



## **Sustainability Policy**

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### **Our Values at Young Friends Kindergarten**

At Young Friends, sustainability is not a marketing theme, enhancement or occasional project — it is the foundation of who we are. It shapes our curriculum, our environment, our relationships, our leadership and our daily routines.

We believe children deserve a childhood rooted in nature, authenticity, connection and care for the world around them. Every decision we make considers the wellbeing of children, animals, community and planet. Our values underpin every aspect of our provision:

- Sustainability in every part of our provision
- Respect for children, families, colleagues, animals and the natural world
- Child-led learning through meaningful, real-life experiences
- Authenticity in relationships, communication and resources
- Compassion for people, animals and the environment
- Community that nurtures wellbeing, belonging and connection
- Responsibility shared by every member of our team

These values are lived daily through our curriculum, routines, conversations, environment and culture.

### **Our Sustainability Ethos**

At Young Friends Kindergarten, sustainability is embedded into how we live, learn and care for one another every single day. It is not an “eco corner,” themed week or display board. It is a way of life.

From the food we cook and grow, to the materials we choose, the way we care for animals, and the language we use with children, sustainability underpins every decision we make.

We believe children develop a genuine respect for the environment when they experience sustainable living first-hand in meaningful, joyful and authentic ways. Children are therefore actively involved in gardening, composting, repairing, cooking, recycling, caring for animals, conserving resources and participating in the everyday running of the setting.

We are proud to be a genuinely sustainability-led early years setting, where environmental responsibility, emotional wellbeing and social responsibility are deeply connected.

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Unlike many settings where sustainability exists only in displays or occasional activities, our entire provision is designed around sustainable principles. This includes our curriculum, purchasing choices, food systems, waste reduction, care practices, staff culture, resources and long-term vision for children and the planet.

### **Our Vision for Children**

We want children to grow up:

- Feeling deeply connected to nature and their local environment
- Understanding where food comes from and how to care for living things
- Valuing repair, reuse and creativity over waste and consumerism
- Seeing sustainability as a normal part of everyday life
- Developing empathy, responsibility and respect for people, animals and planet
- Learning through meaningful real-life experiences rather than artificial activities
- Becoming thoughtful, curious and environmentally responsible citizens

We believe children learn best through participation in real life. Therefore, sustainable practices are woven naturally into daily routines rather than taught through isolated lessons.

### **The Three Pillars of Sustainability**

Everything we do is grounded in three interconnected areas of sustainability:

#### **Environmental Sustainability**

- Caring for the planet through conscious daily action
- Making thoughtful choices about food, materials, energy and waste
- Reducing unnecessary consumption and single-use products
- Helping children develop a relationship with the natural world
- Protecting biodiversity and encouraging care for ecosystems
- Prioritising natural, open-ended and reusable resources

#### **Social Sustainability**

- Building a culture rooted in fairness, respect and belonging
- Modelling kindness, collaboration and empathy
- Rejecting tokenism in favour of genuine inclusion
- Supporting staff wellbeing, reflective practice and teamwork
- Creating a calm, emotionally safe environment for all children

#### **Economic Sustainability**

- Teaching children to value and care for what they have
- Repairing, repurposing and reusing before replacing
- Reducing unnecessary spending and consumer culture
- Investing in durable, meaningful and environmentally responsible resources
- Demonstrating that sustainability and quality go hand in hand

### **The 7 R's of Sustainability**

Our daily decision-making is guided by the 7 R's:

1. Rethink – Do we really need this?

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2. Refuse – Say no to unnecessary waste or harmful products
3. Reduce – Use less and use carefully
4. Reuse – Find new purposes for existing items
5. Repair – Fix before replacing
6. Recycle – Sort and recycle responsibly
7. Rot – Compost and return nutrients to the earth

These principles are visible throughout the nursery and embedded into everyday conversations with children.

### **Our Sustainable Curriculum**

Our curriculum is shaped entirely through our sustainability ethos. Sustainability is not an “add on” — it is the lens through which we plan, teach and respond to children’s learning.

Children experience sustainability through meaningful hands-on experiences including:

- Growing food
- Cooking meals from scratch
- Making oat milk
- Composting food waste
- Repairing broken items
- Caring for animals
- Gardening and planting
- Upcycling materials
- Using real tools
- Learning about weather, tides, seasons and biodiversity
- Visiting local green spaces and charity shops
- Creating natural gifts and resources

Daily routines, provocations and projects are designed to keep children “in flow” — deeply engaged in meaningful learning connected to real life.

Children are encouraged to participate actively in the care of their environment and community rather than being passive recipients of learning.

We intentionally avoid over-commercialised, plastic-heavy or worksheet-based approaches to education. Instead, we prioritise authentic experiences, creativity, sustained shared thinking and practical life skills.

### **How We Support Our Team to Deliver Sustainable, Child-Led Education**

Our staff are facilitators of thoughtful, responsible and meaningful learning. Sustainability is modelled not only through what staff do, but through how they think, speak and interact.

- Staff always have sustainable, child-led experiences available when children are not in flow
- Staff understand and actively implement our sustainable curriculum
- Staff use the Eco Warriors Board and team collaboration to generate ideas and projects
- Staff are expected to contribute to all areas of provision rather than remaining in one role or space

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- Staff participate in gardening, cooking, animal care, repair work, workshop activities and environmental projects
- Staff support children to care for resources and understand the impact of waste
- Staff are encouraged to reflect, ask questions and continuously develop their sustainable practice
- Supervision and appraisal include reflective discussions about sustainability and environmental responsibility

“Flow” refers to children being emotionally settled, deeply engaged and meaningfully involved in learning experiences with or without adult input.

### **Social Sustainability and Role Modelling**

Children learn how to treat people, animals and the environment by observing the adults around them.

At Young Friends, staff are expected to model:

- Warmth and kindness
- Respectful communication
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Care for resources and shared spaces
- Calm, thoughtful problem-solving
- Genuine curiosity and empathy
- Appreciation for nature and living things

Staff greet one another warmly, introduce team members respectfully and create a culture where children see adults caring for each other and their environment.

These behaviours are part of every role profile and are reflected upon regularly during supervision and training.

### **Food, Nutrition and Sustainable Eating**

Food at Young Friends is central to our sustainability ethos.

- All meals are 100% plant-based and cooked fresh from scratch on-site daily
- Food is prepared using whole, fresh ingredients wherever possible
- Produce grown by the children is used in meals and snacks
- Children help prepare snacks, meals, puddings and oat milk
- We use a Thermomix to support efficient low-waste food preparation
- Homemade oat milk is fortified with vitamins and prepared in-house
- Children learn about nutrition, food origins, seasonality and food waste through real experiences
- Leftover food is reused sustainably where safe and appropriate
- Composting systems are used for unavoidable food waste
- Staff model calm, respectful mealtime behaviour and gratitude for food

Our approach encourages children to understand that food is valuable, nourishing and deeply connected to environmental wellbeing.

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### **Kitchen Garden**

Our kitchen garden is an essential part of our curriculum and daily life. It is not decorative — it is functional, educational and deeply valued.

Children regularly:

- Plant seeds and seedlings
- Label and care for plants
- Harvest produce
- Wash and prepare food they have grown
- Learn about pollinators, soil health and ecosystems
- Observe weather patterns and seasonal changes
- Learn about composting and the food cycle
- Explore moon gardening and tide tracking

The kitchen garden supports physical development, emotional wellbeing, patience, collaboration, responsibility and environmental awareness.

Children experience the full cycle from seed to table and begin to understand their relationship with the natural world.

### **Woodland Workshop and Repair Culture**

Our Woodland Workshop and repair areas are central to our sustainability model and philosophy. These spaces teach children that objects have value and can be repaired, repurposed and cared for rather than discarded.

Children use real tools with close supervision to:

- Sand and repair furniture
- Build structures and resources
- Create signs and birdhouses
- Repair books and toys
- Upcycle materials into new creations
- Learn practical problem-solving and persistence
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Projects may continue over days or weeks, helping children understand patience, responsibility and pride in meaningful work.

This approach directly challenges disposable consumer culture and supports long-term sustainable thinking.

### **Caring for Animals**

Animals are respected members of our community rather than entertainment or display items. Our giant rabbits and labradors are integrated naturally into nursery life. Children learn to care for animals through calm, respectful relationships.

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Children participate in:

- Feeding and brushing animals
- Cleaning habitats respectfully
- Making toys and enrichment items
- Learning to observe animal body language
- Sitting quietly and calmly with animals

We teach children that animals deserve kindness, autonomy and gentle treatment. We do not use animals for performances, parties or superficial “show and tell” experiences.

### **Waste Reduction and Resource Use**

We actively work to reduce waste and unnecessary consumption across the setting.

At Young Friends:

- No glitter, balloons, cling film or unnecessary disposable decorations are used
- We avoid plastic-heavy resources wherever possible
- Open-ended, natural and reusable materials are prioritised
- Worksheets and heavily structured small world toys are avoided
- Natural resources are gathered responsibly without damaging habitats
- Recycling systems are available throughout the nursery
- Children are taught to repair before replacing
- Food waste is composted
- Clothing and item donations are supported
- We continue developing our family Swap Shop initiative

We encourage children to think critically about waste, consumption and environmental responsibility through meaningful everyday experiences.

### **Toileting and Cloth Nappies**

Our sustainability commitment extends into all care routines, including toileting and nappy changing.

- We use washable cloth nappies laundered in-house
- Families do not provide disposable nappies except in exceptional circumstances agreed with management
- We do not use offensive waste bins for disposable nappy waste
- Families are informed of this approach during admissions
- Children are supported respectfully and hygienically throughout intimate care routines

This significantly reduces environmental waste while supporting our wider sustainability ethos.

### **Everyday Sustainable Practices**

Children and staff participate in sustainable daily living as a normal part of nursery life.

These experiences include:

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- Saving water and energy
- Gardening and de-weeding
- Filling bird feeders and insect baths
- Listening to and identifying birdsong
- Sweeping and caring for shared spaces
- Composting and recycling
- Sorting and folding washing
- Making oat milk, soap, candles and paper
- Visiting kitchen plots and charity shops
- Making natural gifts for people and animals
- Learning about trees, biodiversity and ecosystems
- Using reusable snack caddies
- Creating seasonal decorations using natural materials
- Exploring weather, tides, clouds and moon cycles
- Caring for tools, resources and equipment

These experiences build independence, responsibility and genuine understanding of sustainable living.

### **Planning and Learning Extension**

- Staff plan sustainable projects daily based on children's interests and the natural environment
- Experiences are flexible, seasonal and responsive
- Real-life activities are prioritised over artificial themes or commercial topics
- We do not rely on printed packs, worksheets or excessive laminated resources
- Sustained shared thinking and intelligent dialogue extend children's understanding
- Projects evolve naturally over time and often emerge from children's own ideas and observations

### **Community and Wider Environmental Responsibility**

We believe sustainability extends beyond nursery walls.

We therefore aim to:

- Build strong partnerships with families around sustainable living
- Support local repair, reuse and community initiatives
- Encourage environmentally conscious habits at home and nursery
- Reduce unnecessary packaging and waste wherever possible
- Source resources thoughtfully and ethically
- Continuously reflect on our environmental impact

Families are encouraged to engage with our ethos and contribute ideas that align with our values.

### **Constant Reflection and Evolution**

We do not consider ourselves "finished" in our sustainability journey.

As a setting, we continuously reflect, review and evolve.

- Sustainability audits form part of leadership and supervision processes
- Staff and families are encouraged to contribute ideas and feedback

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- We regularly evaluate our environmental impact and practices
- We continue developing new sustainable systems and partnerships
- Sustainability remains central to all future development planning

We are committed to remaining a genuinely progressive, thoughtful and environmentally responsible early years setting.

#### **Linked Policies**

- Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Food, Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy
- Washable Cloth Nappies Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Supervision and Appraisal Policy
- Parent Partnership Policy
- Images Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Outdoor Trips Policy
- Staff Conduct Policy

#### **Authorisation**

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