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Climate Action Plan

Sustainability Lead: Mel Armstrong

**1. Introduction**

At Little Acorns we recognise the importance of instilling environmental responsibility in young children while taking actionable steps to reduce our ecological footprint. This plan outlines our commitment to sustainability through learning, engagement, and operational improvements.

**2. Key Areas of Focus**

**A. Sustainable Practice in Daily Operations**

* **Reduce Waste:** Implement a robust recycling system and minimize single-use plastics. Use reusable containers for snacks and meals.
* **Energy Conservation:** Switch to energy-efficient lighting and encourage staff to turn off electronics when not in use.
* **Water Conservation:** Educate children on responsible water usage.
* **Eco-Friendly Supplies:** Prioritise sustainable materials for crafts, toys, and educational resources.

**B. Nature-Based Learning and Play**

* **Outdoor Education:** Incorporate activities like gardening, nature walks, and wildlife observation to foster a connection with the environment.
* **Composting & Growing Food:** Teach children about composting and plant small gardens to grow vegetables, reinforcing sustainability concepts.
* **Sensory Exploration:** Use natural materials in learning spaces to promote environmental awareness through hands-on experiences.

**C. Community Engagement & Partnerships**

* **Parent Involvement:** Educate families on sustainable practices they can implement at home.
* **Local Collaboration:** Partner with environmental organisations to organise visits, workshops, or tree-planting activities.
* **Fundraising for Green Initiatives:** Organise eco-friendly events to raise funds for sustainability projects.

**D. Carbon Footprint Reduction**

* **Eco-Friendly Transport:** Encourage walking, cycling, or carpooling among families and staff to reduce emissions.
* **Energy Use Monitoring:** Set goals for reducing energy consumption and track progress.
* **Sustainable Procurement:** Choose local, ethical suppliers for food, stationery, and cleaning products where financially possible.

**3. Goals & Timeline**

| **Goal** | **Action Steps** | **Timeline** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reduce Waste | Introduce recycling bins & limit single-use items | Ongoing |
| Encourage Outdoor Learning | Develop garden spaces & incorporate nature-based play | Ongoing |
| Educate on Sustainability | Introduce eco-conscious activities & lessons | Immediate & ongoing |
| Reduce Carbon Footprint | Encourage sustainable transport & monitor energy use | Ongoing |

**4. Monitoring & Evaluation**

To ensure the success of our Climate Action Plan, we will:

* Conduct regular audits of waste reduction, energy use, and sustainable practices.
* Gather feedback from staff, children, and parents on eco-friendly initiatives.
* Adjust and expand initiatives based on effectiveness and engagement levels.

**5. Conclusion**

By integrating sustainability into our early years setting, we empower children with an understanding of environmental stewardship while making real-world impact. Together, we can create a greener future for generations to come.

**Activities to support our plan:**

**1. Nature Exploration & Gardening**

🌱 **Mini Garden Project:** Let children plant easy-to-grow vegetables, herbs, or flowers and care for them over time.

🐛 **Bug Hunts:** Encourage outdoor play by searching for insects, learning about their role in the environment.

🍂 **Nature Collages:** Gather leaves, twigs, and flowers to create beautiful, eco-friendly artwork.

**2. Waste Reduction & Recycling**

♻️ **Sorting Game:** Teach recycling by sorting materials into labeled bins—plastic, paper, and compostables.

🎨 **Upcycled Crafting:** Use old magazines, cardboard, or fabric scraps for creative projects.

🛍️ **Reusable Bag Decoration:** Provide plain fabric bags for children to decorate and use instead of plastic.

**3. Energy & Water Conservation**

💡 **Light Patrol:** Encourage children to be "energy detectives," switching off lights when not in use.

🚰 **Water-Saving Challenge:** Teach responsible hand-washing by timing how long taps stay on.

⚡ **Solar-Powered Fun:** Introduce simple solar-powered toys to showcase renewable energy.

**4. Storytime & Eco-Learning**

📖 **Books on Nature & Sustainability:** Read engaging stories about protecting the planet, like “The Lorax” or “Charlie and Lola: Look After Your Planet.”

🎭 **Green Role Play:** Set up pretend recycling stations or “farmers’ markets” for imaginative play.

🎶 **Eco Songs & Rhymes:** Sing songs about trees, recycling, or the importance of caring for animals.

**5. Community & Engagement**

🌎 **Adopt a Local Green Space:** Visit the school campus, pick up litter, and learn about local plants and wildlife.

💌 **Letters to Nature:** Have children write or draw “thank you” notes to the earth, trees, or animals

Assessing the children's understanding of sustainability:

**1. Observation & Engagement Levels**

* Monitor how children interact with the activities—are they excited, asking questions, or applying what they've learned elsewhere?
* Track participation rates to see which activities are the most engaging.

**2. Child-Led Demonstration & Reflection**

* Encourage children to share what they've learned—through drawings, storytelling, or role play.
* Ask them simple questions like:
  + *Why is recycling important?*
  + *What can we do to help the planet?*
* If they are able to articulate these ideas, the activities are resonating!

**3. Parental Feedback & Home Engagement**

* Send a short survey or casually ask parents if their child is mentioning sustainability at home.
* Look for signs of eco-friendly behaviours extending beyond the classroom, such as children reminding their families to turn off lights or recycle.

**4. Visual Tracking & Progress Charts**

* Create simple charts to track measurable outcomes, such as:
  + Amount of waste reduced (e.g., fewer disposable items in snack time).
  + Growth of plants in the garden (comparing before/after photos).
  + Number of children actively participating in eco-friendly activities.

**5. Long-Term Behavioural Shifts**

* Do children demonstrate greater environmental awareness—such as automatically placing waste in the correct bin or showing excitement for nature-based learning.
* Keep a journal of key milestones, noticing how their attitudes evolve.

**Climate Action Plan Assessment**

**1. Observation-Based Assessment**

* **What to Track:**
  + Children’s enthusiasm and participation in sustainability activities.
  + How often children naturally engage in eco-friendly behaviours (e.g., turning off lights, recycling).
* **Method:**
  + Staff observations recorded through short daily notes or checklists.
  + Monthly reflections on patterns in engagement and behaviours.

**2. Child Engagement & Understanding**

* **What to Track:**
  + Children’s ability to articulate eco-friendly concepts (e.g., why we recycle).
  + Their engagement in discussions, role play, or storytelling related to sustainability.
* **Method:**
  + Staff-led reflection sessions where children discuss what they’ve learned.
  + Simple Q&A interactions:
    - *What happens when we plant a seed?*
    - *How can we take care of nature?*
  + Collect children’s drawings or storytelling responses and analyse recurring themes.

**3. Parental Feedback & Home Engagement**

* **What to Track:**
  + Whether children talk about sustainability at home.
  + Whether families adopt eco-friendly behaviors inspired by the setting.
* **Method:**
  + Informal conversations with parents about any changes they’ve noticed.
  + A short quarterly feedback form asking:
    - *Has your child discussed recycling, nature, or sustainability at home?*
    - *Has your family made any new eco-conscious choices based on what your child has learned?*

**4. Visual Tracking & Documentation**

* **What to Track:**
  + Growth in gardening projects (before/after pictures).
  + Reduction of waste or single-use plastics.
  + Changes in classroom or setting energy use.
* **Method:**
  + Display visual progress boards showing recycling success or plant growth.
  + Track any reductions in waste disposal and compare monthly reports.

**5. Long-Term Behavioural Shifts**

* **What to Track:**
  + Do children initiate eco-friendly behaviours on their own?
  + Are they naturally mindful about energy use, waste, and nature?
* **Method:**
  + Track changes in routine behaviours over six months.
  + Hold an annual staff discussion to reflect on the overall impact of sustainability education.

**6. Overall Evaluation & Adjustments**

* **Regular Review Cycle:**
  + Conduct assessments every **3 to 6 months** to review progress.
  + Identify activities that are working well and those needing adjustments.
  + Adapt activities based on engagement levels and effectiveness.