Hambledon Nursery is Sensationally Sustainable!

One of the focus areas within our bespoke curriculum at Hambledon Nursery is to teach the children about the importance of looking after planet earth and the natural world in a wider context. This area of learning falls under the Early Years Statutory Framework under ‘Understanding the World’. In this area of development, we encourage the children to use all their senses in hands on exploration of natural materials. We teach the children to begin to understand the need to respect and care for the natural environment and all living things. The children will begin to understand key features of the life cycle of a plant and an animal. They will explore collections of natural materials with similar and/or different properties and be encouraged to talk about what they see, using a wide vocabulary. They will engage in activities including planting seeds and caring for growing plants.

ECO-SCHOOLS PROJECT AND AWARD

Earlier this academic year Hambledon Nursery enrolled in the Early Years Eco-Schools programme. This is a seven-step programme culminating in the Green Flag Status which we are on track to be awarded in the summer term 2026. We have been working on how we can make the nursery more sustainable, and how we can teach our children about sustainability and what this means.

This is being achieved through involving the children in many different activities and teaching them about the reasons behind doing them. Activities including going on rubbish collection adventures, dashing about with litter pickers and bags and returning to the nursery to sort out any rubbish that we may find and learning about different types of materials whist doing so.

We have explored recycling by keeping unwanted cardboard boxes and packaging for use in junk modelling and various craft projects, or to repurpose to use in imaginary role play.

We have considered how to reduce waste, by using the back of a marked piece of paper to reuse for painting instead of throwing it away. Learning about turning off the

taps after the children have washed their hands and trying to take only one paper towel to dry their hands on afterwards. Saving energy by turning off the lights on bright sunny days when the natural sunlight lights up the rooms inside the nursery and the overhead lights are not needed! These are just some examples of the simple acts which the children can be part of and help foster an understanding of the concept of being more sustainable in our daily actions and activities at the nursery.

We are taking our first steps on this exciting journey, working together in our nursery community to effect small changes which, when added to a whole, do make a difference. Most importantly, the activities are fun and engaging and encourage our cohort of children to think more deeply about what they can do to help care for our planet.

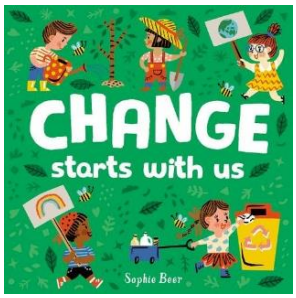
We have also been supporting the wildlife in our garden. We made bug hotels using recycled and natural materials and the children positioned them in our garden. The children were excited to make natural bird feeders too from rolling pinecones in lard and birdseed and stringing them up in the nursery garden.

We also washed out and reused old plastic containers to fill with bird seed to make alternative make bird feeders to add to the collection in the garden and support birds through the colder winter months.

We loved taking part in the RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch, surveying the area from our tree house using our new binoculars and ticking off sightings on our clipboards. We have loved sharing stories about nature and how we can all do little things to help our planet.

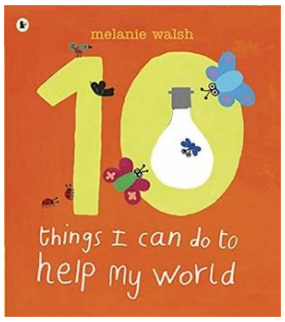
We have shared various children's books aimed at inspiring planet-friendly habits. These books have been left in the newly created display area of the classroom where we are making a scrapbook to record of all the many ways we are learning about caring for our environment and being more sustainable in our choices.

Books often spark wonderful child-led discussion and learning, and we often use books as an initial opener to introduce new ideas and as a way of exploring new concepts, alongside real and meaningful first-hand experiences. Sustainability is a huge concept for a small child to understand, but by talking about it one theme at a time. Take recycling and how we can reduce waste and help wildlife is a way to start the initial process, which is positive, and we are passionate about embedding these concepts within our curriculum.



We used the book 'Recycling' by Jess Stockholm which is part of the 'Helping Hands' series to introduce the children to ideas around what can we recycle? who can sort the waste? what can we re-use?

The book 'Change Starts with Us' by Sophie Beer is a simple board book, which clearly illustrates how we can make changes. Like planting trees, which we did with the children, using a pack of hedgerow saplings that were donated by the Woodland Trust, which we planted along the fence line of the nursery car park.



'Ten Things I Can do to Help My World' by Malanie Walsh is another text we
have shared with the children. This inspired our drive to turn off lights when we leave the room. Now every afternoon, when the 3–4-year-old children go outside for playtime, they check that the lights have been switched off including next door in the 2–3-year-olds room because they have gone home by that stage.

We have carried out sustainability reviews together, including the children in this process. It was lovely to recognise all that we are already achieving. We are lucky that our nursery is in the countryside, and so, as we and the children are all nature lovers, we scored very well on biodiversity. It was interesting to highlight those small changes we can make that bring a large impact on our use of resources. We have

recently adopted an ‘Environmental Sustainability Policy’ and will looking at embracing more opportunities for improvement as staff come together to work on our vision for a climate action plan at the nursery. This links with the Department for Education’s school and nursery initiative to improve sustainability within education.

Finally, we are collecting for our local ‘Hydestile Resident Animals’ hospital, and we would love to help them with any of the following which can be dropped off at the nursery:

- Clean blankets *(not knitted as the animals get their claws stuck)*
- Textiles: *towels, sheets, duvet covers, pillowcases*
- Rabbit food: *rabbit mix, peanuts, rich tea biscuits, Weetabix*
- Cat litter
- Hedgehog food: *loaf, super meat cat or dog food. (Lily's kitchen is a favourite, but anything: dry cat or dog food)*
- Black bin liners *(and wheelie bin liners)*
- Tissues and kitchen rolls
- Cleaning items: *disinfectant, bleach, washing up liquid, hand wash, washing powder, fabric softener, hand sanitiser*
- PPE: *face masks, rubber gloves.*

Thank you for helping with any of the above. We have a lovely, collection box which the children helped to decorate ready for any kind donations.