Go Green

Guidance to Support Early Years Settings in implementing an awareness in children of the importance of looking after their environment.

Unitots Nursery
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Introduction

Education has a key role in addressing sustainability concerns and although ‘care and concern for living things and the environment’ is part of ‘Understanding the World’ in the Early Years Foundation Stage there is no clear guidance on how sustainability links to children’s learning and development.

Early Years Practitioners are well placed to support children to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment, creating a culture of sustainability inside the setting. Practitioners can encourage children to be actively involved, contributing ideas and taking action through sustainability activities, themes and topics.

To be effective practitioners we need to engage parents and carers and seek out people in the local community who are working in this area, such as local authorities, re-cycling centres and participants of the National Green Impact Scheme.

Unitots Nursery have been part of the University of Worcester’s Green Impact Scheme for six years. The Green Impact Scheme is an environmental accreditation and awards scheme run by the National Union of Students to bring green campuses, curriculum and communities across the country. With an increased awareness of environmental sustainability we decided to introduce the concept to the children and to continue to include it routinely in the curriculum.

We have accumulated ideas on how to encourage young children to become active participants and have produced a guidance leaflet to help other Early Years Settings develop children’s awareness of how they can help to look after their world.
Contribution of User Groups

Increase awareness of environmental sustainability by actively seeking the support and contribution of ideas from user groups, for example, staff, parents/carers and children.

Parents and Carers

Send out an email or letter to parents/carers asking for ideas and suggestions and put up a poster in the Nursery where ideas can be written. Implement ideas and suggestions where appropriate.

Examples of Ideas suggested by parents and carers:

- Re-cycle wellingtons
- Each room/unit has its own fruit tree that it looks after and eats for snack
- Provide animal habitats e.g. bee hotel (not hive), wormery
- Pass on clothes that can be re-used to other parents
- Use of Biodegradable nappy sacks/ eco nappies
- Pick fallen fruit and make something with them to eat or sell for funds
- Re-use bottles such as shampoo bottles, small bottles, squirty soap bottles for water play

Staff

Put up a notice in the staff room for all to contribute with ideas. Examples of ideas suggested by staff:

- Plant seeds and create a vegetable garden. Eat produce for snacks
- Collect rain water to use outside
- Use wind up torches and clocks
- Use re-cycled wood to make animal habitats e.g. bug hotel and bird boxes
- Use milton solution in sterilising unit for cleaning before tipping away
- Give careful consideration to where used paint is emptied, down sink – water pollution, in bin – adding to landfill
- Buy eco-friendly products
- Make a display board showing staff how they can help support the environment
- Plan a ‘Go Green Week’ each term with a range of activities e.g. Litter pick, Food bank for those in need, Bird walk, Energy advice sheets displayed for parents

Children

During circle time and discussions encourage children to contribute their ideas. Examples of ideas suggested by children:

- Make a bird table to feed the birds
- Make a bird house
- Make a Green Code
  When outside encourage the children to look for ways and ideas to look after the environment. Staff can assist by asking relevant questions and directing the children to practical areas, for example, water butt, empty planting areas, plants and trees. After discussions with the children created a ‘Green Code’ and implement it. Display inside and outside to remind the children of the code and choose a child to be a ‘Green Monitor’ to help ensure that the code is followed.
Wellington Re-cycling Table

Please donate your child’s wellies when they have outgrown them, and put onto the Wellington Re-cycling Table. If your child needs wellies please help yourself to the wellies on the table.

Re-cycling Table for Children’s Clothes

Please donate your child’s clothes when they have outgrown them, and put onto the Clothes Re-cycling Table for other parents
Our Green Code

1. We will look after the garden and outside areas, looking after the plants and minibeasts who live there.

2. We will water the plants when it is hot, as they need a drink just like us!

3. We can look, smell and gently touch the flowers in the garden but leave them to grow.

4. We will grow our own vegetables to eat.

5. We will use the compost from the food waste on the garden to help the plants and vegetables grow.

6. We will use water from the water butt to water the plants.

7. We will be careful not to scare the birds; we are big and scary to them!
In pre-school we made a nest box.
We had lots of different types of wood and we used proper tools to hold the pieces of wood together using nails and screws.
We painted it with outdoor paint to keep it dry.
How Early Years Settings can contribute to helping the environment

- Turn off running taps
- Turn off lights that aren’t needed
- Use plastic strips on external doors that are open to retain heat
- Close windows to retain heat
- Put up/refresh posters and leaflets with suggestions on how to be ‘more green’
- Put up displays to encourage environmental sustainability
- Use a water butt to water plants and vegetables
- Put waste food that composes down into a compost bins and use on the garden
- Set up a vegetable plot, grow fruit and vegetables, use or snacks
- Source recycled paper
- Send out electronic admission forms, newsletters etc
- Use eco-friendly resources and products
- Use refillable sprays
- Use eco-friendly cycles on washing machines and dishwashers
- Turn off computers and other electrical equipment when not in use
- Only use photocopies where required
- Print double sided when possible
- Only laminate when there is a full laminating pouch
- Only fill the kettle to the amount needed
- Switch off electronic toys when not in use
- Empty waste/excess water onto plants and garden
- Consider what is being emptied down the drain, would it be better going to landfill
- Reduce use of plastic toys
- Re-cycle where possible, paper card, batteries, printer ink, toner, plastic and glass bottles etc
- Role model looking after the environment, talk about what you are doing and why
- Buy locally made products to support the local community
- Set up a ‘not in the bin’ area where items such as stationary, books, cd’s and others unwanted items can be put that others may want
- Provide parents/carers with information leaflets on how they can help the environment
- Raise awareness of textile recycling by joining the ‘Rag Bag’ Recycling Scheme and raise money for your setting
- Add an environmental statement to your web page
- Grow flowers to attract bees
- Leave an area ‘wild’ to provide a natural habitat for mini-beasts
- Re-use table to make use of unwanted items
Embed in practice

Embed sustainability in every day practice and actively involve the children in the learning process.

Teaching Ideas

• Have a container for food waste from snacks – children empty their snack remains into box and take out later to the compost. Next step to use as compost on the garden.

• Play a re-cycling game with 2 bags, one black, and one green. Children select from a range of products and packages deciding what goes into which bag. For example: Tins, newspapers, cereal boxes, bottles, juice cartons, paper in green bag and crisp packets, plastic bags, chocolate wrappers in black bag.

• Visit re-cycling areas

• Watch re-cycling lorries in action

• Contact local council and arrange visit from re-cycling teams

• Watch recycling clip – see link below - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcF6Mcv9ba8

• Display, make easily accessible, picture books supporting the environment

• Set up an environment friendly interest table

• Make minibeast habitats e.g. bug hotel, wormery, ant house

• Make bird feeders and /or bird table

• Plan real world projects for the children to learn about, for example, the water cycle, rainforests, endangered animals, food and the continuous cycle of growth

• Collect and re-use water

• Plan ‘clean up days’

• Visit and/or use a small area of an allotment

• Invite visitors from the local community
to talk about helping the environment

• Plan activities that involve investigation and problem solving - taking things apart and learning how to put back together

• Work with the children to devise a Green Code – rules about how to look after the environment

• Give some responsibility to an older child by making them the ‘Green Monitor’, checking taps are turned off, that paper/card is put in the recycling bin and that children are putting waste snack food in the compost tub

• Provide paper for the children to draw on that has been used on one side, explaining why

• Make willow structures for the children to play in using willow trimmings

• Make re-cycled plastic bottle structures

• Use saved water for mud kitchen

• Plant seeds, plants and flowers that can be eaten

• Grow herbs in containers

• Design own personal plate or bowl made out of clay

• Grow plants in unwanted wellingtons

• Go on nature hunts to appreciate plants and insects in their natural habitats

• Design a ‘rubbish crane’ to remove pollution from the trees

• Staff to role model practice such as turning off lights and taps

• Involve children in basic repair activities

• Use leftover water from drinks to water the garden
• Make a wormery
• Consider having a pet, fish are relatively easy to maintain or plants, for children to learn how to take care of living things

• Teach the children about capacity so that they learn how to half fill a cup for a drink

• Use small containers for water play to avoid spillage

• Litterless lunches - plan a week for staff and children to use the most natural, least processed, minimally packaged foods – for snacks and lunch boxes

• Use re-claimed resources such as

  What can children help recycle

• Batteries
• Food waste
• Ink and toner cartridges
• Paper

  What can staff help recycle

• Glass bottles
• Magazines
• Newspapers

• Catalogues
• Stamps
• Food swap

Resources

Purchase resources to increase awareness and as teaching aids. For example:

Board Games

• What’s rubbish?
• Ten Green Bottles
• Eco dominoes

• Re-cycling board game
• Wooden toss bag game
• Recycle your Rubbish Set

Activities

• Learn to Recycle Activity Kit

• Eco-vision Interactive CD’s

Books that focus on helping the environment and promote sustainability

• Miss Fox’s Class Goes Green (Eileen Spinelli)  
  Planet (Lauren Child)
• Gabby and Grandma Go Green (Monica Wellington)  
  Compost Stew (Mary McKenna)
• Charlie and Lola: Look after Your  
  The Earth Book (Todd Parr)
Resources continued

Toys

- Recycling lorries and trucks
- Sea plane (Green Wings)
- Wonder world wooden eco house
- Eco play houses
- Underwater Alphabet I Spy Bottle

Useful Websites

www.everearth.co.uk
www.greenrewards.co.uk
www.greenbeekids.co.uk
www.cardboardtoys.com

Ideas for making resources

- Fill small plastic bottles with tight lid with a range of resources for young children to explore
- Use old pots and pans to make a musical washing line
- Use old socks to make sock puppets
- Use old scarves and pieces of cloth, sheets etc for dressing up and in the role lay
- Use shoeboxes, cereal boxes as blocks
- Use old small cake/muffin tins and a selection of small objects to make a first puzzle
- Cut out shapes in the top of a shoe box and use re-cycled lids and jars that can be posted in
- Use 10 small green bottles to make song sack
- Use old crates and a plank to make a mud kitchen counter
- Use recycled materials with children to make models
- Use old crates for outdoor play
- Plant willow tree branches after pruning to make willow structures
- Make instruments out of junk modelling
- Use old wellington boots as planters
- Use plastic milk bottles to make structures
Celebrate Achievements

Document what children are learning and celebrate achievements to encourage continued awareness of caring for the environment we live in. This can be done through:

- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Display
- Posters
- Learning journeys
- Videos
- Recordings
- Reports
- Parent feedback
- Achievement slips