



Climate Change and Sustainability Policy

Our Commitment

The Nursery is dedicated to fostering environmental stewardship in young learners, in line with the Department for Education (DfE) Sustainability Strategy (2025) and the climate priorities of Essex County Council (ECC). We support ECC's Everyone's Essex mission and embed sustainable practices throughout our operations, curriculum and community engagement.

Aims

To support the creation of a climate action plan to allow us to take a structured and strategic route toward ensuring our setting is acting toward and educating our children and their families about sustainability.

Our commitment to work in partnership with our children and families ensuring the education we provide gives knowledge-rich and comprehensive teaching about climate change.

To involve children, young people and their families in an important element of our curriculum of climate action planning.

To inspire staff, children and their family's enthusiasm to help drive positive change.

To increase practical knowledge of sustainability and climate change give children a sense of agency where anxiety stems from climate concerns.

To create a sense of pride in our Montessori setting, enables us to share knowledge and enthusiasm with our local communities.

Decarbonisation (Reducing Carbon Impact)

Decarbonisation means finding ways to use less energy from things like coal, oil, and gas, because they release harmful gases into the air. These gases make the planet hotter and cause problems for people, animals, and nature.

In early years settings, decarbonisation is about making small changes that help care for the world. This includes saving energy by turning off lights, reducing waste, reusing and recycling materials, and encouraging children to spend time outdoors learning about nature.

By taking these steps, we are helping to protect the environment, support children's understanding of sustainability, and work towards a healthier, cleaner future for everyone.

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We utilise energy-efficient **LED lighting**, ensuring lights are switched off in unused areas.

- Heating efficiency is maintained by keeping **windows and doors closed** when heating is active.
- We promote **digital communications** to reduce paper waste.
- Eco-friendly cleaning processes are used; products procured in bulk to minimise packaging.
- We replace disposable wipes with **reusable towels** for hand drying.

Additionally, ECC's **Early Years & Childcare Climate Advice Pack** offers tailored guidance on reducing carbon emissions, which forms part of our toolkit for continual improvement [Essex County Council+15eycp.essex.gov.uk+15schools.essex.gov.uk+15](#).

Adaption and Resilience (Preparing for Climate Risks)

Staff track local weather patterns to adapt routines for comfort and safety.

- In warm weather, shaded play areas, **sun hats**, and **hydration routines** help protect children.
- Our **heatwave response plan** includes flexible outdoor times and cooled indoor spaces.

These practices reflect ECC's work on **Climate-Resilient Schools**, like SuDS planters for stormwater management and flood resilience being offered to early years settings [flood.essex.gov.uk](#).

Biodiversity and Nature Engagement

It is important for Early Years children to understand and be involved in **biodiversity and nature engagement** because these early experiences shape their values, attitudes, and behaviours toward the environment for life. Here are several key reasons why this is essential.

Builds a Lifelong Connection with Nature

Early exposure to nature helps children develop a deep emotional connection with the natural world. This connection fosters a sense of care, respect, and responsibility for living things — essential foundations for future environmental stewardship.

Supports Holistic Development

Engaging with nature supports children's:

- **Physical development** (through outdoor exploration and movement)
- **Cognitive skills** (through observation, questioning, and discovery)
- **Emotional well-being** (nature reduces stress and promotes calm)
- **Social development** (as they collaborate and share experiences)

Encourages Curiosity and Inquiry Based Learning

Nature is a living classroom. Watching a seed grow, spotting insects, or listening to birds encourages curiosity and leads to rich conversations, questioning, and critical thinking — all central to Early Years education.

Fosters Empathy and Responsibility

Looking after plants, feeding birds, or caring for a bug hotel helps children learn empathy, patience, and responsibility. These skills are transferable and support positive behaviour, both in school and in life.

Raises Awareness of Environmental Issues

While the concepts of biodiversity loss or climate change may be complex, children can understand simple messages like:

- “We take care of living things.”
- “Plants help us breathe.”
- “Bees help flowers grow.”

By making these ideas accessible, we help children develop eco-conscious habits early on.

Aligns with Curriculum Goals

Biodiversity and nature engagement directly support the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** in areas such as:

- Understanding the World
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language

Promotes Sustainable Thinking

Through hands-on nature experiences, children begin to understand that their actions have an impact. Whether it's watering plants or reducing waste, they learn that small actions can make a big difference — laying the groundwork for sustainability thinking.

When young children engage with nature and biodiversity, they don't just learn *about* the world — they learn to *care* for it. That's why it's not only valuable but essential to embed nature engagement in Early Years education.

Children participate in many activities on a daily basis, these include :

- Planting **flowers and vegetables** in our garden.
- Nurturing vegetables through, growth, harvesting, cooking and eating.
- Working in outdoor spaces include **bug hotels**, bird feeders, building and installing bird boxes in our woodland and dedicated nature areas.
- **Regular nature walks** help children explore and connect with wildlife.

This aligns with ECC's emphasis on biodiversity in early years settings, including creating wildlife gardens, nature clubs, and Forest School-style activities schools.essex.gov.uk.

Climate Education and Green Thinking

In our setting, we believe that even our youngest learners can begin to develop respect and care for the natural world. Through play-based experiences, storytelling, and outdoor exploration, children are encouraged to notice seasonal changes, understand where food comes from, and develop simple sustainable habits such as reducing waste, recycling, and caring for plants and animals. We promote "green thinking" by modelling environmentally friendly practices within daily routines and encouraging children to make thoughtful choices that protect their world. Our aim is to nurture curiosity, responsibility, and a sense of belonging to the wider community and planet, laying the foundations for lifelong environmental awareness.

When communicating and working with the children we embed daily eco-phrases like:

- **"We care for our world"**
- **"We recycle"**
- **"We love trees and animals"**

Our curriculum integrates eco-themed books, songs, and stories.

We observe **Earth Day**, **Recycle Week**, and other eco-celebrations with special activities. These curriculum-integrated climate messages reflect ECC's guidance around developing climate action plans that link learning with environmental well-being eycp.essex.gov.uk Essex County Council+9schools.essex.gov.uk+9schools.essex.gov.uk+9Reddit.

Staff and Community Involvement

The Nursery believes that creating a truly sustainable environment is a shared responsibility between staff, children and their families. **All staff contribute actively to our sustainability commitments**, modelling eco-friendly behaviours and embedding environmental awareness into everyday practice. Our team regularly reflects on and adapts routines to reduce waste, conserve energy, and promote nature-based learning. We also actively involve our wider community—**parents and families are invited to donate reusable materials**, support recycling initiatives, and take part in seasonal **planting days and eco-themed craft sessions**. By working together, we strengthen our collective impact and demonstrate to children the power of community in caring for the planet.

Updates and tips on sustainability are regularly shared via **newsletters** and **displays**.

We also encourage participation in ECC's **Essex Schools' Climate Action Network (ESCAN)**, which supports the involvement of young advocates and educators in local climate projects educationessex.essex.gov.uk Essex County Council+2schools.essex.gov.uk+2.

Review and Update

This policy and our action plan are reviewed **annually**.

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We track key metrics (energy use, waste reduction, biodiversity initiatives).

We participate in ECC-sponsored training—such as the **Early Years Climate Action planning webinar**—to stay informed and inspired educationessex.essex.gov.uk.

ECC Support and Links

- ECC's **Climate Action Advice Packs** (including early years-specific) provide free, practical tools to reduce carbon impact in childcare settings [Essex County Council+2eycp.essex.gov.uk+2](https://educationessex.essex.gov.uk).
- ECC's **Energy Survey Team** offers audits to identify efficiencies and grants to support building improvements schools.essex.gov.uk.
- ECC's **Climate Action Challenge Fund** has supported local schools in biodiversity and climate engagement projects—sharing model projects can inspire future initiatives here [Local Government](https://localgovernment.essex.gov.uk).

Read Dr Diane Boyd's [sustainability matters in early childhood resource](https://www.ncfe.org.uk/media/p1socs4v/sustainability-matters-in-early-childhood-resource.pdf)

(<https://www.ncfe.org.uk/media/p1socs4v/sustainability-matters-in-early-childhood-resource.pdf>), developed and written in partnership with NCFE

Read the [London Early Years Foundation sustainability strategy](https://leyf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/LEYF-Sustainability-Strategy.pdf)

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Aligned with the DfE Sustainability Strategy (2025)

Together, we are nurturing green habits, healthy futures, and a sustainable community.