

Outdoor Learning Policy – July 2025

Aims and objectives

As a school we feel it is important to enable all children and young people to use the outside environment as a context for their learning. Our pupils will have the opportunity to learn in, about and through the full range of environments that our school and local area have to offer. All staff have a shared responsibility to ensure that the environment is used in a stimulating and meaningful way and that it is accessible for all. The outdoor area is set up to meet the need of the cohort that access it and provides significant learning opportunities. This includes time usually spent in class, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Outdoor spaces are used effectively to promote positive relationships and well-being. Staff take account of research linking benefits of outdoor learning and green space with well-being. Outdoor learning takes place both as part of discrete subject development and interdisciplinary learning where the outdoors and the wider community provide rich learning environments.

The aims of outdoor learning are:

- To encourage children and young people to have a healthy lifestyle, making the most of the benefits of learning outdoors to both physical and mental health.
- To enable children and young people to express themselves creatively, problem solve, investigate and explore.
- To motivate children and young people making school an enjoyable experience.
- To encourage children and young people to be aware of and take care of their environment.
- To empower children and young people to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.

In order to achieve the outdoor learning aims, our school aims are:

- To develop outdoor learning within and across our school in order that it becomes embedded within the curriculum and is sustainable for the future.
- To celebrate our outdoor spaces and the rich learning that can take place there.
- To provide a safe and secure environment that children and young people can take risks in.
- To provide CPD where required to enable staff to thrive as outdoor educators.
- To plan for and assess high quality experiences outdoors including local visits or trips further a field.

Teaching and learning style

All learning is important whether it takes place indoors or outdoors. However, sometimes the outdoor environment can be a more effective and stimulating place to learn than inside a classroom. Frequent outdoor learning encourages children and young people to engage with their natural environment and supports their self-regulation. Exposure to natural environments can provide a calming and regulating

sensory experience, while also offering opportunities for children and young people to develop self-control and manage their sensory input. The outdoors provides excellent opportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always relevant in the classroom.

Quality learning experiences in real situations have the capacity to raise achievement across a range of subjects and develop personal and social skills. With well planned, safely managed and personalised experiences to meet the needs of every child they can:

- improve focus and attention
- Increased confidence and independence
- develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments
- make learning more engaging and relevant
- develop active citizens and stewards of the environment
- nurture creativity
- provide opportunities for informed learning through play
- stimulate, inspire and improve motivation
- develop the ability to deal with uncertainty
- provide challenge and the opportunity to allow for managed "risk taking" to take place
- reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance
- improve attitudes
- support sensory needs
- provide opportunities for active play

Outdoor learning curriculum planning

Outdoor learning is an approach to learning which can be incorporated into every area of the curriculum. Being outdoors allows children and young people to engage directly with the environment through a direct, hands-on approach, allowing them to make connections on their learning journey. Rather than being infrequent and informal, classes or individuals learning outdoors should be seen as an integral part of classroom activities and used to meet both the curricular and sensory needs of students.

The curriculum content in other specific subject areas should be viewed through the lens of outdoor learning, to ascertain which teaching points and what content will be best served by the outdoor area. Some topics have a greater focus on outdoor learning than others.

Each class teacher creates plans for opportunities for outdoor learning and how this will fit in with subject medium-term plans. There are times when these are interventions to support individual pupils, reducing behaviour incidents or offering a sensory experience to aid their self-regulation.

We enable pupils to have access to the full range of activities involved in learning outdoors. Where children are to participate in activities off site, for example, a field trip, we carry out a risk assessment prior to the activity, to ensure that the activity is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

Foundation Stage

Outdoor learning plays an integral part in the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, as children work towards the objectives set out in the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) which underpin the curriculum planning for children aged three to five.

Outdoor provision is seen as a right for children in the Foundation Stage, and the outdoor classroom is used every day, just as the indoor classroom is (except when there are dangerous weather warnings). Practitioners share this commitment and responsibility to provide outdoor learning each day. The outdoor area activities are planned, and this is displayed in the outdoor continuous provision planning document.

Forest School

Forest School is well established in school and there are two allocated spaces for Forest School on both sites at our school

Beach School

Beach School is a new addition to school (including access to a beach chalet at various points in the school year), and we have 3 teachers developing their understanding of Beach School and completing their qualification.

Assessment and recording

We assess the children's learning outdoors in the same way that we assess indoor learning, by completing Evidence for learning assessments as we observe the children during the sessions. Outdoor learning lends itself to cross-curricular learning and it's a great way to learn holistically and cover a range of subjects in a small period of time.

Resources

We are continually reviewing resources in our school to be able to teach outdoors. EYFS has a dedicated outside playground, with different areas and resources, which is used daily. KS1 have use of a large outdoor space and decking area with elements of continuous provision in place, including sand and water. KS2 and KS3 have a large concrete playground with a seated area and sheds containing a range of resources. This enables staff to vary the outdoor sessions to maintain engagement and motivation. KS4 and KS5 have use of the MUGA, this is a flexible space which can be used for a range of activities and can be adapted to meet the interests and needs of the cohorts using it. We have introduced a range of resources that are in place all the time and we have other resources which are easily accessible for staff and pupils.