

DRAFT

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One of the world's youngest environmental activists challenges schools to offer sustainability curriculum

- Nine-year-old activist Licypriya Kangujam calls for climate change education
- eduCCate Global CEO aims to add sustainability to GCSEs
- The Westminster School – Dubai pledges to plant 5,000 trees by the end of 2021

Dubai, United Arab Emirates: Nine-year-old environmental activist and founder of The Child Movement, Licypriya Kangujam gave a rousing speech to GEMS Education students, educators and environmentalists to put education at the heart of climate change action. Speaking at The Westminster School – Dubai's (TWS) first-ever virtual sustainability event, "Green Vogue: A Sustainable Fashion Conference", on Thursday 12 February, the diminutive activist, who has been referred to as 'The Greta Thunberg of India', called on her fellow students to "act on climate change and influence the adults around them to do the same." As an Indian, she also addressed Delhi's problems of pollution and called out world leaders for their diverted attention and lack of action.

TWS' Green Vogue sustainability conference brought GEMS schools together with industry leaders, educators, and environmentalists and gave young people a platform to share their concerns and solutions for how the fashion industry can reduce its impact on the environment, and tackle the exploitation of workers. The event was coordinated by Year 13 student Ishmal Ahtsham and Year 11 student Aliza Muzaffer, a member of the school's Green Ambassadors, who gave an address on the impact of consumerism on the climate.

Attended by 2,800 students, teachers and sustainability experts, the virtual event boasted a roster of guest keynote speakers including: Melanie Harwood, Co-founder and CEO of eduCCate Global, and Anita Reddy, social worker and founder of Association for Voluntary Action and Services.

Melanie Harwood of eduCCate Global, an organisation that trains teachers to teach on climate change and sustainability, said: "It all starts in the classroom". She highlighted the importance of recognising that the next generation are key to making changes in the fashion industry not only as consumers, but as the future "transitional engineers of a changing fashion community". Harwood also announced her goal to implement sustainable development within the GCSE curriculum.

TWS is the Middle East's first, and to date only, 'Centre of Excellence in Sustainability and Climate Change Learning' and holds impressive green credentials. The school has also partnered with eduCCate Global and has already achieved the related Bronze and Silver Awards in record time, making it the largest school in the world to have achieved this status. A total of 292 TWS teachers and leaders are now UN-certified Climate Change

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Teachers, and the school aims to have a climate literacy teacher in every class by August 2020.

Vijayakumari Sathyan, Head of School, The Westminster School – Dubai, who led the initiative, said: “I am delighted to see the progress we have made in climate change education at The Westminster School – Dubai. Through this sustainability conference and our green initiatives we have seen students transform learning into action. Students are more empowered to act more sustainably and secure their future.”

Carl Roberts, Principal / CEO, The Westminster School – Dubai, said: “I am immensely proud of all our students and staff who worked so hard to make ‘Green Vogue’, our first sustainability conference, a true success. At The Westminster School – Dubai, our work on climate change and sustainability in the past year has had a significant impact on our students and staff as it is now part of the fabric of our school’s ethos. The Westminster School – Dubai is on a mission to become a sustainable, carbon neutral school, and we have pledged to plant 5,000 trees by the end of 2021. The future of the planet is our collective responsibility, and as educators it is our responsibility to equip the next generation to be aware of the challenges, and help them to become conscientious citizens and stewards of the planet.”

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