



Outdoor Learning Policy

Date
October 2024

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to foster our children's love of learning outdoors. This policy applies to all pupils, including those in the early years. At Scott Primary School, we are passionate about the outdoors. Outdoor Learning offers wonderful learning opportunities outside of the classroom such as enquiry, cooperative learning, confidence, communication, perseverance and problem solving. We are extremely lucky to have beautiful grounds, which extend to nearly 30 acres and which includes 8 acres of woodland. We believe that all children should have a chance to experience the outdoors and to gain from the undeniable benefits that Outdoor learning fosters.

Definition

What do we mean by outdoor learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes outdoor play, outdoor lessons, school grounds projects, bush craft, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities. Outdoor learning can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom and can help to bring learning alive.

Impact

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 difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone.

Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility.

Outdoor learning has the opportunity to be more active than indoor classroom learning and therefore, can influence behaviour as well as tapping into the learning styles of the more kinaesthetic learner.

Outdoor learning also provides many opportunities for personal development, allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning.

"The first-hand experiences of learning outside the classroom can help to make subjects more vivid and interesting for pupils and enhance their understanding. It can also contribute significantly to pupils' personal, social and emotional development."

Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, DfES 2006.

"Learning outside the classroom improves young people's development in all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes, especially in two areas: enjoying and achieving, and achieving economic well-being."

Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, DfES 2006.

"It was evident from the survey that learning outside the classroom could make an important contribution to pupils' future economic well-being and to preparing them for the next stage of their lives."

Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, DfES 2006.

Aims

- To ensure that learning outdoors is happening on a regular basis for all children.
- To ensure that learning outdoors is planned across a range of subjects in all year groups.
- To increase pupils 'cultural capital' and give them a range of experiences beyond the core curriculum.
- To provide a safe and secure outdoor learning environment.
- To encourage children to care for their environment and to develop a connection with the outdoors.
- For children to recognise that they may have a greater sense of wellbeing from spending time outdoors.
- To build confidence and enable children to take on challenges and be risk-takers in their learning.
- To promote teamwork and communication skills.
- To move their bodies and be healthier.
- To learn about their local area and surroundings.

Intent

We will achieve this through:

- Each class will have access to regular, discrete and timetabled sessions outside. These should take place at least once a half term and link to current learning.
- All children will have regular experiences in our grounds, including the woods.
- Teachers will take their classes once a year to the local orchard and pond area of Brickhill Community garden.
- Vulnerable children will have extra opportunities to access Outdoor Learning through Squirrels (KS1) and Scott Explorers (KS2).
- All children will take part in activities that offer Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural experiences such as through our tree planting scheme and the annual RSPB Birdwatch.
- The School Impact Outdoor Learning Award, and RSPB Wild challenge.
- Encompassing the values and outcomes of the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto and Every Child Matters.
- Ensuring that all classes have access to an up to date risk assessment and that regular 'safety sweeps' are conducted of the outdoor learning areas.
- To link Outdoor Learning to PSHE where possible to promote wellbeing, such as during Children's Mental Health week.
- Ensuring that Parents are well informed of when Outdoor Learning will take place, so that appropriate clothing can be provided.

Implementation

Teaching and Learning

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning, we closely monitor the use of Outdoor Learning as a key element of the learning experience at Scott Primary School. We will provide support and professional development, where possible, to enable staff to feel confident to adapt their practice to include opportunities for learning beyond the confines of the classroom. Adults, showing pupils that the world in which we live in should be appreciated and cared for, should model good practice.

Good practice should include:

- encouraging and supporting pupils, providing positive experiences outside and within nature.
- guiding pupils in self-discovery, modelling skills and language where appropriate.

- allowing appropriate independence and risk-taking.
- providing opportunities for reflection.

Early Years

Within the EYFS, pupils have daily access to a purpose built outdoor area. These are resourced to provide age-appropriate learning experiences to stretch and challenge pupils in line with the EYFS curriculum. During child-initiated learning, pupils have free-flow access to their outdoor area and can choose to learn outdoors throughout the year. Learning experiences and resources enable pupils to explore the natural environment, seasons and their own interests and fascinations. Reception will also have the opportunity to take part in whole class, discrete Outdoor Learning sessions, linked to current learning, as per the rest of the school.

KS1 and KS2

The outdoor environment is used across the National Curriculum to bring learning to life and make it 'hands-on' and relevant. Pupils are given regular opportunities to engage with Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) where their curriculum objectives take place outdoors. Children from Years 1-6 have regular, discrete Outdoor Learning sessions, planned by their teachers, which should link to current learning.

Monitoring and Recording

Class teachers are expected to record their Outdoor Learning Lessons in the class 'floorbook', as well as sending photographs and evidence to the Outdoor Learning Lead. This means that regular monitoring and feedback to Class Teachers can be initiated.

Assessment

Good practice in assessing Outdoor Learning is no different from assessment elsewhere in school. Where possible activities should allow children to demonstrate "performance of understanding" i.e. they should be given tasks that show they can use what they have learned to...

- Give explanations
- Make predictions
- Evaluate
- Find examples
- Find solutions
- Work independently
- Work with a partner
- Work as part of a team.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

At Scott Primary School, we are lucky to have access to a range of areas that Outdoor Learning may take place.

These include:

- The school playgrounds and fields, across both sites.
- Gardening areas.
- Our courtyard and pond (North Pole).
- Our woodland area, which extends to the red markers.
- Our 'Base Camp', which is used by our Scott Explorers (KS2).
- The local woodland, which includes a stream and bridge, a local orchard and pond.
- Local walks, including local footpaths (through the woods, fields and towards Clapham), and to the local shops.

Outdoor Learning opportunities may take place further field, however, a separate Risk Assessment and Evolve should be completed.

Health and Safety

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. All activities should be considered for a risk assessment, but only those, which might deliver activities not normally undertaken in school, should proceed to full individual risk assessment. In most instances, the General Outdoor Learning risk assessment is sufficient for the school grounds and for local walks. This is available to all staff and should be displayed in all classrooms. Children and staff are advised about possible risks before entering the area and a 'safety sweep' should be conducted by an adult before entering the woods. In case of an emergency, more than one adult should accompany all groups into the woods. The lead adult should ensure that a first aid bag, relevant inhalers and a mobile phone (please sign a mobile phone exemption form) are taken into the woods.

Resources

As a school we have a variety of resources for use within Outdoor Learning lessons. Most of these can be found in the Outdoor Learning cupboard, which is situated in the Year 4 corridor. This included spare shoes and coats, which are used by our Scott Explorer children if needed. Staff should ensure that parents are aware when Outdoor Learning will take place so that appropriate clothing and spare shoes can be provided.

Some resources (knives, saws, fire starting kits etc.) carry their own risk factors and should be used in conjunction with an appropriate risk assessment and safety procedures. Resources must be treated respectfully and returned following use.

Roles of the Subject Leader

The Outdoor Learning Lead monitors standards teaching and learning and carries out evaluations of activities and their impact upon the children. Support is given, if necessary, to ensure all staff are adhering to the agreed policy and planning format. Findings from monitoring are discussed with the Senior Leadership Team and shared with teaching staff as appropriate.

Policy Review

To be reviewed every 3 years.

L.Mirto
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