

# Embedding the EYFS into the Eco-schools Programme; Visualising the journey

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## Phase one



### Action research background and aims

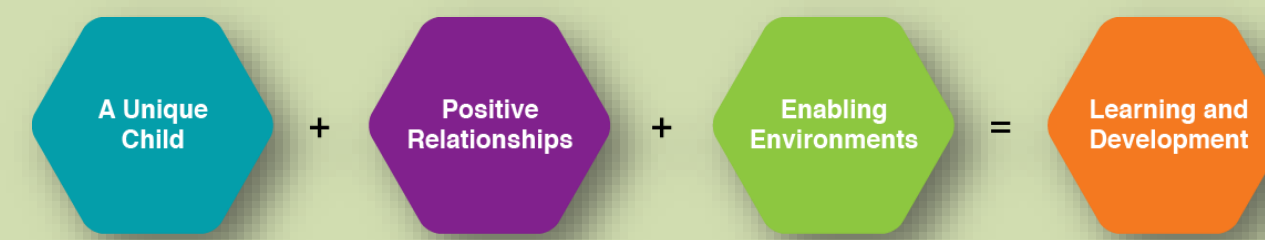
Eco-schools are advocates for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)  
OMEP represents the interests of children  
Embedding the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014) into the Eco- Schools England programme. This highlights the juxtaposition of statutory and voluntary guidance with opportunities to view the learning and development requirements using alternative lenses.

A collaborative inquiry approach was established with dialogue between academics, Eco Schools England, OMEP and leaders within the early childhood education sector. The EYFS Prime areas and characteristics of effective learning (DfE, 2014) have been embedded into a table, alongside the nine themes used by Eco Schools England. This project is currently emerging within a rhizomatic model ((Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987)

Collaborations are not being driven by predefined outcomes, with the EYFS (DfE, 2014) embedded into the handbook by experts. Rather, the table offers an initial frame for discussion with the group collaborations for phase 2.

### Challenges

Brundtland report (1987:17) suggests that adopting an education for sustainability approach rests solely on “political will”



## Phase two

### An Ethnographic approach

Phase two of the project supports the development of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) where lead practitioners are working with a diverse range of early years practitioners across England. Ethical approval has been granted by LJMU to gather data for phase three and practitioners are (re) viewing the table as critical friends and embracing the theoretical elements of democratic agonism (Mouffe 2000). This project recognises a place for, and the importance of contesting and challenging critical issues in early childhood. This is underlined by Rinaldi (2006:156) when she states that in early childhood there must be an acceptance of “conflict as part of dialogue” when considering critical and ethical tensions and issues.

This phase is characterised by (re)construction and negotiation and there is an anticipatory hopefulness that the cluster group collaborations will ultimately have their own ‘lines of flight’ (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987) resulting in valuable conversations for a shared ownership of the project.

The Earth Summit recognised the need for all to recognise “new forms of participation” especially in regard to decision making “which potentially affect the communities in which they live” (1992:270).

LJMU Interns from two disciplines, Education Studies and Early Years and Outdoor Education, have been recruited as an integral part of the community of inquiry with a remit to analyse the feedback from practitioners.



## Phase three Data analysis



The interns will scrutinise the data independently with a remit to come together to explore the different interpretations. Analysis of the data will inform the development of a holistic ESD framework suited to the Eco Schools programme. This project provides the opportunity for transformative participation with policy makers, leaders, practitioners, children and communities being involved. Ironically, the current political climate resonates with the “reluctance” noted in 1987 and is characterised in some of the passive and ambiguous responses from the Department of Education (2016) where ‘diary overloads’ frame an inability to commit to engagement with the project.

### References

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Collaborative Inquiry

Communities of Inquiry

Cluster Analysis & trial