Wendy Compson, early years educator and trainer is passionate about the environment and sustainability. Over the last two years, she has been supporting Sarah’s Montessori nursery in Norwich to achieve their OMEP Sustainability Bronze Award (2022) and they are in the final stages of completing the silver award.

We’ve always tried to be sustainable, but working towards this award has made us become more intentional.

Sarah explains that working towards the award has meant that sustainability has simply become part of what they do every day as it becomes ingrained in practice.

### OMEP

A key focus of OMEP is supporting early years settings to promote sustainable citizenship. The awards encourage settings to consider their current practice and what more they might do more sustainably. In total, there are 30 areas to consider, under the umbrella of three pillars. These are *social and cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability*.

### Involving families

A key element of working towards the awards is including families. Using OMEP’s ‘*I care…*’ booklets the activities that children do at nursery can be followed through at home.

Sarah shares a few examples…

The ‘Recycling Activity’ (under the *Environment Pillar*) have really engaged children and their parents. Each week, three children are invited to bring in clean rubbish from home which they sort for recycling in circle time. Children actively discuss, offer their ideas, and sort the rubbish from home. The impact of this activity can be seen in various ways, such as children’s lunch boxes now contain less packaged food.

Another (under the *Social Pillar*) is realising our social and cultural interdependency. Parents from a range of cultures and religions have helped supported the setting, such as by arranging trips to different places of worship (synagogue, mosque, cathedral…).

Children from the setting have recently begun to visit a local residential care come, sharing some of their favourite activities (such as, threading, screwdriver, botany puzzles) with residents. In turn, residents share their interests with the children.

Wendy, Sarah and her staff have found some of the requirements under the *Economic Pillar* more challenging. Helping children understand the value of money has inspired the setting to include new materials and equipment, which means that ‘sustainable citizenship’ will be embedded in its long term provision.

### Climate change concerns

In a world where there is much anxiety about climate change, Sarah and Wendy’s positive enthusiasm is evident. They recognise that by introducing very young children to celebrate their world and the interdependence of everything, they are becoming confident ‘movers and shakers’. As young children absorb everything with open minds, they naturally embrace and adopt practices. They are equipped to make a difference.

### And finally…

Working towards the OMEP silver award is both rewarding and challenging. Sarah is unequivocal in confidently recommending others…

“Go for it… early years settings are used to working with tight margins on a very low budget… having to make do with what we’ve got means that we’re actually doing a lot without realising how much we are doing…”

We are making small steps that are adding to the good practice that we are doing and… we are leaving a legacy that will last.

The impact and legacy of working for this Sustainable Citizenship award is far reaching… for the children, their families, their communities, the setting and their futures.

[*https://thenorwichmontessorischoolltd.co.uk/*](https://thenorwichmontessorischoolltd.co.uk/)

*Why not follow The* ***Norwich Montessori School*** *on social media?*

<https://www.facebook.com/NorwichMontessori/>

*Further information on Wendy Compson (Montessori trainer and Advocate for Sustainable Citizenship) be found at*

<https://www.wendycompson.co.uk/>

*Further information, practical guidance and advice are available through,*

***Turning Little Stones*** *(Series 1, Episodes 2 & 4)* ***& Delving a little Deeper***

*See website for details.*