

# Early Years Eco-Schools Guide

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In this guide you will find a wealth of information and resources to help your setting commence or develop its sustainable journey.

We are all too aware of the difficulties and challenges settings face when trying to integrate sustainable practices and learning opportunities into your setting. In order to fulfill the three pillars of sustainability, we would strongly encourage you to involve families, the local and wider community, colleagues, local similar provision and most importantly, the children in your settings.

As you progress with your sustainability journey, we would appreciate your help and co-operation by completing the activity reflections so that we may continue to develop and grow the available resources. Any comments and suggestions are most welcome!

Diane Boyd

Liverpool John Moores University



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# Eco-Schools Vision

We believe in a more environmentally sustainable and socially just world where people live healthy, enjoyable lives in thriving environments. What young people learn today will influence how future generations live. Eco-Schools is part of a growing global movement that seeks to nurture knowledge, creativity, kindness, wisdom, critical thinking, empathy and many more of the skills and values that will allow sustainable development to flourish and a better world to emerge.

We face, and will continue to face, numerous inter-connected environmental, social and economic challenges. Climate change, biodiversity loss, natural resource pressure, extreme weather events, water stress and deforestation are all already impacting on the way we organise our lives and economies.

Progress has been made to address these challenges. Despite this, the problems are largely getting worse with implications for social and economic equality both within and between countries. If we fail to overcome these problems we will destroy the ability of the planet to sustain the natural biological, physical and atmospheric systems that support life on Earth. Our current ways of living are environmentally unsustainable and, therefore, ultimately socially and economically unsustainable too. This is the problem we are trying to solve. The responsibility for solving this problem, or at least attempting to, lies with many stakeholders across many sectors. The education sector has a vital role to play. We believe that the approaches that Eco-Schools is built on have a lot to offer.

Eco-Schools was developed in 1992 by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in response to the UN Conference on Environment and Development. FEE's aim for Eco-Schools is to "empower students to be the change our sustainable world needs by engaging them in fun, action-orientated learning". We believe that children of all ages should have the opportunity to learn about their natural environment. We also believe that children should develop the knowledge, skills and values that will help them thrive in a more environmentally sustainable world.

Schools, nurseries, and childminders all have an important role to play and should be supported to deliver effective and inspiring education for sustainability. The Eco-Schools programme helps to realise this vision. The Eco-Schools programme is successful because it helps passionate children and adults channel their enthusiasm for the environment into a strategic and organised plan of action and learning for sustainability. It is also successful because of the support settings receive from passionate educators who work to improve their sustainability performance and learning.

## Who benefits?

We all benefit from education for sustainability. When children, young people and adults develop sustainability knowledge, skills and values they become better equipped and more motivated to create a fairer, greener society. Independent research into the Eco-Schools programme in England found evidence of positive impacts on pupil wellbeing, behaviour, motivation and cognitive skills that benefit the whole school community. These learning benefits were in addition to the sustainability performance benefits that were also confirmed.

Settings benefit from engagement with the Eco-Schools programme, pupils benefit and communities benefit too. It is also important to remember that people, animals, plants, insects, rivers, oceans and skies now and in the future benefit hugely too.

# Top Tips

Many leaders and managers often state time, knowledge, budget constraints and staffing issues restricts their ability to operate a more sustainable setting. In this section, we discuss top tips for success in order for your journey to be a smooth one.

## **Gain support**

The most successful settings are the ones which make a conscious decision to embed a sustainability philosophy into their whole operation with the full support and commitment from their senior management team and staff.

## **Keep it simple**

Start off by introducing small, low cost measures and use the action plans provided to build up to larger, more complex projects which require large amounts of time and money. Colleagues and management will more likely support bigger projects when they have witnessed and been part of smaller successful projects.

## **Connect with other experienced, sustainable settings**

Make contact with an established and experienced setting, further down their sustainable journey. Learn from their mistakes and listen to their advice. Make a trusted friend.

## **Establish a support network of other settings in a similar position**

There are a whole host of networking opportunities available including Early Years hubs, childminder networks and authority advisory teachers available for networking opportunities. Seek them out!

## **Family and child involvement**

There are a range of ways to get families involved in your setting. Collecting resources for nature play or craft activities, help create a nature play area, to name but a few! Have a clear communication channel, ideally a website and email newsletter, Facebook page, Twitter account etc. and allow them opportunities to help out and get involved. At the centre of all that you do should be the children. Involve them in decision making, allow their voices to be heard, and allow them to take part. Taking a participatory, democratic approach from the outset will enable you to have a smooth sustainable journey.

## **Resourcefulness, creativity and streamlining**

Don't be afraid to try something new, take risks! Being creative and resourceful can help to keep costs down. Always be sure to ask for help when needed. Carefully consider the amount of paperwork produced and explore alternative methods of recording information. This saves time and money!

## **Communication**

At the heart of your journey should be communication. Parents, families, staff, management and most of all children need to be given a voice and be heard! Effective communication will lead to an effective sustainable setting.

## **Celebrate and share!**

Celebrate successes, show appreciation for staff, children and families recognising their achievements and commitment. Share your experiences, good or bad, with us and the sustainable community. Together we can make a massive difference!

# The Seven-Step Framework

Eco-Schools follows a simple Seven-Step Framework. Firstly you need to establish your Eco-Committee and then with your Eco-Committee conduct an environmental review. Once completed you need to develop your action plan, assigning roles to pupils and staff and determine measures of success. You need to involve the whole school and the wider community, create an Eco-Code and link to the curriculum .

## The Eco-Committee

The Eco-Committee is the action team and the driving force behind your sustainability journey.

It must include:

- Children chosen or elected to represent different age groups and the whole setting
- A member of staff (the Eco-Coordinator) to support but not lead the committee

The Eco-Committee should also include the following where possible:

- Member of the senior management team
- Bursar/Business Manager
- Governor(s)
- Parent(s)
- Non-teaching staff member(s)
- Caretaker or site manager
- Representative(s) from local authorities
- Member of the local community

It is important to decide how the Eco-Committee will keep the rest of the setting informed about decisions and involved in the projects that will take place. Using the setting newsletter, website or making presentations can help. You don't even have to call yourself an Eco-Committee if you don't want to. You are free to be as imaginative and creative as you like in naming your action team.

### The role of the Eco-Committee

The Eco-Committee is tasked to:

- Ensure that the whole setting is aware of the Sustainability programme
- Take the lead in carrying out the Environmental Review
- Ensure that everyone in the setting is represented in the decision-making process (as far as possible)
- Provide a link between children, staff, senior management team, governors and the whole community
- Take the lead in delivering the Action Plan

The size of the Eco-Committee and where and how often it will meet is decided by each setting, although we recommend that the team meets at least every eight weeks. The Eco-Committee must keep a record of their decisions and the minutes of their meetings should be reported back to the senior management team, and the wider school community

# Environmental Review

An Environmental Review is an audit of your setting, covering the nine Eco-Schools topics in reasonable depth, plus a number of other areas. Your Environmental Review is designed to give a realistic picture of your setting's current environmental performance. It should tell you what you're doing well and what you might need to work on.

The Environmental Review informs your Action Plan, helping your setting to decide what changes are necessary and how urgently the changes are required.

This activity must be completed at least once every two years, but ideally should be completed every year, to enable the Eco-Committee to do follow-up reviews to see the progress your setting has made.

## **Who carries out the Environmental Review?**

The Environmental Review must be carried out by the Eco-Committee. An example template for early years can be found on the Eco-Schools website. You can adapt this to suit the members of the Eco-Committee. It is up to a setting whether they wish to design their own Environmental Review or use the template.

## **What should the Environmental Review include?**

It must include all of the nine topics: Energy, Litter, Waste, Water, Global Perspectives, Transport, Healthy Living, Biodiversity and School Grounds. An Environmental Review should include a series of simple questions. Simple yes/no answers to each question may provide sufficient information but you may wish to use the Environmental Review to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the setting or include recommendations for action.

## **Linking your Environmental Review to the curriculum**

Whether you're devising your own Environmental Review or using an off-the-peg form, there are many opportunities to link this activity with the curriculum, particularly with maths, science and IT. Measuring, recording, estimating and displaying data can all be developed to meet national educational targets, as well as contributing to Eco-Schools.

## **Linking to the Eco-Schools award levels**

At Bronze, Silver and Green Flag level: A school has to complete a formal review. This can be devised by the setting but must cover all nine Eco-Schools topics. The results must also be documented.

## **We've conducted our Environmental Review...what next?**

Once the Eco-Committee has carried out an Environmental Review of the setting, it is time to develop an Action Plan based on its findings.

## Action Plan

The Environmental Review will have sparked a lot of ideas for potential projects. The Eco-Committee now needs to draw up a workable plan with details of the projects they want to take action on. It will include lists of tasks, equipment needed and people to involve for each project. The Eco-Committee might also want to outline a timetable and, if necessary, draw up a simple budget. Copies of the Action Plan should be made available for the whole school to see; the more that people are aware of what the Eco-Committee is trying to do, the more likely they are to get involved and play their part.

An example Action Plan can be found on the Eco-Schools website or you can write your own Action Plan.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

In making any project successful it is important to monitor whether things are changing or have changed. There are lots of different ways to do this: before and after photos, knowledge and attitude questionnaires, meter readings, analysis of electricity and water bills, transport surveys, litter counts, biodiversity surveys, waste audits and so on. Eco-Committees need to lead on design and implementation of their monitoring and evaluation but they might want to ask parents, staff and managers for input.

## Informing and Involving

To spread the impact of Eco-Schools work the Eco-Committee will need to get as many people involved as possible. They might also want to get involved with sustainability projects that are happening nearby. The Eco-Committee can let people know about their Eco-Schools work by having a prominent and eye-catching noticeboard, giving assemblies and presentations and by organising some fun events. They could exercise their artistic side by designing some posters too. By involving the wider community the Eco-Committee will be helping even more people to learn for sustainability along the way.

## Eco-Code

It is a requirement for the Silver and Green Flag Awards, that your school has agreed, adopted and displayed an Eco-Code. The Eco-Code is your mission statement.

It should demonstrate – in a positive, clear and imaginative way – your school's commitment to improving your environmental performance.

The Eco-Committee should have a key role in developing the code. This will give your school a greater sense of responsibility for the values the code represents. The Eco-Code may take the form of simple phrases, a poem or a song. Its presentation could be a design challenge for pupils. Citizenship and personal social health education classes provide a good opportunity to discuss the Eco-Code's meaning and values.

Example Eco-Codes can be found on the Eco-Schools website.

# Linking to the curriculum

Eco-Schools is fully supportive of the Early Learning Goals 2016. The EYFS (DfE 2014:9) notes that in planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and are inter-connected.

<b>Communication and Language Development</b>	
Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations	
ELG 01: Listening and Attention	Opportunities can be created in both indoors and outdoors with a mixture of activities, discussions and texts. By provide a wide and diverse range of information and text for stories, rhyming games and songs it can challenge and offer alternative thinking around ESD. For example, children/babies in the settings can create their own Eco songs or raps giving them a sense of ownership and participation.
ELG 02: Understanding	Use a range of questions, instructions and debates, whilst discussing key environmental issues both local and global. Ensure opportunities for how and why questions generated by the children themselves.
ELG 03: Speaking:	Recognise the diverse and cultural perspectives of the setting/community and offer opportunities for talking and developing narratives.



## Physical Development

Physical Development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

ELG 04: Moving and Handling	Whilst indoors and outdoors the children/babies have opportunities to be physically active on a range of sensorial surfaces and textures. They will also utilise a range of equipment and develop confidence in handling tools, animals and plants, whilst understanding how to care for them and protect their environment.
ELG 05: Health and Self-care	They understand why it is important to develop independent healthy lifestyles both through physical activity and nutrition. They have opportunities to grow and sell their own food and understand about hygienic practices.

## Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behavior in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

ELG 06: Self-confidence and self-awareness	Children have opportunities to develop their confidence through their own initiatives and entrepreneurial thinking, whilst trying new activities and participating in a democratic process.
ELG 07: Managing feelings and behaviour	Children develop an awareness of equitable practice through dialogue, listening and participatory practice. They embrace and value cultural and social justice, sharing ideas, knowledge and recognising the rights of all within the setting.
ELG 08: Making relationships	Children have opportunities to develop relationships within the setting, the community and globally. Through activities or stories children understand about social and cultural interdependence and intergenerational contexts.

**Literacy**

Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

ELG 09: Reading

Having opportunities to read environmental print and texts, design posters and make setting big books, both inside and out. Utilise a selection of texts that embrace indigenous and cultural narratives.

ELG 10: Writing

Utilise a range of materials both inside and outside. They gain confidence designing resources, posters, text to support ESD activities within the setting and community. Develop sensorial experiences with a range of open ended materials and water, mud, sand and foliage.

**Mathematics**

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

ELG 11: Numbers

Children have opportunities to use numbers and money in real life contexts, for example cake sales/children in need. They understand issues concerning fair trade and why they should shop locally to support their community. Use numbers to solve problems or gather data.

ELG 12: Shape, space and measures

Children understand patterns and shapes in the environment (Plants, wildlife, animals). They understand about developing spaces and how they would be responsible for them. Use positional language in real life situations.

## Understanding The World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

ELG 13: People and Communities	Children need to be aware of universal rights of all throughout the world and develop confidence to discuss and challenge. To be able to understand and recognise cultural differences through stories, visits, community participation and global practice. To develop community based practice locally.
ELG 14: The World	To observe and understand their world, locally, nationally and as a global citizen. To recognise and develop a bio-centric view of their world and how they are part of its future.
ELG 15: Technology	To recognise that technology leaves a carbon footprint and consider different ways to conserve energy both in the setting, at home and within their community. (For example, turning off lights, using recycled paper, generating less printing and limiting use of the dryer.)

## Expressive arts and design

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Early Learning Goal	Eco-Schools Activity Examples
ELG 16: Exploring and using media and materials	Using open ended natural materials than provide sensorial experiences for babies and children. Ensure a wide and diverse range of practical activities are offered – For example, making musical instruments from recycled materials, dancing to cultural songs , cooking and baking using local indigenous produce and using their local environment to inspire (e.g. Natural wildlife and beach materials) .
ELG 17: Being imaginative	Recognise the diverse ways that children can express themselves and encourage participatory co-construction practice.

# Nine Topics

The Eco-Schools programme is focused on nine key topics. Your school isn't required to work on all of the topics at once. However, whilst working on one topic you may find you make improvements in other areas, as they are designed to interlink. Your Eco-Committee will choose the topics your school wishes to address once you've completed your first steps.

## Energy

Energy is an essential part of our daily lives. We use energy to heat and cool our homes, schools and businesses. We use energy for lights and appliances. Energy makes our vehicles go, planes fly,



boats sail, and machines run. Energy comes from renewable (like solar or wind) or non-renewable sources (like fossil fuels or gas)

All living things need energy too. Plants use the light from the sun to grow. Animals and people eat the plants and use the energy that was stored. Food is fuel for our bodies' energy needs like muscle power.

We also use our own bodies to make heat energy. When you have been running or working really hard, your body produces heat energy. When you wear clothing like a jacket in the winter, it holds in that heat energy and keeps you warm.

### Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Select energy monitors that are responsible for identifying lights that have been left on as well as proper use of heating and cooling appliances. Energy monitors are recognized by way of a special tag or poster
- Encourage discussions with children about climate change and how to save energy at the setting
- Make up a story with the children about saving energy using photos or drawings of the children participating in energy saving actions. Alternatively make up a song about saving energy
- Run activities in conjunction with annual Earth Hour event
- Use small, fold up laundry racks so that children can hang out smaller items while staff hang out bigger items. Talk about best days for drying the laundry outdoors or where to place the rack indoors
- Practice reading a thermometer with children
- Learn about static energy – children rub a balloon on their hair and use the charged energy to pick up small bits of paper
- Source solar energy kits such as lights, fans or solar powered toys
- Make kites and fly them as a tool to discuss wind energy
- Make wind socks

# Litter

Keeping our Earth clean is the responsibility of every individual. Each of us must be aware of our own behaviour and how it affects the environment. We must also develop a sense of caring and ownership



for the world in which we live – its air, water, land and all of its inhabitants. We need to teach this to our children, too.

Even children, who often feel that what they do has little or no affect, can have a positive influence on the environment by helping to reduce the amount of litter and pollution.

Litter is anything (wrappers, packaging, paper, bottles, cans, etc.) that is left on the ground or where it does not belong. Litter does not look nice and it can harm plants and animals living in nature.

The waste that originates from houses, industries and factories should be placed either in a recycling bin, used for compost or placed at a waste disposal centre.

Dropping litter shows a lack of respect for your friends and neighbours, and spoils the community for everybody else. As well as making places look messy, litter can attract rats and insects, which can spread diseases!

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Provide recycling bins and allow children to recycle and observe good recycling habits
- Adopt a litter free snack policy – encourage parents to provide fruit only at snack times
- Carry out a community litter pick
- Discuss with children where rubbish goes and why we should recycle
- Involve children in the recycling process of the setting
- Read recycling stories and make up recycling songs and raps
- Take part in national, international and local events to encourage litter free environments
- Organise a visit from your local authority waste collection services or visit a waste disposal centre
- Involve parents and encourage parents to adopt positive recycling practices

# Waste

Every year we produce about 3% more waste than the year before. This might not sound much but, if we carry on at this rate, it means that we will double the amount of waste we produce every 25 years. The average UK family throws away 6 trees worth of paper in their household bin a year. We get through nearly 3 billion disposable nappies each year in the UK. Disposable nappies take 500 years to decompose.

There are lots of items that we use every day and then get rid of them by throwing them in the bin. Unfortunately, this results in piles of rubbish as we throw old items, as well as packaging of new items.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle are most common methods to reduce landfill waste. Landfill waste poses a huge problem as it has economic and environmental impact.

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Talk about where paper comes from and why it's important to recycle
- Make recycled paper from used paper
- Supply recycled materials for art projects and play activities
- Create a worm farm and allow children to participate
- Get involved in local community initiatives with parents and children
- Encourage discussions about waste, make up stories and poems about waste
- Create a compost bin and allow children to collect waste and deposit in the bin
- Create a compost treasure hunt
- Allow children to feed scraps to wild birds and animals
- Make a recycled bird feeder
- Try junk modelling

# Water

Of all the water in the world, only 3% is fresh. Less than one third of 1% of this fresh water is available for human use. The rest is frozen in glaciers or polar ice caps, or is deep within the earth, beyond our



reach. To put it another way, if 100 litres represents the world's water, about half a tablespoon of it is fresh water available for our use.

The UK has less available water per person than most other European countries. London is drier than Istanbul, and the South East of England has less water available per person than the Sudan and Syria. Surprised? As our population grows, more and more people are sharing this

limited resource. Also, the more water consumed the less there is available for the environment, so it is important that we use water wisely.

Reducing the amount of water that goes to waste at home helps protect the wildlife that lives in rivers and wetlands, while cutting the energy needed for treating and pumping water for domestic use. Everyone uses water each day, whether it be at home, school or work. There are LOTS of really small changes that you could make which all add up to make a BIG difference – especially to your pocket and the environment!

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Provide watering cans for the children to assist with watering the garden
- Encourage children to collect and measure water in containers using a range of different container sizes, funnels and plastic tubes
- Encourage children to undertake floating and sinking experiments
- Encourage general water play activities including fishing and washing up using a water play
- Discuss the different uses of water for plants, animals and growing food
- Discuss water saving strategies and ask questions about why we need to save water
- Read and make up stories, poems and songs about saving water
- Collect leftover water from drinks and water play to water the garden
- Create a water wall with recycled materials and use buckets to collect water at the end so it can be reused

# Global Perspectives

Global Perspectives encompasses a range of values and elements that individuals are encouraged to adopt into their everyday lives. These values include awareness for the world around them and the issues that

are of concern, a high level of respect for diversity, a commitment to social justice and equality, and a willingness to contribute to the community at local as well as global levels. This may seem a daunting prospect to undertake in an educational setting, but many of us incorporate elements of Global Perspectives without realising.

Becoming a Global Citizen allows societies across the world to become part of an interconnected community that strives to achieve quality and sustainability for nature and for each other.



Allowing children to develop into globally aware and responsible adults will enable them to make positive connections between cultures and societies and create a global community that allows equality and opportunities for all.

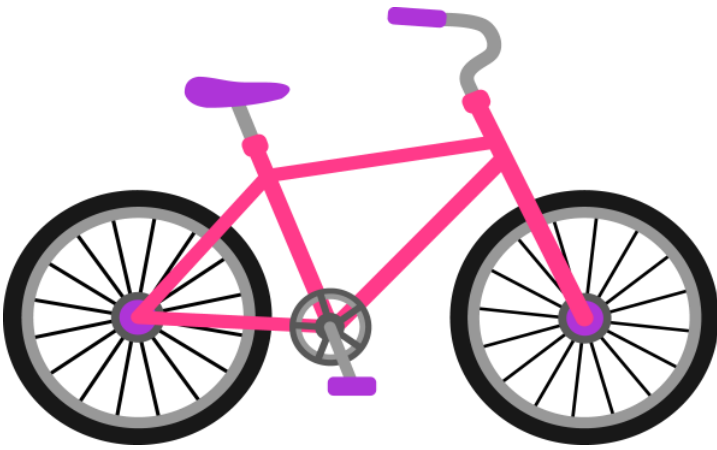
## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Look at Valentine's Day cards in the local shops, making links in the local community
- Design your own cards to give to family and friends – giving children the opportunity to value family
- Talk about how children across the world will be sending cards to their family and friends – teach children that we live in a multicultural and diverse world
- Let parents know that you are making cards and provide resources so they can help their child learn more at home
- Whilst out on a walk look at everything around you – children can learn about the world in which we live and be proud of what we see around us
- Have a picnic. After the picnic, pick up litter, allowing the children to learn to respect the natural world, respect the law, learn right from wrong and to have social responsibility
- Have a themed meal with the children, incorporating different cultures



# Transport

Transport refers to the movement of materials, animals and people from one place to another. There are many modes of transport that can be used. These include road, air, rail, water and space.



Within each mode of transport there are different vehicles that can be used. These include tractors, cars, helicopters, speed boats, bicycles, lorries, and even your own feet!

More vehicles are being used on the roads, in the sea, and across the skies than ever before. This causes pollution and damage to the environment, so it is important that we understand what these modes of transport are and how they impact the world that we live in. By choosing to walk, jog or bike more often than using motorised transport we are reducing our harmful impact on the environment AND we are becoming healthier at the same time!

This is particularly important for young children, as gross motor skills begin to develop from birth, and between the ages of 3 and 6 children develop fundamental movement skills. By allowing opportunities to develop these skills, children are able to move confidently and control body movements.

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Discuss the impact that travel has on our environment and health using stories, poems and making up songs
- Encourage parents and children to lead healthier, more active lifestyles
- Staff and managers should be positive role models for parents and children and demonstrate active lifestyles by walking or cycling to setting at least once a week
- Encourage parents and children to walk to setting at least once a week
- Promote car share schemes and leave your car at home schemes
- Invite a wide variety of transport operators to setting including buses, fire engines or ambulances
- Invite a cycling club to visit the setting and demonstrate safe cycling using equipment
- Take children on a bus journey discussing the impact travelling by bus has on the environment
- Discuss the wide variety of transport involved in food production such as tractors

# Healthy Living

Leading a healthy and active lifestyle is important for all ages. The National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 years advise that:



Physical activity should be encouraged from birth. Toddlers and pre-schoolers should be physically active every day for at least 3 hours, spread throughout the day.

Children aged 2 to 5 years should spend less than one hour per day watching television and using other electronic media.

Children younger than 2 years should not spend any time watching television or using electronic media. Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary, or inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, apart from sleeping.

With good food habits and daily physical activity you will be well on your way to a healthy life. Easy to say, but sometimes not so easy to do!

Our busy lifestyles can be hard on our health. Rushing to and from school and work can make it hard to find time to be physically active. We can also slip into the habit of choosing unhealthy snacks and take-away foods or spending our free time watching TV or in front of the computer.

However, these choices can be dangerous for our health and our children's health – both now and in the long-term. That's why it's so important to stop, take stock and make a conscious decision to follow a healthy lifestyle.

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Get children learning and playing outside
- Adopt a healthy eating policy
- Provide opportunities for the children to put away groceries
- Discuss where your grocery items have come from using a world map and local maps to compare the distance travelled by different items
- Involve children in simple green cleaning activities
- Involve children in growing and preparing food and discuss the benefits of growing your own food
- Organise a visit from health visitors/dentists/opticians to discuss how children look after themselves
- Involve parents in informing the children about how they can live healthier lives

# Biodiversity

Biodiversity is extremely important and ensures the continuation of life within an environment.

Every living thing on planet Earth is connected in some way to other living things, as if a giant spider web exists between them.



If one species becomes endangered or extinct for example, it will affect all of the other species, including humans. For example, if fishermen started hunting all of the whales, then the killer whales would run out of prey to catch. They would then hunt seals and otters. Without seals and otters, sea urchins would increase and would destroy all of the kelp. Fish use kelp as protection for their young, and without protection the fish

population would decrease. This means that the fishermen would have no fish to catch, so people would have less food to eat and the oceans would start to become unhealthy.

Biodiversity ensures that there is a healthy balance in the web of life.

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Undertake discussions with children about who they are sharing their outdoor play space with such as birds, insects, butterflies and what type of environments these animals and creatures need to live.
- Go on a “Safari” at your setting or to a nearby park. Take some binoculars to spot birds and use magnifying glasses to observe small creatures and plants.
- Observe and discuss the life cycles of different animals such as tadpoles - frogs.
- Use a flower press to dry flowers and identify different types of flowers and ones which are native to England and to the U.K.
- Work together to create habitat for different animals and mini-beasts such as making nest boxes. Discuss why we need to protect our plants and animals and create homes for them.
- Talk about a range of homes for insects/animals/birds and play a matching game - Who Lives Where?
- Make up a song or rap about an animal or plant and perform for parents.
- Align activities with national and international events
- Investigate opportunities to bring other wildlife experiences to your setting such as hiring a butterfly house, or bee hive, organising a visit from a zoo.



# School Grounds

The use of outdoor space has been found to enhance the value of learning and development for children. Utilise a diverse range of different spaces for different things. Some flat spaces can be



used for playing games, building things, planting gardens and some that have shelter can even be used to house campfires or wildlife homes! Elements can include quieter gathering spaces to develop social and communication skills, mud kitchens to increase physical activity and development, and activities such as campfire building, cooking, and gardening to enhance movement and critical thinking skills. It is important that we look at the shape, size and surroundings of the environment around us because then it can be used in the most efficient way so that everybody can enjoy it.

Analyse your indoor space - do you have adequate ventilation, fresh air and natural light? All extremely important for the health and wellbeing of children. You can set a positive example for your children to engage with the outdoors and nature just by being enthusiastic and enjoying activities outside.

Being confident and comfortable in nature will allow children to develop a healthy relationship with the environment that will continue to develop as they grow. Provide opportunities for crawling, tumbling to stimulate outer senses.

## Activity Ideas for Early Years:

- Creating a recycling centre, a composting area or a raised bed that children can plan with their own fruit and vegetable plants
- Simple changes such as making a mosaic or painting plant pots can be done on a shoestring budget
- Involving children in the design and creation of new features in your setting can help to develop new skills and new ways of thinking, as well as instilling a new sense of respect for children's surroundings
- Create a bug hotel in your school grounds and watch who comes to stay
- Create a compost bin
- Getting the most out of the school grounds by having an area with seating or an activity zone that can be used to work with children in either small groups or in full classes
- Explore the natural environment surrounding your setting using binoculars and magnifying glasses
- Encourage children to value the schools grounds as a place to play, explore and make a connection with the natural world

# Activity Reflection

This page is for you to reflect on the successes each Eco-Schools activity that you do.

*Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child and young person has the right to a say in decisions that affect them.*

Considering this statement, please answer the following:-

Were the children consulted prior to activity commencing? Please explain

.....  
.....  
.....

How were the children able to contribute to the activity? Please explain

.....  
.....  
.....

Were the children able to implement their own ideas? Please explain

.....  
.....  
.....

Early years provision is dependent on reflective practice that allows for extending and developing, how did you extend and enhance this theme? Provide examples of other activities you did around this topic which will be used in the development of this pack

.....  
.....  
.....


Please give details of success/failure of activity, what was useful, what could be improved etc.

.....  
.....  
.....


Once completed, please copy and send to Diane Boyd at Liverpool John Moores University,  
[D.J.Boyd@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:D.J.Boyd@ljmu.ac.uk)

# Self-Assessment Matrix


## Energy

Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed
	Maximise the use of natural light and ventilation during the day	
	Turn off lights each day during rest time	
	Place signs near all light switches and power points to act as reminders to turn off when not needed	
	Use a check list at the end of each day to make sure all lights and appliances are turned off	
	Use fans where possible instead of air conditioners	
	Use correct temperature settings on air conditioners and section off rooms when heating or cooling	
	Make sure children are appropriately dressed requiring less use of heating and cooling appliances	
	Tell your families about the actions you are taking to reduce energy use. Include energy saving tips in your newsletter	
	Always use cold water for washing, wait for a full load and use the Eco cycle	
	Minimise the use of clothes dryers. Use the clothes line instead	
	Conduct an energy audit to eliminate unnecessary power use	
	Switch to more energy efficient lighting	
	When purchasing new appliances consider those with high energy star rating	
	Install sensor lights in infrequently used areas	
	Consider installing a solar hot water system	
High Effort and/or Cost	Consider installing a solar power system	


## Litter and Waste

Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed	
	Use reusable shopping bags every time you shop instead of plastic bags		
	Ask staff to be aware of packaging waste and encourage them to seek out products with little or no packaging		
	Ask families to bring in recyclable items for children's activities and set up a useful box in each room to store them in. Encourage children to build and create using the recyclable items		
	Set up paper collection points in each craft area and encourage children to reuse one-sided paper		
	Encourage families to reduce food packaging by introducing a package free lunch box initiative		
	Train staff on how to recycle more effectively		
	Place colour coded bins in each room or in a central location		
	Assess whether you need to increase the number of recycle bins		
	Identify families who will take home excess organic waste for their own compost bin or worm farm		
	Introduce a worm farm/compost bin to your setting and provide training for all staff		
	Use worm castings and juice from your worm farm on your own veggie garden		
	Reassess the number of general waste bins and frequency of pick up following the introduction of measures to reduce waste		
	Look for opportunities to use recycled materials from parents when planning new spaces		
	High Effort and/or Cost	Move to online assessments and parental notifications so that documentation and newsletters are not printed out	


## Water

Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed
	Use the eco cycle on washing machines and dishwashers, and only use these when full	
	Use a full sink of water to wash or soak items such as art supplies rather than use running water from the tap	
	Tell your families about the actions you are taking to reduce water use. Include water saving tips in your newsletter	
	Investigate the opportunity to label bed sheets so they can be used on the same child for consecutive days	
	Increase mulching of gardens to prevent evaporation to reduce garden's watering needs	
	Conduct a water audit to eliminate unnecessary water use, and compare water bills when available. This is very motivating for staff and children	
	Locate your water meter and take manual water readings. Consecutive readings at the beginning and end of each day will highlight if water is being lost outside business hours. Ensure timely repairs of leaks	
	When purchasing water using fixtures and appliances, select those with the highest water efficiency rating	
	Install low flow taps including push taps to prevent water wastage through taps being left on	
	Ensure all toilets are converted to dual flush toilets with hippos fitted	
	Install a rainwater tank with a gauge and connect to toilets and washing machine. Monitor the gauge	
	Consider installing a water butt	
	Install a water wall for children's play area	
	High Effort and/or Cost	


## Transport

Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed
	Consult your families and staff and discuss ways to reduce your settings' carbon footprint	
	Carry out an audit of staff daily journeys – consider offering car share options	
	Encourage families to walk to setting by establishing walk to setting initiatives	
	Introduce awards for the children who walk to setting on a regular basis	
	Train staff on the impact of heavy vehicle use on the environment	
	Invest in a variety of alternative modes of transport for the children including bicycles, trikes, scooters or balance bikes	
	Carry out a transport audit and consider the number of deliveries that arrive at setting, can any of these be reduced? Once a week to once a fortnight or once a month?	
	Visit a train station, fire station or farm to allow children to experience modes of transport in their natural environment	
	Communicate with families through your newsletter the various ways you are striving to reduce the settings carbon footprint and encourage them to adopt the same strategies	
	High Effort and/or Cost	Invite transport operators into setting e.g. fire firefighters, ambulance drivers, refuse collectors, milkman, allowing children to experience a wide variety of transport

## Healthy Living


Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed
	Discuss with families, children and staff your plans to become a healthier setting and ask for suggestions as to how this can be achieved. The more involved families feel, the chances of them adopting healthier habits increases	
	Encourage a walk to setting day for families and staff	
	Increase the physical activity levels of all children and staff	
	Ensure staff understand the long and short term benefits of adopting a healthier lifestyle	
	Ensure staff act as positive role models for children and are observed making healthy food choices and keeping active	
	Encourage staff and children to eat together	
	Invite families into setting to share a healthy picnic and ask them to bring in a healthy food choice	
	Encourage breastfeeding and regularly hold information sessions for families	
	Buy local/organic/fair trade produce where possible	
	Consider installing a vegetable garden or salad patch	
	Plant fruit trees	
	High Effort and/or Cost	Invite families in to setting for a themed healthy food tasting session. For example, this event can be a regular occurrence, choosing different healthy foods from around the world or different fruits from around the world

## Biodiversity

Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed
	Undertake discussions with children and families to find out how they would like to make changes to the outdoor area to support local diversity and nature play	
	Borrow a bug, reptile or mammal collection	
	Put up posters of animals, birds and insects in your setting and try to identify visitors to your garden.	
	Plant a range of plants in your garden to provide shelter, nesting and food for animals and birds that might be passing through your outdoor area. Include or retain trees and tall shrubs, dense or spikey lower shrubs, plants that provide fruit, nectar and seeds. Talk to your local nursery to select suitable plants for your outdoor area	
	Tell your families about the actions you've completed to increase your settings' biodiversity. Include tips in your newsletter. It might inspire families to look at what they can do in their own garden!	
	Add mulch, logs, large flat rocks and stone piles for lizards, animals and insects	
	Add a nesting box to your outdoor area to replicate natural shelters such as tree hollows. They are fun, cheap and easy to make	
	High Effort and/or Cost	Create a frog pond that is safe for your children at your setting to access.



## School Grounds

Low Effort and/or Cost	Actions	Completed
	Introduce more plants both indoors and outdoors. Ensure all staff know the watering, light and feeding requirements of the plants you purchase. For the outdoors, look for varieties that are low maintenance and have less watering requirements. These will also create habitat for local wildlife	
	Incorporate stones and other natural materials including shells, pebbles and pinecones into both the indoor and outdoor learning environments and encourage imaginative play	
	Create a mud pie of sand pit	
	Create a mud kitchen	
	Create a permanent display table with interesting natural and sensory elements such as leaves, seeds and shells	
	Construct a tee pee using bamboo and grow climbers such as beans over the frame to create unique and interesting spaces	
	Consider incorporating pets into your outdoor space. Rabbits, guinea pigs and chickens can make excellent pets for young children	
	Undertake discussions with our children and families to find out what they would like to see in their outdoor area. Talk about how you could incorporate more natural elements, for example logs, stepping stones, seating and balance beams. Replace soft fall areas with sensory gardens and textured pathways	
	Hold an activity day, inviting parents to help develop outdoor areas	
	High Effort and/or Cost	Consider investing in a bee hive and equipment

# Glossary

**Biodiversity** - The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. Biodiversity includes diversity within and between species and the diversity of ecosystems.

**Carbon Footprint** - A carbon footprint is an estimate of how much carbon dioxide is produced to support your lifestyle. Essentially, it measures your impact on the climate based on how much carbon dioxide you produce. Factors that contribute to your carbon footprint include your travel methods and general home energy usage. Carbon footprints can also be applied on a larger scale, to companies, businesses, even countries.

**Carbon Neutral** - Every time we travel or turn on our computers, we add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. This is because most of the energy we use comes from fuels like oil, coal, and gas. Other types of energy, like solar and wind power, do not contribute to climate change. But they are often more expensive. Being "carbon neutral" means removing as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as we put in. How can we remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? One way is to buy "carbon offsets". This supports projects like a wind farm or solar park. It helps make clean energy more affordable. It reduces future greenhouse gas emissions to make up for our travel and electricity use today.

**Climate Change** - Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). Climate change may result from: natural factors, such as changes in the sun's intensity or slow changes in the Earth's orbit around the sun; natural processes within the climate system (e.g. changes in ocean circulation); Human activities that change the atmosphere's composition (e.g. through burning fossil fuels) and the land surface (e.g. deforestation, reforestation, urbanization, desertification, etc.)

**Compost** - A mixture of decaying organic matter, as from leaves and vegetable and fruit scraps, used to improve soil structure and provide nutrients. Well-balanced compost requires air, moisture, carbon and nitrogen materials, micro and macro-organisms.

**Conservation** - The management of human use of nature so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to current generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.

**Cultural diversity** - Variety or multiformity of human social structures, belief systems, and strategies for adapting to situations in different parts of the world. Language is a good indicator of cultural diversity, with over 6,000 languages currently being spoken.

**Culture** - A collective noun for the symbolic and learned, non-biological aspects of human society, including language, custom and convention. The concept of culture is often used synonymously with 'civilisation'. However, it does have a range of meanings, including understandings of culture as norms and values; culture as meaning; and culture as human activity.

**Deforestation** - Those practices or processes that result in the conversion of forested lands for non-forest uses. This is often cited as one of the major causes of the enhanced greenhouse effect for two reasons: 1) the burning or decomposition of the wood releases carbon dioxide; and 2) trees that once removed carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the process of photosynthesis are no longer present.

**Education for Sustainability** - Education for sustainability includes many of the founding principles of environmental education but with a stronger human focus, recognising that fundamental human rights and social justice are just as essential to sustainable development as environmental sustainability.

**Environment** - Environment includes ecosystems and their constituent parts, natural and physical resources, the qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas, the heritage values of places, and the social, economic and cultural aspects of these things.

**Global Warming** - Global warming is an average increase in the temperature of the atmosphere near the Earth's surface and in the troposphere, which can contribute to changes in global climate patterns. Global warming can occur from a variety of causes, both natural and human induced. In common usage, "global warming" often refers to the warming that can occur as a result of increased emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities.

**Global citizenship** - Global Citizenship is a way of living that recognises our world as an increasingly complex web of connections and interdependencies. One in which our choices and actions may have repercussions for people and communities locally, nationally or internationally.

Global citizenship nurtures personal respect and respect for others, wherever they live. It encourages individuals to think deeply and critically about what is equitable and just, and what will minimise harm to our planet. Exploring global citizenship themes help learners grow more confident in standing up for their beliefs, and more skilled in evaluating the ethics and impact of their decisions.

**Indigenous** - Indigenous people or things that are native to or exist naturally in a particular country, region or environment.

**Natural resources** - Natural resources are often classified into renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources are generally living resources (fish, coffee, and forests, for example), which can restock (renew) themselves if they are not overharvested. Renewable resources can restock themselves and be used indefinitely if they are used sustainably.

**Project-Based Learning** - Students go through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. Rigorous projects help students learn key academic content and practice 21st Century Skills (such as collaboration, communication & critical thinking).

**Renewable Energy** - The term renewable energy generally refers to electricity supplied from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, geothermal, hydropower, and various forms of biomass. These energy sources are considered renewable sources because they are continuously replenished on the Earth.

**Sustainable Development** - Development that meets the needs and aspirations of the current generation without compromising the ability to meet those of future generations.

**Sustainability** - There is no one agreed upon definition for sustainability. SSP defines it as “improving the quality of life for all – economically, socially, environmentally – now and for future generations.

## Useful Links

### Children’s Books

The Nature Corner – M. Van Leeuwen

Where Does the Garbage Go? – P. Showers

Why Should I Recycle? – J. Green

The Three R’s – N. Roca

I Can Save the Earth! – A. Inches

The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle – A. Inches

The Adventures of an Aluminum Can – A. Inches

10 Things I Can Do To Help My World – M. Walsh

Yucky Worms – V. French

The Night Iceberg – H. Stevens

The Bee Tree – P. Polacco

Juliana’s Bananas – R. Walton

### Practitioner’s Resources

Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability – J. Davis

Global Childhoods – M. Edwards

Risk Challenge and Adventure in the Early Years – K. Solly

Making a Mud Kitchen – J. White

Encounters with Materials in Early Childhood Education – V. Pacini-Ketchabow

Education in Times of Environmental Crises: Teaching Children to be Agents of Change – K. Winograd

# Useful Websites

**Muddy Faces** – Forest School, Outdoor Play and Learning Shop [www.muddyfaces.co.uk](http://www.muddyfaces.co.uk)

**World Forum Foundation** - global exchange of ideas on the delivery of quality services for young children in diverse settings [www.worldforumfoundation.org](http://www.worldforumfoundation.org)

**Jan White Natural Play** – Blog on Natural Play [www.janwhitenaturalplay.wordpress.com](http://www.janwhitenaturalplay.wordpress.com)

**Bumblebee Conservation Trust** – Information on Bumblebees in the UK [www.bumblebeeconservation.org](http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org)

**RSPB** – Activities for early years [www.rspb.org.uk/youth/learn/earlyyears](http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/learn/earlyyears)

**Woodland Trust** – Outdoor activity ideas [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives)

**Eco-Schools** – Support and ideas for the Eco-Schools programme [www.eco-schools.org.uk](http://www.eco-schools.org.uk)

**The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom** – Support and resources for anyone working with children and young people [www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk)

**The Institute for Outdoor Learning** – support for individuals and organisations who use the outdoors [www.outdoor-learning.org.uk](http://www.outdoor-learning.org.uk)

**Love Outdoor Play** – blog on outdoor play around the world [www.loveoutdoorplay.net](http://www.loveoutdoorplay.net)

**UK National Association for Environmental Education** – Support for professional educators in relation to environment and sustainability issues [www.naee.org.uk](http://www.naee.org.uk)

**Sustainability and Environmental Education** – SEEd identifies, promotes, enables and supports environmental education and education for sustainable development in the UK [www.se-ed.co.uk](http://www.se-ed.co.uk)

**Gardening with Children** – Interactive website for pupils and teachers on gardening at school [www.gardeningwithchildren.co.uk](http://www.gardeningwithchildren.co.uk)

**Food for Life** - Food for Life brings schools and nurseries together around the core ethos of healthy, tasty and sustainable food [www.foodforlife.org.uk](http://www.foodforlife.org.uk)

**Farming and Countryside Education** – Education for children and young people about food and farming in a sustainable countryside [www.face-online.org.uk](http://www.face-online.org.uk)

**Children's Scrapstore** – Scrapstore based in Bristol for arts and crafts supplies [www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk](http://www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk)

**Wrap** – Information and research on sustainability issues including a resource library for recycling education [www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk)

**Learning through Landscapes** – Inspiration for outdoor learning and play experiences [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)

**Religions, Environment and Education** – Educational and life-enriching opportunities [www.reepinfo.org.uk](http://www.reepinfo.org.uk)

# Dates for Your Diary 2017

## January

National Bird Day – 5<sup>th</sup> January  
World Religion Day – 25<sup>th</sup> January  
National Story Telling Week – 28<sup>th</sup> January – 4<sup>th</sup> February

## February

World Wetlands Day – 2<sup>nd</sup> February  
Fairtrade Fortnight – 27<sup>th</sup> February – 12<sup>th</sup> March

## March

World Book Day – 2<sup>nd</sup> March  
Waste Week – 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March  
International Day of Forests – 21<sup>st</sup> March  
World Water Day – 22<sup>nd</sup> March  
Earth Hour – 25<sup>th</sup> March  
The Big Pedal – 20<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> March

## April

Earth Day – 22<sup>nd</sup> April

## May

National Walking Month – 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May  
Compost Awareness Week – 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> May  
Vegetarian Week – 15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> May  
Empty Classroom Day – 18<sup>th</sup> May  
International Day for Biological Diversity – 22<sup>nd</sup> May

## June

Volunteers Week – 1<sup>st</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> June  
World Environment Day – 5<sup>th</sup> June

## July

Plastic Free July – 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> July  
National Marine Week 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> July  
Love Parks Week 14<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> July

## August

World Breastfeeding Week – 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> August  
National Honey Bee Day – 19<sup>th</sup> August

## September

Read a Book Day – 6<sup>th</sup> September  
Waste Less, Live More Week - 18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September  
Ozone Day – 16<sup>th</sup> September  
British Food Fortnight – 17<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October

## October

International Walk to School Month – 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October  
World Animal Day – 4<sup>th</sup> October  
Global Handwashing Day – 15<sup>th</sup> October  
World Food Day – 16<sup>th</sup> October

## November

World Toilet Day – 19<sup>th</sup> November  
Universal Children's Day – 20<sup>th</sup> November  
Global Entrepreneurship Week – 13<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> November  
Switch Off Fortnight - 13<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November

## December

International Volunteers Day – 5<sup>th</sup> December  
Human Rights Day – 10<sup>th</sup> December