as part of a unit on the environment, creation or stewardship, there are many other ways in which issues of sustainability and the climate crisis could be introduced. A thematic unit on faith and action could include a topic on environmental action by religious believers. The concept of Sewa in the Sikhi faith could be used to consider how some Sikhs are expanding this to include questions of sustainability and the climate crisis, or the concept of *ahimsa* provides multiple opportunities to investigate different Hindu responses to the environment.

The Secondary RE Steering Group will be moving to focus on climate change and RE in more detail over the coming year and will be providing further resources and ideas freely available on the Moodle. Additionally, a unit on Pagan Faith traditions is in the final stages of development and will explore alternative ways of understanding our place in, and relationship with, the natural world.

Where to find resources:

Websites:

[RE:Connect religion, belief and the environment - RE:ONLINE](#)

[Indigenous Leaders at the Frontlines of Environmental Injustice and Solutions](#)

[Indigenous Environmental Network | Respecting and Adhering to Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Law](#)

[Rowan Williams says pupils are right to protest over climate | Climate crisis | The Guardian](#)

[Can religion help fight climate change? | World Economic Forum](#)

[IFEES Protecting our planet for future generations using Islamic teachings](#)

[Jewish Climate Action Network-MA - Welcome](#)

[DANCE](#)

[Christian Climate Action – Direct action, public witness for the climate](#)

[Humanist Climate Action](#)

Websites with statements from religious leaders:

Pope Francis: [Laudato si' \(24 May 2015\) | Francis](#)

Patriarch Bartholomew: [Statements | Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#)

Former Archbishop Justin Welby: [Archbishop's Climate Message to Global Summit | The Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

The Dalai Lama: [The Office of His Holiness The Dalai Lama | The 14th Dalai Lama](#)

Sheikh Ahmed el Tayeb: [Grand Imam Ahmed Al Tayeb Inaugurates First-ever Faith Pavilion at COP28 | Egyptian Streets, الإمام أحمد الطيب | Grand Imam, during his speech at the Al-Azhar University conference on climate: The new crisis striking our world today is that of environment and climate change](#)

Rabbi David Rosen: [Judaism and Human Environmental Responsibility – Rabbi David Rosen | KAICIID](#)

Swami Chidanand Saraswati: [Climate Change Real, We Need To Step Up To Stop It, Say Seers | Dehradun News - Times of India, 'Earth is our valentine': Swami Chidanand, Sadhvi Bhagwati lead Mahaswachhta Abhiyan in Prayagraj](#)

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev: [Indian climate guru calls for action at Cop29 to help world's small farmers | The National](#)

Jathedar Gurbachan Singh: [Sikhism's Call to Eco-Consciousness: Upholding Environmental Values | SikhNet](#)

Clips:

[Go Dharmic](#)

[Climate Change: Judaism - TrueTube](#)

[Climate Change: Buddhism - TrueTube](#)

[Climate Change: Multi-Faith Views - TrueTube](#)

[Can God Save The Planet? - TrueTube](#)

[Environmental responsibility](#)

[Ecology interview](#)

HIAS RE Team

Justine Ball, HIAS Inspector/Adviser for RE and History

Email: justine.ball@hants.gov.uk

Tel: 023 9244 1442

Chris May, HIAS Teaching and Learning Adviser for Secondary RE

Email: chris.may@hants.gov.uk

Tel: 023 9244 1442

Laura Blair, RE Centre Manager

Email: re.centre@hants.gov.uk

Tel: 01962 863134

For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following email:

htlcdev@hants.gov.uk

Upcoming Courses

Keep up-to-date with our learning opportunities for each subject through our Upcoming Course pages linked below. To browse the full catalogue of learning offers, visit our new Learning Zone. Full details of how to access the site to make a booking are provided [here](#).

- [English](#)
- [Maths](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Geography](#)
- [RE](#)
- [History](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Computing](#)
- [Art](#)
- [D&T](#)
- [Assessment](#)
- [Support Staff](#)
- [SEN](#)
- [TED](#)
- [MFL](#)

Terms and conditions

Terms of licence

Moodle+ subscribers are licenced to access and use this resource and have agreed to pay the annual subscription fee. This authority starts when the fee is paid and ends when the subscription period expired unless it is renewed. This file is for personal or classroom use only. By using it, you agree that you will not copy or reproduce this file except for your own personal, non-commercial use. HIAS have the right to modify the terms of this agreement at any time; the modification will be effective immediately and shall replace all prior agreements.

You are welcome to:

- download this resource
- save this resource on your computer
- print as many copies as you would like to use in your school
- amend this electronic resource so long as you acknowledge its source and do not share as your own work.

You may not:

- claim this resource as your own
- sell or in any way profit from this resource
- store or distribute this resource on any other website or another location where others are able to electronically retrieve it
- email this resource to anyone outside your school or transmit it in any other fashion.