



Eco-Schools and the Seven Areas of Learning and Development



Environmental work and the Eco-Schools programme can enrich your nursery or school's curriculum by providing contextual learning opportunities. The best schools and nurseries seamlessly use the Eco-Schools programme to enrich their curriculum whilst working towards the Early Learning Goals. With such a broad framework, for early years, it is difficult to list all of the ways the Eco-Schools programme can be incorporated into your curriculum, the aim of this document is simply to demonstrate how, with a little thought, the Eco-Schools Seven Steps and Ten Topics can be used to help children learn and develop.





Seven Areas of Learning and Development and the Eco-Schools Seven Steps





Seven Steps

Communication and Language

Throughout the Seven Step process children are provided with many opportunities to develop their communication and language skills. During Eco-Committee meetings, children learn to give their attention when adults and other, young committee-members speak. They are then allowed to respond appropriately in a more formal situation than usual. Completing the Environmental Review can lead to rich discussion and through working on actions in their Action Plan children will learn to follow and give instruction. The Eco-Schools Informing and Involving step is an ideal circumstance for children to communicate with their peers, parents and other adults using past, present and future tenses.

Physical Development

The projects Eco-Schools work on in their Action Plans can help to achieve the Early Learning Goals for physical development. Early Years settings can do this through explicitly focusing on teaching about good health in our Healthy Living topic or developing control and coordination through a variety of actions in their Action Plan (gardening, litter picking etc.).

Personal, Social and Emotional

Throughout the Eco-Schools journey children will talk about their own and others' behaviour and the consequences of this behaviour on our environment. They will work as part of a group to influence and change their and others' behaviour. Through Eco-Committee meetings they will gain the confidence to speak to a group and share their ideas. Working on their Action Plan will give further opportunities to discuss ideas and subsequently choose the resources needed for activities. When completing their Action Plan they will take into account others' needs and feelings including those in their local and wider community.





Literacy

Linking to the Curriculum is Step 4 of the Eco-Schools programme and this can easily extend to literacy work. There are lots of environmental themed early years books which can be read with children, see some of our favourites in our Early Years Reading List resource. Whilst completing topic actions, children will follow and give simple instructions and some topic actions may require children to create resources such as switch off signs and posters for Energy topic work. Monitoring and Evaluation can provide further literacy opportunities, during a bird watch or bug hunt (Biodiversity topic) as children may be tasked with labelling birds and bugs.

Mathematics

Step 6 Monitoring and Evaluation is particularly useful when using the Eco-Schools programme to develop maths skills. Whether it's measuring the weight of litter collected, timing daily exercise routines, counting the number of mini-beasts or creating simple tally charts for our Transport topic.

Understanding the World

The Eco-Schools programme provides an excellent framework to meet the Early Years, Understanding the World Learning Goals. The ten Eco-Schools topics have been chosen to give children a balanced and broad perspective of living things and their environment, whilst providing children with the opportunity to actively learn how to combat issues such as climate change, single-use plastics and animal extinction.

Expressive Arts and Design

From Step 1 to Step 7 the Eco-Schools programme encourages creativity and expression in young people. Beginning with sharing ideas in





Expressive Arts and Design (continued)

Eco-Committee meetings, moving to thinking of inventive solutions when creating an Action Plan, then using a variety of recycled materials to create art during Step 4 Curriculum Links. The final Eco-Schools step is perhaps the most creative of all, when children create an Eco-Code that can take any form they like: poem, song, dance etc.





Biodiversity

Activity: Make a Bug Hotel



Communication and Language

Lead a discussion with children about the environments insects are usually found in and how they can recreate these 'habitats' within their bug hotel to encourage insect life.

Physical Development

Whilst creating their bug hotel, children will be using simple tools and placing various materials precisely.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children are given the chance to choose appropriate materials for their bug hotel and can take turns in adding materials, working as a group to create a successful hotel.

Literacy

Children follow simple instructions to create their hotel, whilst learning to read and write the names of a variety of insects.

Mathematics

Once the children have completed their bug hotel, they go on regular mini-beast hunts counting and recording the number of insects they find.

Understanding the World

Children are encouraged to make observations about the insects they find and why the environment their bug hotel has created is different from other environments.

Expressive Arts and Design

Creating a bug hotel is a perfect, hands-on and simple design and technology activity.





Energy



Activity: Appoint Energy Monitors

Communication and Language

Appointing energy monitors introduces children to the concept that energy is a resource that can be preserved—this can lead to rich discussions about their energy use and how they can reduce it.

Physical Development

If possible, children should be allowed to explore energy by building and creating simple circuits, increasing their control and dexterity through handling materials such as wire and crocodile clips.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children are taught appropriate reactions to finding unused electrical devices switched on and the correct way to politely remind adults and children that they should be switched off when not in use.

Literacy

Children can design simple signs to display near switches, with messages such as 'Turn Off' reminding adults to reduce their energy use.

Mathematics

Children conduct regular energy audits, they count and record the number of electrical devices they find that are left on when not in use. Then comparing these results to previous audits.

Understanding the World

Children begin to recognise energy as a resource and how to responsibly use it both in class and at home.

Expressive Arts and Design

Building simple electrical circuits is good practice for future design and technology activities.





Global Citizenship

Activity: Raise Money for Charity



Communication and Language

Talk to children about the work of different charities giving them the chance to decide which charity they want to raise funds for. Allow children to discuss why they think their preferred charity should be chosen, whilst giving their attention to classmates choice and reasoning.

Physical Development

Physical activities such as fun runs, or sponsored walks are included in your fundraising activities.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

You discuss with children what charity is and why it is important giving children the incentive to become involved in fundraising activities.

Literacy

Children are involved in advertising fundraising events, they create posters and write simple sentences to share with their wider community.

Mathematics

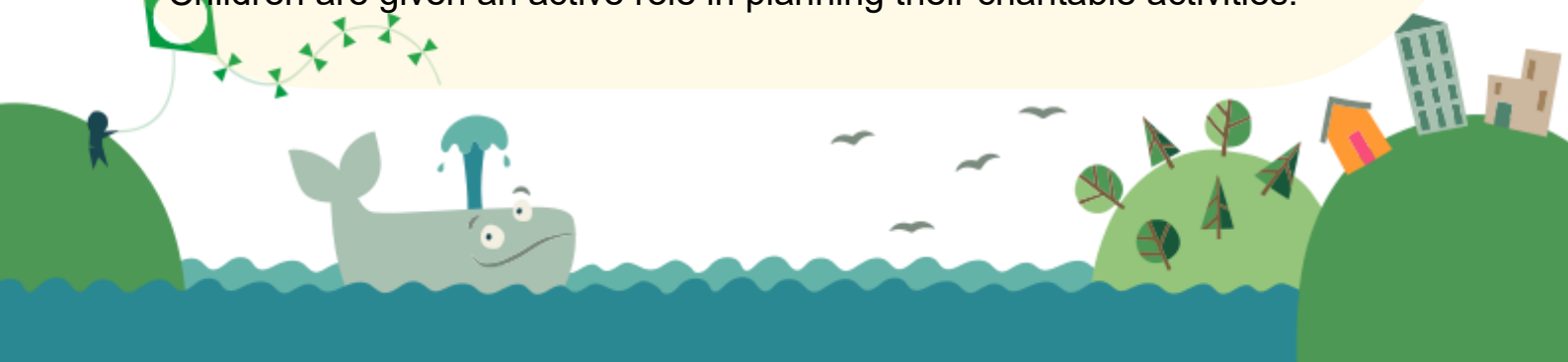
Fundraising goals are shared with children, they are updated each time money is donated or raised and learn the value of money by knowing why you have set your target and, once achieved, how it will help your chosen charity.

Understanding the World

Children begin to understand charity and the different challenges faced in their local and wider community. They begin to learn how they can take an active role in helping.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children are given an active role in planning their charitable activities.





Healthy Living



Activity: Take Part in Daily Exercises

Communication and Language

A variety of exercises are introduced to your daily exercise routine, throughout each children follow instructions and sometimes even give instruction by leading familiar exercises.

Physical Development

Alongside completing daily exercises, children learn about the benefits of exercise on good health.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Through daily exercises children learn to understand and follow rules in order to exercise safely, they gradually grow in confidence and become open to trying new activities. Encourage group actives to help with team work and moral.

Literacy

Literacy work focuses on exercise, children learn to write simple words such as 'run' and 'hop'.

Mathematics

Exercises are timed and/or set to counting e.g. children maintain yoga poses for a thirty second countdown or complete twenty star jumps.

Understanding the World

Children begin to appreciate physical activity and develop an understanding that different children enjoy different exercises.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children are taught that exercise can take place through dance and using song.





Litter



Activity: Litter Pick Your Playground

Communication and Language

During litter picks, children are given different pieces of equipment, one may have a litter picker whilst another has a bin bag. They learn to communicate in order to successfully work as a team.

Physical Development

Control, strength and coordination improve as children use litter pickers to place (small) litter in a bag or bin.

Personal, Social and Emotional

Children discuss why litter is a problem, they begin to understand why littering is unacceptable behaviour and its consequences on wildlife and the environment.

Literacy

Lessons discuss how litter makes them and others (including wildlife) feel. They talk about their ideas and write simple words related to their feelings.

Mathematics

Whilst litter picking, children monitor their progress by counting the pieces of litter they collect and keeping a total.

Understanding the World

Children talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences. They understand why litter is a problem.

Expressive Arts and Design

In class, children have access to a variety of waste materials that can be used for design and technology activities e.g. boxes, yoghurt pots and plastic bottles.





Marine



Activity: Reduce Single-Use Plastics

Communication and Language

Gather a variety of common single-use plastics from home and in school, ask children to carefully study them and describe their common characteristics.

Physical Development

To raise awareness of the effects of single-use plastics on marine environments place clean and safe single-use plastics in your water tray and encourage children to fish them out with small nets and by hand.

Personal, Social and Emotional

When completing the activity mentioned above, open a discussion with children about how marine life would feel being surrounded by our litter and waste plastic

Literacy

This activity can lead to children writing words or simple sentences relating to how marine life feels.

Mathematics

Once you have identified the common characteristics of plastic with children, search for plastics in your classroom counting the number of single-use plastics you can find.

Understanding the World

This topic should help children to understand that our choices and actions can have unexpected and negative consequences.

Expressive Arts and Design

Use clean single-use plastic such as bottles to create fish or marine-life sculptures.





School Grounds



Activity: Get Children Gardening

Communication and Language

Talk to children about where they would like to learn and play, move on to the colours and smells they would like to see everyday and agree on the flowers and plants you will grow.

Physical Development

Allow children to get hands on, using tools to sow seeds and nurture plants.

Personal, Social and Emotional

Children are given collective responsibility for looking after their plants, only through teamwork and cooperation will their plants survive.

Literacy

Literacy lessons discuss plants focusing on the five senses, children write simple words and sentences describing the colour, look and smell of plants in your school grounds.

Mathematics

Children are responsible for monitoring their plants. They record how many plants are growing and measure their height.

Understanding the World

Gardening can help children understand why it is important to care for living things and give them an insight into where their food comes from.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children create pots out of recycled materials (milk cartons, yoghurt pots etc.) they decorate these pots and use them to grow their seeds prior to planting them outside.





Transport



Activity: Host a Walk to School Day

Communication and Language

Discuss the various ways children travel to school or nursery. Ask them what they like about their journey and what they do not like. Ask them how they would choose to travel if it was their choice.

Physical Development

On your walk to school day, talk to children about the health benefits of walking to school and how it is an easy way to incorporate physical exercise into their daily routine.

Personal, Social and Emotional

Study the different ways children travel to school or nursery and the consequences, both positive and negative, of each method of transport on their local community, the environment and their bodies.

Literacy

On the day, children are given access to books with a transport theme.

Mathematics

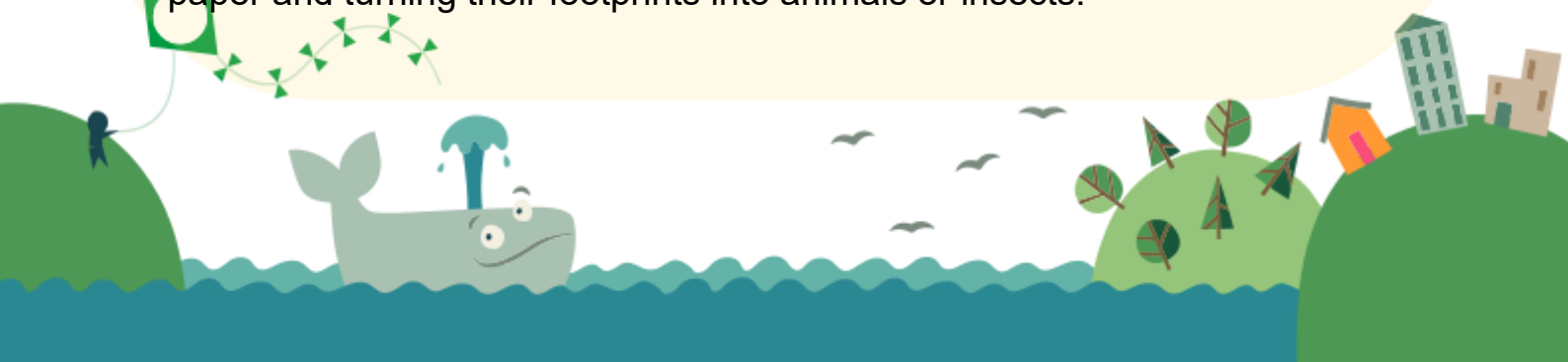
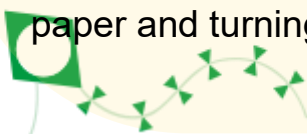
A hands up survey is conducted, to see how children have walked to school before your walk to school day and on your walk to school day. Children are responsible for counting the hands up or completing a tally.

Understanding the World

Ask children about their journey to school, what did they see, hear or smell. If they usually travel by car, but walked today did they notice anything they have never seen before when travelling by car.

Expressive Arts and Design

Throughout the day, children make 'foot' artwork by printing a footprint on paper and turning their footprints into animals or insects.





Waste



Activity: (Re)Love Your Stuff (Second-Hand pop-up shop)

Communication and Language

Discuss sharing with children, ask them what items they share and who they share them with. Do they think it is important to share with others?

Physical Development

Talk to children about why it is important to wash clothes regularly, including the clothes that they are donating to your sale. Use this discussion as a stimulus to a wider conversation on basic hygiene.

Personal, Social and Emotional

Ask children what usually happens with their old clothes, do they think it's a good idea to give unwanted clothing to other people? Discussion should focus on both ethical and sustainable issues surrounding second-hand clothing.

Literacy

Signs are created by children (with adult support) featuring simple, clothes-related words.

Mathematics

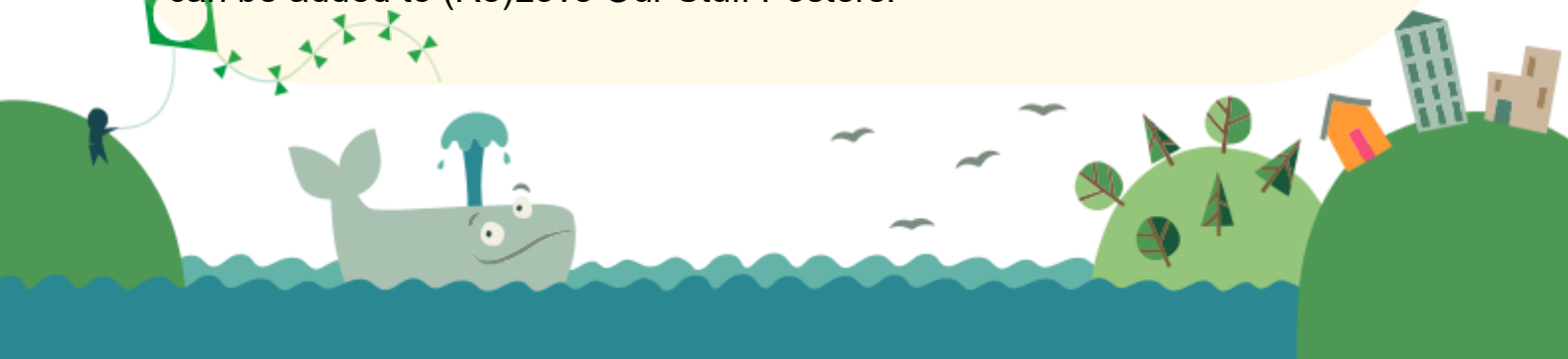
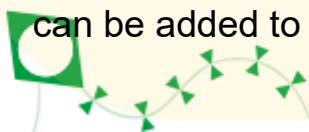
Children can practice their number writing skills writing price tags for the clothing.

Understanding the World

Throughout the project, children begin to understand that new clothing uses Earth's natural resources.

Expressive Arts and Design

Advertising is left to children, who are in charge of drawing pictures that can be added to (Re)Love Our Stuff Posters.





Water



Activity: Focus on Flushing the 3Ps: Pee, Poo, Paper

Communication and Language

Use this project to tackle a taboo and promote mature discussion in your children.

Physical Development

Basic hygiene, such as washing hands after visiting the toilet, is taught throughout the duration of this awareness action.

Personal, Social and Emotional

This action highlights that simple behaviour choices can have unforeseen consequences.

Literacy

Focus on the 'p' sound in phonics, can children think of any other words that begin with 'p'?

Mathematics

Focus on the number 3 writing it and representing it in as many different ways as possible.

Understanding the World

Children learn the similarities, differences, positives and negatives about a variety of materials, some of which may look and feel similar.

Expressive Arts and Design

Role play sessions are arranged allowing children to act out the positive behavioural changes you are promoting through your action.

