11. Environmental Sustainability Policy

Introduction

At St Mary's Nursery, we are committed to promoting environmental sustainability and fostering in children a deep respect and care for living and non-living environments. We recognise our responsibility to future generations and aim to minimise our environmental impact while educating children about sustainable practices.

This policy outlines our approach to environmental sustainability, both in our educational program and our operational practices, It supports our responsibilities under the current Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework effective from 1 September 2026, including providing children with opportunities to understand the world and the natural environment, while supporting their health, safety and wellbeing.

The EYFS framework does not prescribe a separate environmental sustainability curriculum. St Mary's Nursery therefore incorporates sustainability through its broad curriculum, everyday routines, outdoor learning, Understanding the World, and the nursery's operational practices.

The policy also reflects current environmental and waste-management requirements applicable to the nursery in England and relevant Department for Education and Ofsted guidance.

Legal Framework and Guidance

This policy has been developed with consideration of:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, effective from 1 September 2026
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Climate Change Act 2008
- The Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2025 and associated Simpler Recycling requirements
- Government guidance on Simpler Recycling: workplace recycling in England

- Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for the education and children's services systems
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- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Ofsted's current Early Years Inspection Toolkit and inspection arrangements applicable from 1 September 2026
- Current EYFS nutrition guidance, where food and drink are provided to children
- Any relevant local authority waste, recycling and environmental requirements
- The nursery will keep this policy under review and will update it where legislation, statutory guidance or relevant government guidance changes.

Aims and Objectives

Through this policy, we aim to:

- Provide children with opportunities to learn about and connect with the natural world
- Develop children's understanding of environmental issues and sustainable practices in an age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate way
- Reduce our nursery's environmental footprint
- Role model sustainable behaviours and attitudes
- Create an environmentally conscious culture among children, staff, and families
- Support children's understanding of the interdependence between people and the environment
- Support the EYFS educational programme for Understanding the World by giving children meaningful experiences of the natural environment, living things, places and communities
- Ensure that sustainability activities remain play-based, practical, inclusive and appropriate to children's individual needs and stages of development
- Promote children's health and wellbeing through safe access to outdoor learning and the natural environment

Educational Approach

We promote a holistic, open-ended curriculum which explores ideas and practices for environmental sustainability by:

Connecting with Nature

- Helping children to explore nature through art, play, and sensory experiences
- Going on regular nature walks and learning about plants and wildlife in the local area
- Creating opportunities for outdoor learning in all weather conditions with appropriate clothing
- Supporting children to experience the natural environment through natural materials like wood, stone, sand, and recycled materials
- Encouraging respect for living things and habitats
- Providing regular opportunities for children to observe seasonal changes, weather, plants, insects, birds and other wildlife
- Ensuring outdoor learning and exploration are appropriately risk assessed and that children are supervised in accordance with the nursery's health and safety procedures
- Encouraging children to develop curiosity, care and respect for their immediate environment rather than presenting environmental issues in a way that causes unnecessary anxiety or distress

Understanding Natural Systems

- Supporting the environment by learning how to grow and nurture plants in the nursery garden
- Discovering the food cycle by growing, harvesting, and cooking food
- Learning about seasonal changes and weather patterns
- Exploring lifecycles of plants and animals
- Investigating local ecosystems and biodiversity
- Helping children to understand simple relationships between people, animals, plants, food, water and the places in which they live
- Using everyday experiences to develop children's vocabulary and understanding of the natural world

Sustainable Practices

- Helping children to learn about water conservation, energy efficiency, and waste reduction through play-based activities and adult interactions
- Developing a recycling area and encouraging children to share a recycling ethos in the home environment
- Teaching children about the concepts of reducing, reusing, and recycling through practical activities
- Encouraging parents and children to regularly walk to nursery to raise awareness of transportation impacts
- Discussing environmental issues at an age-appropriate level
- Avoiding presenting walking, cycling or other sustainable travel as an expectation for families where this is impractical or inappropriate
- Using everyday routines such as turning off taps, switching off lights and sorting waste as opportunities for children to learn through observation and participation
- Supporting children to understand that small, everyday actions can help to care for their environment

Operational Sustainability Practices

As a nursery, we will embed sustainability into all aspects of our operations including:

Resource Use and Waste Management

- Implementing a comprehensive recycling system with clearly labelled bins
- Recycling materials for art and creative activities and encouraging parents to bring in their recycling materials for the same use
- Ensuring parents recycle children's take-home recycled material models if they do not keep them
- Composting food waste where this can be undertaken safely and appropriately
- Reducing single-use plastics throughout the nursery
- Carefully monitoring our waste output and setting reduction targets
- Taking particular care with food waste to maintain appropriate hygiene, food-safety and pest-control arrangements

Energy Conservation

- Turning off equipment and lights when not in use
- Using energy-saving light bulbs and LED lighting where possible
- Not leaving any equipment on standby
- Conducting regular energy audits and addressing inefficiencies
- Considering renewable energy options where feasible

Water Conservation

- Incorporating water-wise strategies such as ensuring taps are turned off and leaks fixed promptly
- Using water butts for outdoor water play and garden watering
- Recycling water from indoor water play to water plants outside
- Installing water-saving devices where appropriate
- Teaching children about the importance of water conservation

Sustainable Procurement

- Considering our carbon footprint when purchasing materials
- Shopping local where possible to reduce transportation emissions
- Choosing eco-friendly cleaning and art supplies when available
- Using suppliers with strong environmental credentials
- Purchasing products with minimal packaging

Food Sustainability

- In order to encourage children not to waste food at mealtimes, we discourage the use of food as a play material; instead, we encourage activities which involve preparing and tasting different types of food
- Learning about food origins and sustainable food production
- Supporting children to develop positive relationships with food and to understand where food comes from through age-appropriate gardening, food preparation and tasting experiences
- Managing food waste responsibly and safely
- Ensuring that food provided by the nursery remains healthy, balanced and nutritious and is managed in accordance with current EYFS nutrition guidance and the nursery's Food and Nutrition Policy

- Ensuring that sustainability activities involving food take account of allergies, dietary requirements, cultural requirements and individual children's needs
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Climate Change and Global Impact

We recognise that our activities contribute to broader environmental challenges, including:

- Global warming and climate change through greenhouse gases emitted by burning fossil fuels
- Pollution of air, land, and water
- Loss of forests, soils, fish stocks, and other resources through unsustainable harvesting

We commit to continually improving our practices to address these challenges by:

- Assessing our nursery's environmental impact on a regular basis
- Implementing procedures to counteract identified impacts
- Setting annual environmental targets and monitoring progress
- Staying informed about environmental best practices in early years settings

Roles and Responsibilities

Management Team

- Develop and review the Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Set environmental targets and monitor progress
- Ensure adequate resources for environmental initiatives
- Lead by example in sustainable practices
- Communicate environmental commitments to Trustees
- Ensure that the policy remains consistent with the current EYFS statutory framework, relevant environmental legislation and applicable Ofsted requirements
- Ensure that environmental activities are appropriately risk assessed and do not compromise children's safeguarding, health, safety or welfare
- Ensure staff understand any changes to environmental legislation or relevant guidance affecting the nursery

Staff

- Implement sustainable practices in daily operations
- Incorporate environmental education into activities
- Role model sustainable behaviours for children
- Suggest improvements to environmental practices
- Provide age-appropriate opportunities for children to explore and care for their environment
- Supervise children appropriately during outdoor, gardening, water, recycling and food-related activities
- Follow the nursery's waste-management, health and safety, food hygiene and safeguarding procedures
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Children

- Participate in sustainable activities and practices
- Learn about their impact on the environment
- Develop care and respect for the natural world
- Share environmental learning with families

Parents/Carers

- Support the nursery's environmental initiatives
- Reinforce sustainable practices at home
- Participate in environmental projects and events
- Share ideas for improving sustainability

Monitoring and Review

We will:

- Assess our nursery's environmental impact annually
- Review this policy annually to ensure it reflects current best practices
- Monitor our progress against environmental targets
- Gather feedback from staff, children, and parents on environmental initiatives
- Update our practices based on new environmental research and guidance

Partnership Working

Working together with all our parents and partners will help our environment to be more

sustainable and make it a better place for our future generations to grow up in.

We will:

- Engage with local environmental organisations and initiatives
- Share our environmental learning with other early years settings
- Participate in community environmental projects
- Invite environmental experts to visit the nursery
- Collaborate with parents on sustainability initiatives

Conclusion

St Mary's Nursery is committed to improving the quality of life of both the local and wider community now and in the future. Our policy recognises that quality of life in the longer term is dependent on the health and quality of the local and global environment. Through our educational approach and operational practices, we aim to contribute to a more sustainable future for all.

Our approach will remain proportionate to the needs and developmental stages of the children in our care. Sustainability will be embedded through meaningful experiences, everyday routines and positive adult role modelling rather than through a formal environmental curriculum.

This Policy was adopted by	St Mary's Nursery, Camberley,	*(name of provider)*
Last reviewed On	1st September 2026	*(date)*
Date to be reviewed	1st September 2027	*(date)*
Signed on behalf of the provider		
Name of signatory	Sue Dunn	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Acting Chairperson	