



Harmony principles in the EYFS

Summer term 1 | The principle of the Cycle



Cycles Cycles never end

Nature works in cycles that are endlessly self-sustaining and self-regulating. Within these cycles, there are periods of growth and abundance and there are times of decline and decay, of restoration and regeneration. During periods of restoration, resources are recycled as food or fuel so that the cycle can begin again. Nature has no waste. Everything has a value. Nothing is ‘thrown away’.

In learning about natural cycles, we want our children to learn how we, too, need to design similarly circular systems if we are to create a future where there is no unwanted waste or pollution. An understanding of cycles, in their many forms, provides a perfect model for a sustainable future. We begin this journey of understanding in the early years.

Throughout the EYFS, children are introduced to opportunities to explore and develop their initial knowledge and understanding about

cycles – for example, when they observe and explore the time of year when leaves fall from trees, when day turns to night, seasonal changes and the life cycles of living things such as butterflies.

The table below shows how the principle of the Cycle can be brought into learning in the EYFS and what learning about the principle of the Cycle looks like in Years 1 and 2 when following a Harmony curriculum.

	EYFS	Year 1	Year 2
THEMES AND ENQUIRIES	What are the cycles of life on a farm? Links could also be made to themes such as: Seasons Life cycles How does my garden grow? Changes <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	Which is my favourite wildflower and why?	Why should we reduce, reuse and recycle?
KEY CONTENT	UTW: The natural world The senses Seasonal change PSED: Relationships Resilience and perseverance Health and wellbeing	NC Science: Plants, seasonal changes PSHE: Relationships – families Health and wellbeing – healthy lifestyles, mental health, ourselves, growing and changing Living in the wider world – shared responsibilities	NC Science: Uses of everyday materials PSHE: Living in the wider world – shared responsibilities, communities, economic wellbeing



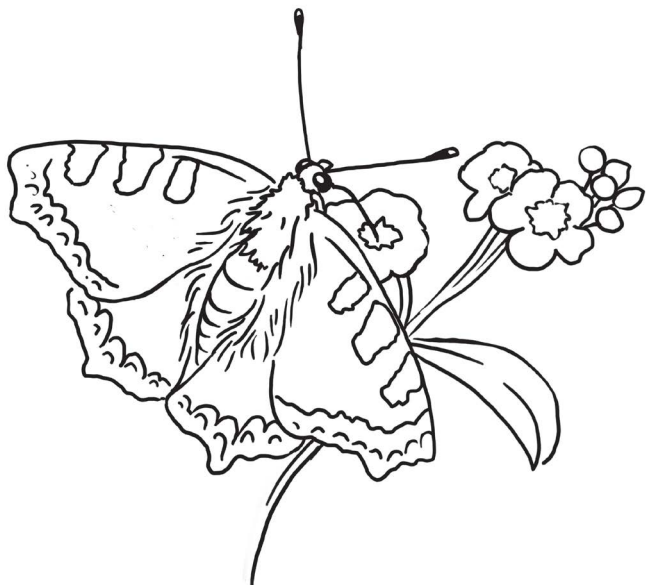
The printable planning grid below can be used as a framework to establish connections between learning themes, Nature-rich provision and a child’s developing awareness and understanding of the Cycle.

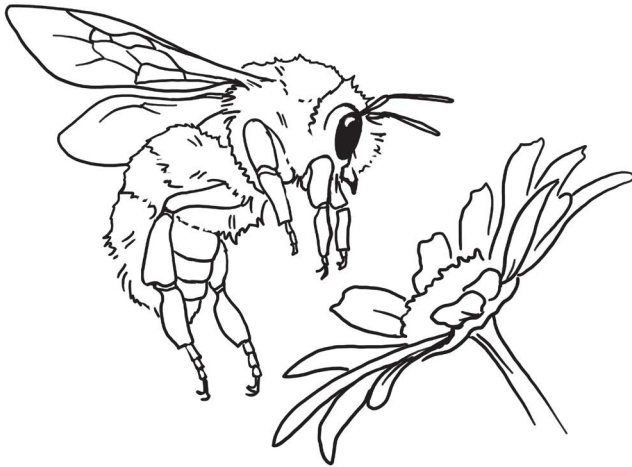
Thinking sustainably	Connecting with Nature and each other	Curating Nature tables and curiosity collections
Providing words, images or signs so children can connect with Nature’s awe and wonder, different phenomena, plants and the principle of the Cycle, for example: life cycle flower plant season tree blossom pattern seed petal rhythm bulb fruit routine leaf vegetable change autumn farm	Designing the indoor and outdoor learning environment to promote Nature connection and connection with others.	Creating intriguing natural collections and spaces to encourage talk, touch and physical exploration of Nature and natural objects.
Celebrating Nature	Learning from Nature about the Cycle	Finding maths in Nature
Sharing and exploring books, rhymes, stories and songs so children can engage in the language and joy of Nature.	Providing opportunities to connect with, and be inspired by, Nature will ensure that children will: • Explore the natural world around them • Describe what they see, hear and feel while outside • Recognise some environments that are different to the one in which they live • Understand the effect of changing seasons on the natural world around them	Providing natural objects and opportunities for the practical development and application of mathematical skills in the natural world.
Exploring natural creativity	Being out and about in Nature	Facilitating loose parts play
Providing opportunities for children to explore beauty, art, geometry and pattern in Nature – and to create using natural resources.	Using welly walks or wonder wanders to spark curiosity and connection with the natural world.	Using open-ended, natural and recycled materials.

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Understanding the world: The natural world
Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants. Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class. Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

We have included examples below that show how Nature connection and a child’s developing understanding of the principle of the Cycle can be nurtured through continuous and enhanced provision.

Thinking sustainably	Connecting with Nature and each other	Curating Nature tables and curiosity collections
Providing simple word collections, symbols or images so that children can engage in the awe and wonder of Nature, different phenomena, plants and the principle of the Cycle. Finding ways in which they can observe, feel and express their thoughts and understanding. In the planning grid on the previous page, we have simply included examples of some of the vocabulary that could form a solid foundation for future learning linked to the principle of the Cycle and connected science/PSHE learning in Year 1. This can be adapted or extended depending on the direction taken by children’s curiosity and interest, individual learning needs and teacher-led provision. 	Designing the indoor and outdoor learning environment to promote Nature connection and connection with others. Through the design of our continuous provision and specific elements of the indoor and outdoor learning environments, we can secure a place for Nature-rich provision. We can also create enhanced opportunities for children to make connections in their learning, to connect with each other and to further develop their understanding of the principle of the Cycle, for example, by providing: • Opportunities to care for Nature and to observe the wonder of cycles first-hand through outdoor growing spaces, indoor plants or butterfly feeders • Outdoor performance spaces where links with seasonal celebrations, songs and rhymes can be celebrated through music, dance and pretend play • Areas for pretend play, such as a market garden, where children can explore plant cycles or growing and selling vegetables, or a job centre, where children can explore green careers and the people who care for the natural world • Visual representations of classroom routines that show daily cycles • Indoor and outdoor seasonal weather watch stations • Small world play that allows exploration of the cycles of life on a farm, seasonal scenes, celebrations and festivals • An outdoor log circle or other places to sit and stare, talk, listen to stories, draw, observe, wonder and to reflect on how being in Nature makes us feel • Observation spots to watch and to note where the children see cycles, for example, shadows, bug gardens or the sun shining through different materials	Creating intriguing natural collections and spaces to encourage talk, touch and physical exploration of Nature and natural objects. Nature tables, curiosity collections and treasure troves filled with objects found in the natural world allow us to blur the lines between the outdoors and indoors, and to further cultivate a deep appreciation of the awe and wonder of Nature. When children are immersed in Nature-rich environments, they are more likely to experience a sense of wonder and curiosity about the beauty and diversity that exists in the world around them. This can enhance their personal, social and emotional development and a growing desire to care for the natural world. Children can be invited to stand, stare and take note of Nature’s wonders or to engage with the questions and observations that these collections can provoke. Examples could include: • Incorporating natural materials such as wood, stones, shells and pine cones into play areas to stimulate sensory exploration and creativity • Providing baskets of sticks, leaves, scavenged materials and twine so children can create their own summer story wands • Using seasonal observation jars, magnifying glasses, loupe magnifiers and visualisers to encourage children to observe vegetables grown from plants closely • Placing potatoes or avocado stones in water and noting what happens over time • Establishing natural treasure shelves, including objects such as empty egg shells as a provocation – asking: <i>Do all animals come from eggs?</i> • Following changes linked to the seasons using natural resources on a light box • Providing spotter sheets and collector pots so that children can collect and share their own items • Exploring picture and information books about life cycles, farms and summer • Establishing a live webcam link (Wildlife Trusts or a local farm link) to observe chicks hatching and growing

Celebrating Nature	Finding maths in Nature	Exploring natural creativity
Sharing and exploring books, rhymes and songs so children can engage in the language and joy of Nature.	Providing natural objects and opportunities for the practical development and application of mathematical skills in the natural world.	Providing opportunities for children to explore beauty, art, geometry and pattern in Nature – and creating using natural resources.
Exposing children to a wide range of stories, non-fiction, rhymes, songs and poems can enhance their understanding of the many cycles that exist within our world and provide opportunities to explore and develop the language of cycles. Books linked to the principle of the Cycle could include: <i>The Shortest Day</i> by Susan Cooper and Carson Ellis <i>It Starts With A Seed</i> by Laura Knowles and Jennie Webber <i>What Lives Lives In The Dirt?</i> series by Susie Williams <i>A Year Around The Great Oak</i> by Gerda Muller <i>Grow It!</i> by Georgie Birkett <i>The Tiny Seed</i> by Eric Carle <i>The Extraordinary Gardener</i> by Sam Boughton <i>My Must-Have Mum</i> by Maudie Smith and Jen Khatun <i>Pip & Egg</i> by Alex Latimer and David Litchfield Or other examples such as those listed in the National Education Nature Park EYFS Booklist. In addition, this understanding can be supported by sharing non-fiction texts about life cycles and farms, stories about growing, changing, challenge, perseverance and resilience, and seasonal songs, poems and rhymes. Festivals and celebrations also play a significant role in supporting children’s learning and development. They help children to begin to understand diversity but also the commonalities of human values and the cyclical nature of celebrations. Celebrations that take place in Summer 1 and support an exploration of this aspect of the principle of the Cycle, could include: • Earth Day • Wesak • May Day • Mental Health Awareness Week • World Bee Day	Nature provides us with a boundless diversity of natural objects (such as pine cones, leaves, acorns, conkers etc) that can be used when exploring recurring patterns, subitising, counting and number bonds. Examples of continuous and enhanced provision that link mathematical development with the principle of the Cycle could include: • Creating visual representations of daily routines that help to secure the language of repeating cycles • Making a natural, simple sundial • Ordering the stages in a life cycle using ‘story stones’ • Making pattern garlands using natural objects • Following recipes linked with seasonal foods • Finding parts within a whole: ‘There were eight eggs in the incubator, two have hatched and six have not yet hatched’ • Exploring butterfly and caterpillar number bonds using 5-frames and 10-frames • Patterning using found objects • Playing dominoes using life cycle pairings 	Creative areas can be enhanced with a range of natural resources that will help children to explore, look for and notice the beauty and patterns that exist within the natural world and the impact that this has on their wellbeing. Examples of continuous and enhanced provision that link creative development with the principle of the Cycle could include: • Collecting seasonal colour palettes • Making seasonal potions and pies • Making summer flower crowns to celebrate Nature • Exploring patterns and cycles within music • Creating natural art installations that represent life cycles • Exploring the music and dance of summer festivals and celebrations • Exploring the water cycle through water art – asking: <i>What happens to the outdoor pictures that we paint from a puddle?</i> • Nature journaling through the seasons – recording the signs of summer or life on the farm • Creating wildflower paintings, drawings and natural art compositions • Exploring dark, light, sunshine and shadow linked with the cycle of day and night

Being out and about in Nature	Facilitating loose parts play
Using welly walks or wonder wanders to spark curiosity and connection with the natural world.	Using open-ended, natural and recycled materials.
Welly walks or wonder wanders provide a wealth of opportunities to engage with the natural world and to nurture an increasing awareness and love of Nature. Guiding explorations and supporting children’s developing curiosity can also lead to further explorations within the school and home environments. Examples of guidance that could spark curiosity and connection while exploring natural cycles within the local area could include: • A focus on how animals behave differently through the seasons • Looking at how we dress differently when we go outdoors through the seasons • Looking for links to life cycles in the natural world, for example, activity around nesting boxes, pollination in progress, changes in a local wildflower meadow • Visiting a local farm to explore animal and plant life cycles and how farmers care for animals at different times in the year • Using a ‘Talking Telescope’ (cardboard tube or rolled-up paper) to describe the seasonal changes that you see around you • Identifying living things around us using the Woodland Trust’s spotter sheets for summer • Experiencing the outdoors from the perspective of local wildlife using the National Education Nature Park website’s points of view resource • Looking for examples of renewable energy – linking with Earth Day (Our Power, Our Planet)	The use of natural, open-ended and recycled materials to support physical development provides a perfect opportunity to introduce the language of sustainability within play. These materials can be used for larger creations, constructions and diagrams, and children can be encouraged to think about and explain where these materials have come from and why they have been chosen. Provision designed to encourage a growing understanding of sustainability and cycles could include: • A collection of objects and materials such as bricks, logs, rocks, repurposed tyres, pallets, crates, clay and rope ends that can be used by children to create representations of animal and plant life cycles • A collection of circular loose parts that allow for exploration of the properties of a circle • A store of recycled materials for large art projects • A bank of dressing-up clothes that can be reused to create vignettes around the different stages of the human life cycle • Team den-building challenges that allow children to create spaces for stillness, quiet and reflection • Opportunities to explore objects and materials that are ‘natural’ or ‘made by people’ • Creating shelters for the Three Little Pigs using a variety of natural materials • Obstacle courses that allow play within circuits and cycles

