

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play [learning through play], school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development and more.

Outdoor learning can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It leads to a deeper understanding of concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility. The results from outdoor learning can be instantaneous as well as active and therefore impact on behaviour as well as tapping into the learning styles of the more kinaesthetic learner.

Through skilled teaching, outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning. Active learning readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning – to name only some of the benefits.

Outdoor Learning can help to bring learning alive. For that reason the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and personal and social development. Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning:

- Outdoor learning helps to ensure that children are successful learners enabling children to develop knowledge and skills in ways that adds value to their everyday learning experiences.
- Outdoor learning enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions. Outdoor learning contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Outdoor learning can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Outdoor learning contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle.
- Outdoor learning has a positive impact upon children's personal and social development. It can also bring about community cohesion and allow children to develop as responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to their wider community.
- It can create pride in the school and wider community and promote community involvement, renewing children's pride and creating a sense of belonging and responsibility.
- It can raise attainment, promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.
- There is clear evidence that boys in particular are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment.
- It helps children see the importance of recycling and looking after the planet and animals.

Aims and Objectives of this policy:

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- To encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- To encourage children to care for their environment.
- To allow the eco-rangers to take a role of responsibility for our outdoor areas and environment.

Monitoring and Assessment

- Assessment of the children's learning is valued equally indoors and outdoors and be part of the same process.
- As the outdoors can enrich all areas of the curriculum, subject leaders monitor planning to see how the outdoors is being used to support the teaching of their subject.
- Outdoor learning throughout the curriculum is monitored on a termly basis by the Outdoor Learning Leader.

Resources

- The Outdoor Learning Leader supports practitioners in using learning outside the classroom confidently and capably.
- A range of resources for field work studies are available in the school (Science, geography, forest schools)
- Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto (DCSF Publications ISBN:978-1-84478-861-3)
- EYFS Framework Document.

Health and Safety

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. In the first instance the schools policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to and applied prior to any outdoor learning activity that may require additional support beyond the reasonable activities one would normally apply within the classroom.

Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor learning. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe. Be Safe is a school expectation and children are

reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe. The following expectations are understood by all pupils. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

Outdoor Learning is an important part of our learning journey.

- We must uphold our school golden rules to be safe at all times when we participate in outdoor learning.
- We must not go to the pond area without an adult.
- We must never walk across the car park area but instead use the footpath with an adult.
- We must stay with our group.
- We must never open the gates to visitors.
- We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning objectives.
- Only our teachers are allowed to open padlocked gates.

If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy outdoor learning and be safe.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning.

We are currently developing our outdoor learning area. The Eco council, which will start in September, will be asked for their ideas on how to develop our outside spaces. Pupils are visiting this natural local resource within close walking distance of the school. The pace of learning can be enhanced by using the outdoors and that children who may find the classroom too constraining will perform and behave better outdoors, reducing the time spent on explanation and behaviour management. There is clear evidence that boys in particular, are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment. The school will communicate the benefits to parents and the wider community of outdoor learning so that there is a greater understanding of its value and importance.

We want each class to experience outdoor learning at least once per half term.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The school grounds.

We are currently in the process of developing our outdoor learning environments within the school grounds. The school buildings can also provide a useful resource for learning about energy use and waste for example – tying in well with the Eco school programme. We have a sensory garden that hopefully the schools new Eco council will take on and help to develop.

Further afield

Each year group will go on a minimum of 2 school trips a year including residential trips in Year 4 and Year 6. Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working. Through staying at outdoor and adventure centres such as Thorpe Woodlands, provides children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel. Our school trips are planned into all aspects of the curriculum and, by taking learners beyond their familiar environment, stimulate their curiosity and imagination and motivate children in a powerful way.

More able children

Outdoor learning offers opportunities to including personal research and develop a personal understanding of their place in the natural world, further developing an understanding of learning processes, enquiry and thinking skills and this deepens and enriches subject learning. The above issues allow opportunities to access discussion on a moral code, ethics, humanity, sustainability, science in its widest sense, problems pertaining to globalisation and philosophical enquiry. Outdoor Learning acts as a bridge to higher order learning and opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.

Equality and inclusion

We endeavour to ensure that all children whatever their abilities are able to play and explore outdoors within the school grounds and further afield. Activities are not offered on the basis of gender and we try to balance out over time the specialist visits offered to children. At all times we aim to respect cultural issues and needs of individual children.