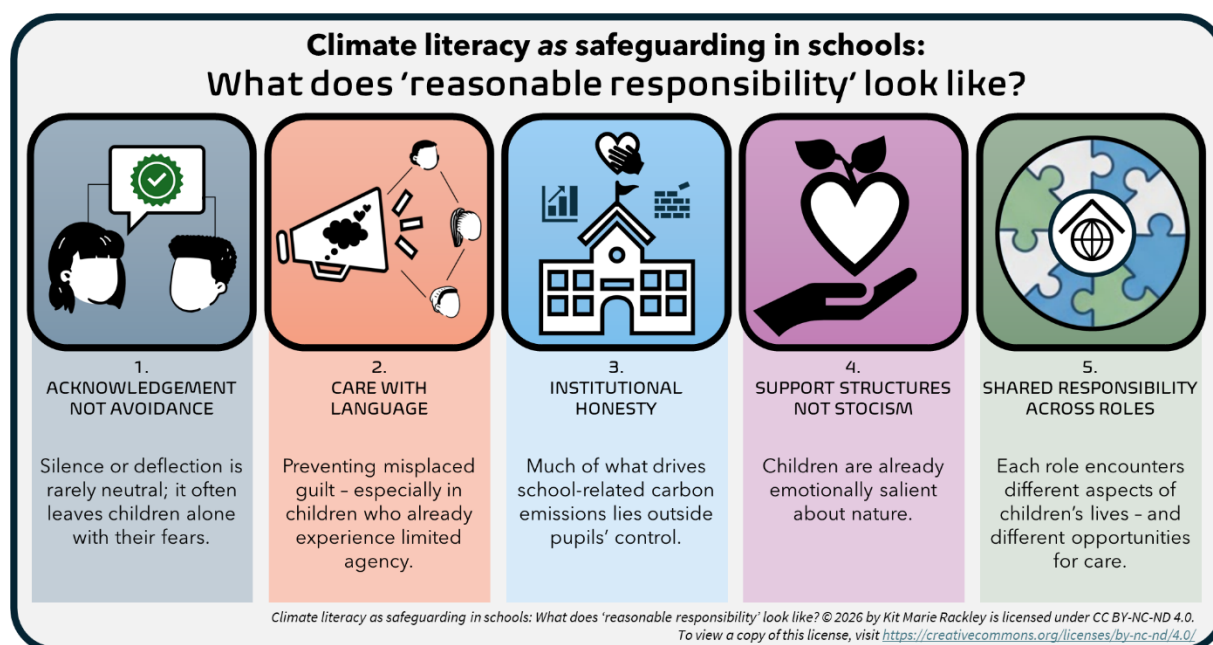**Evidence base for *'Climate literacy as safeguarding in schools: What does 'reasonable responsibility' look like*?'** - Kit Marie Rackley (February 2026).

https://geogramblings.com/2026/02/01/climate-literacy-as-safeguarding-what-reasonable-professional-responsibility-looks-like/

Climate literacy as safeguarding in schools: What does 'reasonable responsibility' look like? © 2026 by Kit Marie Rackley is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

1) Acknowledgement, not avoidance

1. **Youth climate emotions (anxiety, grief, anger, overwhelm) are common and real; validation reduces harm.**

   o High reported levels of climate distress in youth; educator **validation** and safe discussion spaces are protective; **group dialogue** formats support processing and resilience (e.g., Climate Cafés; participatory pedagogies). **[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]**

2. **Meaning-focused coping, agency and nature connection are protective factors.**

   o Evidence overviews highlight **meaning-focused coping** (Ojala), **agency/collective action**, and **nature connection** as linked to improved wellbeing and sustained engagement. **[2, 4]**

3. **In school safeguarding terms, visible climate-related distress must be recognised, responded to, and referred via DSL when appropriate.**

   o **KCSIE 2025**: safeguarding is **everyone's responsibility; mental health** problems can indicate risk; staff must reassure pupils and **act**

immediately through the DSL/early-help pathways; robust **record-keeping** and **information-sharing** are required. [7]

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2) Care with language (systems & collective influence)

1. **Switch "should" → "could/would" to avoid blame and open inclusive dialogue.**

   - Recommended shift, with classroom examples (cycling to school, home energy, approaching council). [8]

2. **Avoid doom/guilt framings; emphasise justice-centred, collective agency and systems thinking.**

   - Guilt/shame/doom **increase distress**, whereas **collective, justice-centred framing** supports agency and buffers distress (eco-emotions & framing sections). [4,6]

3. **Embed a "levels of influence" routine (self ⇄ class ⇄ school ⇄ community ⇄ system/policy) across climate-related lessons.**

   - Proposed as a practical teaching tool in your work (curriculum mapping & practical prompts). [6,9]

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3) Institutional honesty (about major emission levers)

1. **The largest school-linked emissions are Scope 3 (commuting, food, purchases), not just building energy.**

   - **Count Your Carbon** (2024/25, ~1,600 schools analysed): **Scope 3 ≈ 72%** of total; **transport ≈ 40%** (pupil commute ≈ 21%), **energy 27%, food 16%, purchases 16%, waste+water < 1%.** (Headlines + detailed composition tables/figures). [10]

2. **Per-pupil intensity differs by context (rural highest), underscoring travel/system factors.**

   - Rural **0.99 tCO_2e/pupil**, suburban **0.84**, urban **0.81**; commute distances and mode split explain much of the variance (e.g., rural car use 58% vs. urban 34%). [10]

3. **Therefore leadership must be transparent about institutional levers, with students as partners in influence.**

- The emissions breakdown itself justifies focusing on **adult/system decisions** (transport policy, procurement, catering specs) while **engaging students** through consultation and reporting. (Apply the CYC categories to target-setting). [10]

4) Support structures, not stoicism

1. **Staff need clear "recognise → respond → refer" pathways for climate-related distress in line with statutory duties.**

   - **KCSIE 2025** details expectations for **early help**, **DSL availability**, **referrals, record-keeping**, and confirms that **data protection does not prevent** timely information-sharing to safeguard children. [7]

2. **Regular nature/outdoor learning and structured reflection support regulation and wellbeing.**

   - **Place-based/nature-connected** and **group** approaches foster regulation, hope and engagement (e.g., nature connection & embodied learning; group-based methods.) [4, 6, 11, 12]

3. **Practical tools: short reflective routines, staff CPD on climate emotions, pastoral–curriculum bridges.**

   - Outline CPD/bridge actions and policy integration (safeguarding annex, flow prompts, curriculum mapping). [8, 9]

5) Shared responsibility across roles (not "owned" by geography)

1. **Safeguarding is whole-school; DSL leads but every adult has a role.**

   - **KCSIE 2025** Part One establishes **everyone's responsibility**, DSL role, training, **opportunities to teach safeguarding**, and multi-agency working (Part Two). [7]

2. **A Whole-School Approach (leadership, curriculum, student voice, staff development, parents, targeted support, ethos/environment) is the right integration model for climate.**

   - Frameworks & tables on integrating climate and mental health. [4, 6]

3. **Your policy annex/role-map prompts make this distribution explicit and actionable.**

   - Role prompts and annex ideas (questions and mapping) [8, 9]

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