

An Earth Charter & ESD School Seal Story

Avonwood Primary School (UK): Paving the way for sustainability

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An Introduction to Earth Charter & ESD School Seal

As a part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” the Earth Charter International Secretariat created the Earth Charter & Education for Sustainable Development School Seal (ECSS). The ECSS is a quality seal pioneer among school assessments since it integrates an ethical perspective of sustainability with the pedagogical elements and education practice associated with education for sustainable development. The seal was developed partially due to requests from educational institutions that have already incorporated the Earth Charter into their work and sought recognition. The ECSS can also be used as an assessment tool for improvement. By implementing ECSS, schools may begin to influence and transform their local education systems, supporting the United Nations SDG 4[1].



School Profile

As the United Kingdom's first Earth Charter school, [Avonwood](#) sought the recognition of the seal, but more importantly, the assessment opportunities provided by the ECSS process. Despite [Avonwood's](#) curriculum ensuring the Earth Charter is taught in every classroom, the school undertook the ECSS process with an Earth Charter School Seal verifier to realize their boundaries around sustainability in education and inspire other U.K. schools to do the same.

Name: Avonwood Primary School

Location: Bournemouth, England

School type: Public

School level: Primary

Number of Students: 517

Number of Teachers: 45

Prior engagement in sustainable initiatives: Adoption of Earth Charter principles as founding school values, Anti Bullying 'All together' campaigning; Carbon Neutrality Campaign; The Forest School; Eco school programs

Prior Engagement with the Earth Charter: Engaged with the Earth Charter since its inception in 2014

Inception & Mission Inspired by the Earth Charter

[Avonwood](#) Primary School is a school of 517 children in Bournemouth, England. It is a relatively new school having grown from a student population of 42 since opening in 2014. [Avonwood's](#) campus in Bournemouth is comprised of a main school building, a science laboratory, a computer science suite, an outdoor performance amphitheater and extensive outdoor space.

[Avonwood](#) is part of a group of schools called United Learning, one of the UK's leading education providers, comprising over 60,000 students and over 5,000 teachers across the U.K. United Learning summarizes its ethos as "seeing the best in everyone" underpinned by its six core values: ambition, confidence, creativity, respect, enthusiasm, and determination. As [Avonwood](#) explains, these principles run in "[Avonwood](#) DNA" and are amplified in the school mantra: "it starts with one".

United Learning leads a Carbon Neutrality campaign, which Avonwood has welcomed by installing solar panels on the school roofs to offset their energy consumption.





United Learning schools are encouraged to embrace core themes as identified in the Carbon Neutrality Plan and [Avonwood](#) chose “community, culture and ethos” as their central themes to improve student leadership, educational and extracurricular activities with character and parental and community engagement. [Avonwood](#) has a strong community presence and regularly invites community members to the school for special events and productions. One of [Avonwood’s](#) first actions under the Carbon Neutrality Plan was to start the Forest School by creating also a curriculum directly tied to the Earth Charter. The school is also involved in the project Energy Sparks App used to monitor and improve energy use.

Since its beginning, [Avonwood](#) Primary School has incorporated principles from the Earth Charter into its values. [Today, the school proudly claims its title as the United Kingdom’s first Earth Charter School.](#) [Avonwood](#) endorsed the eight “Little Earth Charter Principles” from the original sixteen, building them into the curriculum and applying them to all aspects of [Avonwood](#) life.

The Earth Charter has inspired many initiatives within the school, such as a Big Plastic count to gauge [Avonwood's](#) plastic waste and carbon neutrality. The recycling plan has involved students and the community outside the school, resulting in a secondhand uniform shop run by parents. The students enthusiastically participate in these initiatives and join in student polls to share their opinions on different activities. [Avonwood](#) has also implemented Meat-Free or Meatless Mondays, which are hugely popular with the student body. The school liaises also with the charity 'Hope for Food' to organise an [Avonwood](#) Food Pantry, an on-site food bank that supports more than 70 families per week. Some activities are rewarded with school points, such as walking to school, which [Avonwood](#) is promoting as part of their early-stage plans for carbon neutrality.

[Avonwood](#) also implemented Earth Charter end-of-term awards, each award given to demonstrate a specific Earth Charter value. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the school had "Green Ambassadors," but with the new Carbon Neutrality Plan, they sought to revolutionize the program, transforming it into the Eco-Warriors After School Club. Eco-warriors oversee the waste and recycling in each classroom, and awards are given at the end of the year for the class that recycled the most aluminum, plastic, etc. The administration seeks also to share fun and easy eco-living tips for students to carry home.

Beyond the classroom, the Earth Charter has inspired and revolutionized how [Avonwood](#) conducts outdoor education by creating an outdoor performance amphitheater and engaging in educational activities in its outdoor space. The school promotes after-school clubs such as Eco Club -Gardening and the Fresh Air Club as well as clubs during school time such as the 'Dirt Is Good Competition'. The school also provides Forest School activities whereby pupils learn scouting techniques.



Avonwood Forest School Fridays and the Earth Charter

The fundamental aims of Forest School Fridays are to instill confidence and develop students' self-esteem while providing enriching experiences in their local environment. These opportunities deepen their understanding and knowledge of the natural world while teaching them how to respect one another and work cooperatively in groups. The leader of the Forest School at [Avonwood](#), Craig Summer, often collaborates with [Avonwood](#) teachers to link lessons with the classroom curriculum. Lesson topics range from Survival 101 and the history of Stone Age Britain to animal biology and chemistry. The Forest School also promotes the "Dirt is Good" competition during school hours. After school, students may participate in gardening through the Eco Club and other outdoor activities through the Fresh Air Club owned by Craig.

Forest School Fridays at [Avonwood](#) always occur outdoors for students from Year 1 through Year 6. Students under Year 1 also participate in Forest School as the "Little Explorers." All students are taught basic survival skills such as tent building and identifying trees and other plants around them.

Forest School Fridays were created also to integrate the Earth Charter into the [Avonwood](#) curriculum. Each age group focuses on specific values connected to the Earth Charter, as shown in the chart below, taken directly from the Forest School curriculum.

The Forest School teaches [Avonwood](#) students also respect and responsibility for the world around them a crucial part of the Earth Charter values.

| Year Group | Title Name | Earth Charter Connections |
|------------|---------------------|--|
| Reception | Little Explorers | Life, Love |
| Year 1 | Wildlife Rangers | Life, Love, Earth |
| Year 2 | Fire fighters | Life, Love, Earth, Past |
| Year 3 | Stone age survivors | Life, Love, Earth, Past, Family |
| Year 4 | Explorers | Life, Love, Earth, Past, Family, Interconnected |
| Year 5 | Survivors | Life, Love, Earth, Past, Family, Interconnected, Peace |
| Year 6 | Legacy | Life, Love, Earth, Past, Family, Interconnected, Peace, Future |

ECSS Implementation

Due to Avonwood's relatively small size as a school, the implementation of the ECSS process proceeded smoothly. The ECSS self-assessment framework is flexible, allowing each school to decide how to put it into use. The assessment was undertaken by the Headteacher of Avonwood, Chris Jackson, alongside Earth Charter School Seal verifier Silvia Ferrero. Avonwood has done an excellent job of implementing Earth Charter teachings into the curriculum and school leaders want to develop even further. The Earth Charter School Seal assessment helped Avonwood leadership identify the gaps in the curriculum concerning environmental issues and areas for further professional development for the teaching staff.

As a part of its educational initiatives, the Earth Charter provides several online courses that are available to anyone. Masterclasses and informative webinars are also provided. By recommendation, Avonwood teachers will begin the Earth Charter introductory course in the fall term.

Avonwood is proud to be the United Kingdom's first Earth Charter School and looks forward to developing further its commitment to the Earth Charter.



Avonwood's longstanding commitment with EC



Chris Jackson, Headteacher



[Read more about Avonwood here](#)

[Watch here a video of Avonwood Primary School](#)



Would you like to elevate sustainability and transform your school into a place where **SUSTAINABILITY** and **ETHICAL VALUES** matter?

Visit our webpage earthcharter.org for more information or contact us directly at info@earthcharter.org

We look forward to starting the journey and creating a more sustainable planet together with you!