

Sustainability Tool Kit

Below you will find an audit for each of these climate action plan areas:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Education
- Adaptation and Resilience Decarbonisation

Alongside these audits we have created suggested ideas for resources and enhancements to promote a sustainable practice. We are gathering real-life photos from schools and settings across Cambridgeshire to help support and inspire you. This bank of photos will continually be added to. Please send any photos that you would like to share to earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

We have also created a list of children's books to support sustainability. This will support you to ensure that children are provided with a rich and varied access to books within meaningful contexts.

How to use this toolkit:

- Identify a Sustainability Lead for your setting or school.
- Use the audit to identify key strengths and priorities in the four climate action plan areas.
- Read through the implementation guidance. Create action plan alongside the children.
- Share with all staff and key stakeholders such as parents, governors, committee members and key decision makers to create a shared vision and embedded culture for sustainability.

Climate Education

Reflective Questions

	Minimal	Established	Aiming Higher
Do you provide specific activities that will encourage children learn about sustainability and biodiversity?			
Do you create and make resources for children using natural products?			
Is climate change and sustainability part of your curriculum?			
Do children understand the impact of litter on the environment and how to keep the grounds and local area free from litter?			
Are there opportunities for staff and families to engage with climate education and propose new initiatives?			
Current Strengths			
Areas for Development			
Ideas for Climate Action Plan			

Biodiversity

Reflective Questions

	Minimal	Established	Aiming Higher
Do you encourage connection with the outdoors in play? (naming plants, bare feet, naming bugs?)			
Do you visit areas of natural interest with the children to show them the natural world?			
Do you take part in recording wildlife events, for example The Big Butterfly Count and the Big Garden Bird watch?			
Does your school or setting encourage animal or insect life in the outdoor space, for example bug hotels, wildflowers, wildlife boxes and log grass?			
Does your school or setting have planting areas in hanging baskets, raised beds, pots or containers?			
Current Strengths			
Areas for Development			
Ideas for Climate Action Plan			

Adaptation and Resilience

Reflective Questions

	Minimal	Established	Aiming Higher
Do you grow your own vegetables/fruit? Do you have a water butt for collecting water?			
Do you repair broken resources or re-use to create something else?			
Do you throw away or waste food or use it in other ways (can it be frozen, used in play or donated to food banks?)			
How do you dispose of waste? Do you recycle and encourage children to recycle their waste?			
Do you use environmentally friendly cleaning products?			
Current Strengths			
Areas for Development			
Ideas for Climate Action Plan			

Decarbonisation

Reflective Questions

	Minimal	Established	Aiming Higher
Does your setting or school encourage sustainable travel such as walking, cycling, car-sharing or a walking bus?			
Does your setting or school have a secure place to store bikes and scooters?			
Do you share information with your families about how to reduce the impact of air pollution and global warming?			
Are lights, smart boards and computers/tablets switched off when not in use?			
Does your school or setting take part in energy saving projects and programmes such as Switch off Fortnight, or Earth Day?			
Are pupils aware that saving energy can help save the planet?			
Current Strengths			
Areas for Development			
Ideas for Climate Action Plan			

Implementation Guidance

Ideas for sourcing sustainable resources:

- Charity shops
- Local shops/supermarkets (community projects)
- Freecycle website
- Facebook Market Place or Life is a gift groups on Facebook.
- Parents and staff newsletters
- Nature walks
- Nearly new sales
- School deliveries – can sometimes provide pallets and boxes.
- Amazon wish lists for parents.
- Tyres from local garages/parents
- Logs – Tree surgeons
- Guttering-parents/local builders
- Donation Tree – Each leaf has a resource needed by setting, parents take a leaf if they can provide the resource.
- Florist – Out of date flowers
- Use apps such as Olio and Next Door
- What's App Free groups.
- Local builders' merchants – pallet collars for making planters.

General sustainable practice considerations:

- Ensure you have clearly labelled bins for plastics, batteries, paper, metal, glass, food, garden waste, landfill.
- Discuss with children why we recycle (decomposition, plastics in the environment)
- Consider reducing food waste – can food be used in other ways/frozen? Can dried out of date food be used in play, beading, counting, sorting?
- Donate unwanted food to food banks and compost old vegetables and fruit/skins/peels.
- Nappies – cloth nappies, cloth wipes, reusable/washable wet bags for wet clothes to go home (use old blankets and sew into pockets/bags).
- What do parents' families know about sustainable play and living? Send out information/links/ideas.
- Is there somewhere to post new initiatives or new ideas available to staff and parents?
- Run extra-curricular clubs based on sustainability such as eco councils.

Ensure your provision and practice is fully risk assessed:

“3.76 Providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.” – Statutory Framework January 2024.

Is climate change and eco-anxiety referenced in your safeguarding policy, as a possible risk factor to mental health and behaviour in schools?



Mark Making/Writing/Creative

Resources

- Mark making and writing tools: pencils, crayons, chalk, sticks, feathers, natural brushes, plant stems, weeds.
- Paint/creative consumable materials: chalk paint, natural dyes from plants, food colouring and water, charcoal, mud, tea/coffee, PVA glue in recyclable pots rather than branded glue-sticks, paper tape rather than sticky tape.
- A broad range of surfaces that support mark making: Brick walls, wooden fences, painted/chalkboard walls, old sheets, windows, sand, soil, or mud (snow/ice temporarily), blackboards, paving slabs.
- Range of media: cardboard – boxboard and cereal packets, recycled paper, gifted notebooks, diaries, unfinished exercise books, masking tape, recycled envelopes, cards, postcards, recycled tubes, pots, etc.
- Support: environmental print inside and outside the setting (for example, logos, packaging) displayed at child height and protected from the weather.

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Use recycled paper from the office Cardboard boxes from supermarkets.
- Ask parents to bring in paper from their office.
- Cardboard boxes from supermarkets
- Old sheets for drawing on.
- Recycle paper and use again – ‘Papier Mache’ collages.
- Create your own paper/card.
- Mark making with natural brushes, sticks, feathers, weeds.
- Make your own ink/dyes.
- Use charcoal, mud, coffee, tea, berries, out of date food colouring for mark making.
- Bark or leaf rubbing.
- Create marks or letters using loose parts – pebbles, sticks, moss, mud, sand, shells.
- Mud kitchens are beneficial and can be stocked full of all kinds of malleable resources – mud, sand, clay, moss, petals, leaves, and water.
- You can make your own clay, play dough, and add herbs – mint, rosemary, lavender, thyme as well as using plants and berries for natural colouring – dandelions, sunflowers, nettles, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries.

Notes/Actions for Provision

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Books in Provision

Resources

- 'What do you see when you look at a tree' By Emma Carlisle
- 'The Odd Fish' by Naomi Jones
- 'The Lorax' Dr Seuss
- 'When the Bees Buzzed Off' by Lula Bell
- 'Tiny Crab is a Tidy Crab' by Paula Bowles
- 'Stella and the Seagull' by Georgina Stevens
- 'Somebody Swallowed Stanely' by Sarah Roberts
- 'Clem and the Crab' by Fiona Lumbers
- The Lumberjack's Beard – Duncan Beedie
- Stella and the Seagull – Georgina Stevens and Izzy Burton
- Tidy – Emily Gravett
- The Great Paper Caper – Oliver Jeffers
- Window – Jeannie Baker
- Little Turtle and the Sea – Becky Davies and Jennie Poh
- What We Will Build: plans for Our Together Future – Oliver Jeffers
- Little Miss Waste Less – Roger Hargreaves

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Borrow books from local library.
- Create your own lending library for families.
- Promote events at the local library.
- Encourage a setting/school visit to the local library.
- Host second hand book fairs or book swaps.

Notes/Actions for Provision

Role Play/Performance

Resources

- Music Area: old pans and lids, wooden/metal sticks and spoons, pipes, buckets.
- Varied musical instruments – drums, flutes, maracas, triangle.
- Space to perform, speakers/cd player.
- Music for different cultures and different types of music.
- Old mobile phones, telephones, binoculars, cameras, backpack.
- Stage: curtains, instruments, dressing up, microphones.
- Some dramatic play materials – dress up.
- Furniture: kitchen units, tables and chairs, armchair, old microwave, old kettle.
- Utensils: whisk, wooden spoons, ladle, fish slice, tongs, sieve
- Set of cutlery, different sized plates, mugs, cups, and jugs
- Cooking equipment: different sized pans with lids, baking trays, cake tins (different shapes and sizes), frying pan, wok, measuring cups, measuring spoons.
- Baby dolls (diverse representation), highchair, blanket, cot, potty, bottles, bath.
- Garage: tyres, tool kit, old car parts, high vis jackets, protective glasses, hard hats, walkie talkie, clock, appointment book, pens, phones.
- Shop/cafe: Food packaging boxes/tins (be mindful of allergies), till, money, shopping baskets/trolleys, purse, bags, recipe books, menus, tray, notebook and pens, aprons, tea towels, water spray and cloth, dustpan and brush, small broom, washing up liquid bottle, laundry detergent bottle, tablecloth.

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Make music with what you have already available, pots, pans, wooden spoons.
- Create your own musical instruments with the children using recycled products, straws, sticks, card, string.
- Make a shaker from a plastic bottle and beans/pasta.
- Collect coffee tins and create a drum using a balloon and elastic band.
- Collect old scarves and ribbons for movement and dancing.
- Create a stage area with pallets and logs for seating.
- Create a scrap store for items that you may need for later.
- Ask families for food packaging they use at home to use in roleplay.

Notes/Actions for Provision

Nature or Investigation

Resources

- Observation: bug pots, binoculars, magnifiers, field guides
- Birds: Bird feeders, nesting boxes, bird identification book
- Gardening tools: hoe, fork, rake, spade, trowel, hand fork, watering cans in variety of sizes and shapes, wheelbarrow
- Plants/seeds: nasturtiums, sunflowers, climbing beans, peas, tomatoes, strawberries.
- Growing space: raised beds at child height or hanging baskets.
- Sensory plants: herbs and grasses with interesting texture, movement, colour, and scent
- Textures: Access to soil, sand, stones, pebbles, bark
- Habitats: log piles, dead wood, and bug hotels
- Clothing: Spare wellies and child-size gardening gloves
- Investigation: Magnifying glasses, binoculars, telescopes, microscopes, metal detectors, wildlife/bird box camera, torches, pots for collecting naturals/bugs, mirrors, colour paddles, weather boxes, gardening tools, seeds/bulbs, watering cans, weather measuring devices, sensory plants.

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Support children to respect the outside space and environment.
- Encourage children to name common plants in the outside space.
- Encourage bare foot play/barefoot sensory walks to encourage nature connection.
- Grow your own food and provide opportunities for the children to cook with and taste the produce.
- Create wildlife areas with the children.
- Create games from natural resources using conkers, pinecones, sticks.
- Create bug homes/wormeries and let children watch them work, discuss the purpose for these and what would happen if we did not have plants, soil, trees for bugs, bees, and birds to live in?
- Use [Cambridgeshire STEM in the Early Years](#) for a guide to activities and resources.

Notes/Actions for Provision



Sand and Water

Resources

- Natural resources: large wood slices, logs, bricks, wooden blocks, large shells, cobbles, sticks
- Access to more water: outside tap, water butt, jerrycan with tap, etc.
- Pipes: guttering, pipes and connectors/bends, guttering stands
- Hoses: differing thicknesses, lengths, types
- Watering cans: variety of sizes and types

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Promote the use of natural materials – use wooden spoons, forks, and pots.
- Collect natural resources – pebbles, stones, bark, wood, sticks, cork, moss, conkers, shells, etc. to collect as treasure. Provide cloth bags/muslin bags for children to collect the treasure they find.
- Re-create a beach – cultural capital, using a large sheet and covering with sand.
- Provide shells, pebbles, buckets, spades, sounds of the waves.
- Make windmills using old paper and sticks collected. Discuss wind power with the children – how it makes power through wind turbines.
- Natural resources – leaves, petals, fruit peel
- Add scents to the water – peels, natural juice, herbs and create potions using recycled bottles of different sizes and funnels.
- Use natural colouring from flowers, leaves, and weeds to water.
- Talk to the children about wastewater – use water tray water to water the plants/vegetables.
- Source an old ceramic sink to use outside – place in planting area to water plants after activities.
- Create an activity – what lives in the water and what does not (that is, fish, or plastic bag) for children to fish out the items that should not be in the water/sea.
- Freeze objects in ice for children to crack open.
- Use recycled drainpipes to transport water from one tray to another. (source piping and guttering from building sites for free – it costs them to clear).
- Teach children about the importance of water conservation – turning the tap off after use. Collect rainwater to wash things.

Notes/Actions for Provision

Construction/Block Play

Resources

- Range of natural materials: sticks, logs and log slices of varying sizes, pinecones, conkers, and other seasonal natural resources
- Range of materials: large squares of off cuts of artificial grass, heavy duty fabrics
- Large Scale loose parts: milk crates, supermarket crates, chutes, pipes, guttering, funnels, planks, poles, tarps, netting, tubs, rope, cord in various lengths and thickness
- Tyres: (different sizes), go kart tyres
- Car accessories: Steering wheels (toy versions), car number plates
- Nuts, bolts, and screws: wooden and metal in a range of sizes appropriate for age.

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Use packaging for construction play – all different shapes and sizes, then when broken encourage children to fix using tape/glue/string.
- Collect Duplo and Lego from charity/car boot sales, ask families, then wash.
- Collect trucks and cars from car boot or charity shops.
- Use real construction materials – collect for free from building sites for loose parts and outdoor construction – piping, pallets, guttering, bricks, scaffold boards, etc.
- Use natural collections for construction – pebbles, stones, bark, wood, sticks, cork, moss, etc.
- Ask parents to collect and donate loose parts.

Notes/Actions for Provision

Small World

Resources

- People figures: Figures to represent our diverse society including age, race, and culture.
- Animals: collections of farm animals, sea creatures, wild animals, zoo animals, pets, and dinosaurs.
- Natural loose parts: such as wooden slices, logs of different sizes, pebbles, pinecones, sticks, shells, wooden rings.
- Small houses and shelters: small wooden or chalkboard houses, caves, rattan small world houses, nesting houses, wooden shelters (such as those from pet shops).
- Range of materials: artificial grass, gravel, sand, water (as relevant).
- Roads and tracks: for a range of vehicles and trains, these could be a variety of materials such rubber, wood, card.

Suggestions to promote a sustainable practice

- Collect small world toys from charity or charity shops and ask families.
- Use repair cafés to take broken toys – Cambridgeshire Repair Cafe Network
- Create houses from boxes and bottles for children to design and paint/create, for example dolls house, farms.
- Collect old sheets for dens and use wooden pegs and string to create dens both inside and outside.
- Doll making from wooden pegs/sticks, cloth, cork, and string.
- Use real plants/herbs for woods/forests in dinosaur play, and then water and reuse in other play or then plant for children to care for.
- Create baby bath from old plastic boxes, flannels. Make your own soap. Outside source on old a ceramic sink to recreate water play/baby baths.

Notes/Actions for Provision