

Horton Kirby
Environmental Study Centre
Environmental Policy



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Section 1 – Litter and Waste Management

1.1 Litter

1.11 Litter in the Centre Grounds

To avoid problems of litter, food and drink are generally not taken into the playground. Litter bins are therefore not provided in the playground area. Lunch is eaten indoors during the winter months. In warm weather, some classes eat their lunch in the front garden or playground. In such cases, classroom bins are taken outside to the picnic area. Children are reminded that all litter should be put in bins. A litter check should be carried out at the end of the lunch break.

1.12 Litter at Activity Sites out with the Centre Grounds

No food or drink is taken off-site. Staff check for any worksheets, pencils and other equipment which children may have dropped. Litter not generated by the Centre is not collected due to the health and safety risk involved.

1.2 Waste

1.21 Reduction and Re-use

Photocopies and printed sheets should be backed where possible in order to reduce paper usage. When single sided paper is used, it should be kept so that the other side can be used for informal notes. When paper (or card) is used on both sides, it should be put in the paper recycling box (see 1.22). As well as being recycled, paper from the paper box will be shredded and used for packaging pupils' clay work and for putting in the compost bin. When photocopying worksheets, only the number needed on that day are copied. Any spare worksheets are stored for future use. All worksheets are designed in booklet form so less paper is used. Used envelopes can be re-used for internal mail only, therefore, most envelopes will be recycled (see 1.22). Some cardboard delivery boxes are kept for packaging schools' clay work. Larger cardboard delivery boxes are recycled. An envelope for collecting used stamps for charities is located on the main office wall.

1.22 Recycling

1.22a Kerbside Collection

Paper recycling bins are located in each office. Envelopes and cardboard can also be put into the office paper recycling bins. This can be collected in the kerbside recycling scheme along with materials collected in the classrooms recycling bins. A recycling bin is located in each classroom with a list of items that can be recycled. Materials which can be recycled are: metal foil, paper, cardboard, plastic bottles. The bin will contain a clear plastic sack purchased from Sevenoaks District Council. The classroom recycling bins should be emptied every other day. A kerbside collection of the clear plastic sacks is made by Sevenoaks District Council on a Monday morning at 7am. Recycling sacks are put outside the Centre on Monday mornings.

1.22b Recycling of Non-Kerbside Collection Items

Few glass products are used by the Centre. As glass is not collected in the kerbside recycling scheme, any glass products will be taken to the Recycling Centre in the Village Hall.

1.23 Composting

Composting materials will be collected in each classroom. A list of what can be put into the compost bin is on the classroom wall above the bin. Composting bins from the classroom will be emptied daily into external compost bins. Other materials which can be added to the external composting bins are leaves, grass cuttings, garden weeds, twigs and paper. It is important that the right balance of materials is added to the composting bins so materials added to the compost are carefully managed. More information on composting is available in the Centre's Environmental Folder.

1.3 Awareness of Litter and Waste Management

When classes have a picnic outside, teaching staff should ensure that students are advised about what to do with their litter. Each classroom has a sign detailing what can be put into the recycling and compost bins. Reminder signs beside the photocopier and printer encourage staff to recycle paper and ink cartridges.

Section 2 – Energy

2.1 Insulation

As the Centre was originally a Victorian school building, several areas of the building are poorly insulated. Water pipes are not insulated but this should be looked into as a long term improvement. Some rooms have curtains which are closed at night time and are close fitting. Most windows in the Centre are now double-glazed. Most rooms are carpeted, however, in some areas this is not appropriate due to regular use of water, clay, paint, etc.

2.2 Heating

Heaters are controlled individually and by thermostat in each room and are used as need be.

2.3 Lights

Most rooms in the Centre have fluorescent lights. Energy efficiency advice suggests that all fluorescent lights should be switched off if the room is to be left empty for more than five minutes. Signs have been put below the light switches as a reminder to turn off the lights. As the toilet lights switch is operated using a key, the toilet lights are kept on throughout the day when visitors are at the Centre. External lighting is daylight sensitive, operating between dusk and dawn. Additional motion sensitive lighting is located in the playground. The cleaning of light diffusers is to be investigated. At present light diffusers are not cleaned due to problems of accessing high ceilings. As redecorating of the building occurs, surfaces will be changed to lighter colours to maximise indoor light.

2.4 Electrical Equipment

Electrical items commonly used on a day-to-day basis at the Centre are PCs, the photocopier and hand-driers. Signs have been placed next to PCs to encourage users to turn off PCs and printers not in use. The photocopier is also turned to standby during the daytime and turned off overnight. Whiteboards, laptops and projectors are turned off overnight and turned to standby when there is a short break in teaching.

Section 3 – Transport

3.1 Visitor Transport

Children visiting the Centre travel by coach. The coach stays at the Centre during the day and sometimes transports the class to their study sites. If possible, classes walk to sites rather than travel by coach.

3.2 Staff Transport

Most staff travel to the Centre by car. Car sharing to travel to and from work is not geographically possible. Whilst travelling to other Centres and meetings, staff car- share where possible. When working in the local area, walking is encouraged.

Section 4 – Water

4.1 Taps and Washing Machine

All taps in the washroom area are push button taps. Visitors are educated about wasting water through a display beside the sinks. The washing machine is used for washing hand towels, cleaning cloths, etc. The washing machine is only used when there is a full load of washing.

4.2 Toilets

Water-saving hippos have been placed in all the toilet cisterns. Signs have also been put on the walls in all the toilets explaining why the hippos have been put into the toilets. A motion sensitive flushing device has been installed in the urinal. Previously the urinal was constantly switched on. It is hoped this will help to save water.

4.3 Garden

The pond in the wildlife area fills up naturally with rainwater. A water butt is used to collect rainwater which can be used to water plants in the wildlife area. The area to the left of the main entrance may also be used for drought-tolerant plants to reduce water usage and as an educational resource.

Section 5 – Purchasing Policy

At present, the Centre has an informal purchasing policy with decisions being made primarily upon economic grounds. In the future, it is hoped to move towards a more comprehensive purchasing policy in which ethics and the environment are given greater consideration. In order to do this, current products will be investigated and, if necessary, alternative products sourced. Where possible, reusable products will be bought instead of recyclable. As some disposable products are currently used, alternatives will be investigated. Existing products will be investigated for CFCs and CFC-based products avoided in future purchases. Harmful cleaning products will be avoided where possible. Recycled photocopier and printer paper is used. The toilet and facial tissues used are also made from recycled materials.

Section 6 – The Outdoor Environment

6.1 Current Situation

The Centre grounds contain a variety of different areas and features which encourage interest from visiting groups. The playground area behind the building, has seating and is bordered to the north by a mixed hedgerow. The playground has a variety of markings for games and activities. The area behind the playground is used as an allotment and wildlife area. This area contains a stile crossing point which can be used to introduce children to the idea of the countryside code. The wildlife area also contains two ponds, log piles, a sensory area, rock piles, nettle patches, brambles, bushes and grasses. The allotment area is used for growing fruit and vegetables and as a teaching resource to introduce healthy eating and sustainability ideas. The garden area in front of the building contains a variety of trees, plants and shrubs. This area is used for teaching activities and as a picnic site for visiting school groups in the summer. There is also a bird bath and sundial on the lawn in the front garden. Throughout the Centre, the use of chemical fertilisers and peat-products are avoided.

6.2 Future Improvements to the Centre Grounds

Future improvements to the Centre grounds include developing the wildlife area further and creating more playground activities.

Logs from the garden at the back of the Centre have been moved to the front garden. A fence has been put along the edge of the area to prevent groups using this area for picnics, etc. It is hoped that the damp, shaded conditions will enable minibeast hunts to be more successful than when previously carried out in the back garden. Bird and insect boxes may also be put in the front garden, in the future. A beech hedge has been planted along the boundary fence of the front garden. Several large trees from the front garden have been felled to allow more light to reach ground level. This has enabled the lawn to recover and bedding plants to flourish. The chippings from the trees were used for putting on the garden.

Within the back garden area, brambles around the ponds will be reduced and regularly controlled to improve accessibility. The bushes in the area north of the stile have been cut so that they have an overhang underneath to enable tree-shaking on to sheets below.

Plans were recently made for redeveloping the playground. This is to include new fencing, raised ponds, seating, raised planters and shaded areas. The plans have been illustrated in a water colour painting with the help of a local artist. We are currently looking for funding to take these plans further forward.

Section 7 – Activity Sites

7.1 Activity Sites

Due to the number of studies the Centre offers and the range of age groups visiting, a wide variety of activity sites are used. In this light, the rotation of sites to avoid overuse is not formally monitored. Despite this, staff are encouraged to monitor sites for signs of damage and mis-use.

Section 8 – Environmental Policy and Practice

8.1 Environmental Policy

The Centre has an Environmental Coordinator. The Environmental Policy, agreed upon by the staff, is to be put on to the Centre website and is available to anybody on request. In the future, it is hoped that the environmental policy will be increasingly considered in the design of programmes offered to visiting groups and all other aspects of Centre life. The Environmental Policy will be reviewed regularly and any changes made.

8.2 Environmental Practice at the Centre

The Centre is kept clean and tidy. General maintenance work is ongoing throughout the Centre. Plants are kept in classrooms and offices. A Sustainable Schools display has been put up in the washroom area as this is the only part of the Centre that all classes use. The Sustainable Schools display highlights some of the things we are doing at the Centre to be more sustainable and ideas about what children can do at home.

All staff are encouraged to design and implement improvements. Visitors are also encouraged to suggest improvements.

Section 9 – Legislation

The Centre complies with all relevant UK and EU legislation. Guidance is sought for any issues of concern. The media is also monitored for any changes in regulations which may apply to the Centre.

Section 10 – Partnerships

10.1 Community Involvement

The Centre is involved in appropriate community issues as they arise and seeks partners in the local community to help to achieve some environmental targets. For example, Bromley Environmental Task Force helped to put up fencing around the Centre allotment. As many of the schools that visit the

Centre are from Lewisham, the Centre is involved more with the Lewisham community than the local community. Centre Staff have led a Forest School Project for Early Years in Lewisham. The Centre is also involved in the local parish council and has been involved in work through the Village Society to enhance the amenity value of the River Darent. Advice has also been sought from other local community groups on issues such as recycling and composting.

Section 11 – Communications and Awareness

The Centre will promote its environmental improvements to local community through the Centre newsletter and website. Any group with an interest in the Centre will be able to view the Environmental Policy on the website. All schools visiting the Centre are made aware of things happening at the Centre through signs and verbal explanations. They are also encouraged to do similar environmentally friendly practices back at school and at home. The Centre website also contains a selection of eco-resources that schools can use.