



Whitstable Junior School

Outdoor Learning

Policy

Governors' Committee Responsible: Curriculum Committee

Policy Originator: Headteacher

Status: Non-Statutory

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Signed: _____ Chair of Governors

Signed: _____ Headteacher

Outdoor Learning Policy

Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster and enhance children's love of learning. At Whitstable Junior School, we believe that all children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. We further believe that it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning. The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto, launched by the government in 2006, provided a breath of fresh air for the educational agenda. With the aim of persuading teachers to make the most of outdoor learning opportunities, the Manifesto states that 'Every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development whatever their age, ability and circumstances.' Taking into consideration our school values and aims, and at a time when we are increasingly concerned about the physical and emotional well being of our children and young people, and the question whether they will leave education with the competencies they will need for the future, Outdoor Learning brings with it a range of benefits which are now widely evidenced, acknowledged and accepted. The value of Outdoor Learning on children's health and well being as well as stimulating their natural curiosity about the world has been recognized by researchers (Wood et al 2016; Morgan and Waite, 2017)

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that is mainly used to describe structured outdoor activities that are linked to the National Curriculum and which aims to provide a depth and relevance to the learning that can sometimes be difficult to achieve solely from being indoors. It includes: outdoor play, risk taking, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, and personal and social development.

Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core. 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 kinesthetic 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 add value to their everyday learning experiences.
- Enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour and well-being.
- Contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Impacts positively 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.

- Can raise learner's attainment; promotes and strengthens communication skills, teamwork and sense of cohesion.
- Can motivate boys to be more active in their learning.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy Practice described in this Policy aims to:

- Raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- Empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- Encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- Develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- Provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- Encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- Encourage children to care for their environment

Health and Safety

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. Staff 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 teachers will refer to and apply the schools' policies relating to Health and Safety, and Risk Assessment prior to any outdoor learning activity that may require additional support beyond the reasonable activities one would normally apply within the classroom. It is also important that the school applies robust safety measures to effectively manage and minimise risks. It is equally important, however, that all involved, including parents acknowledge that a degree of residual risk remains.

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 part of our school Community Code and children are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils:

- Outdoor Learning is an important part of our learning journey.
- We must uphold our school expectation to be safe at all times when we participate in outdoor learning.
 - We must stay with our group
 - We must follow our Community Code – be Safe, be Kind, be Responsible
 - We must never climb higher than shoulder height (of the adult) and be in clear view of an adult
 - We must walk around the timber trail/playground/pond area unless otherwise instructed
 - We must not be within a foot of the side of the pond area, or lean over the pond area, with only 4 children at a time.
 - We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning objectives.
 - If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy learning and stay safe.

(Please also refer to our Pond Use Risk Assessment at the end of this policy)

Managing the Delivery of Outdoor 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 Whitstable Junior School. We provide support and professional development to enable staff to feel confident developing the expertise or knowledge base to adapt their practice to include opportunities for learning beyond the confines of the classroom. Children have free access throughout the sessions, with range of free flow and planned

activities. Children wear appropriate clothing and we try to utilise the outdoor space as much as possible.

Opportunities to take learning outside are seized and taken full advantage of. We follow the National Curriculum for Outdoors and enrich these learning activities wherever possible. We also have linked our Humanities Curriculum to our Outdoor Learning Activities. For example, science lessons involve studying the weather, researching the shadows, the sun and moon, or marine life and life cycles. Geography lessons may involve work in the locality, river studies, orienteering, following maps and looking at coastal erosion. History may involve learning how to age trees or buildings.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning:

We have invested in the development of the outdoor learning area. Our playground has benefited from SE water donating plant boxes that are fed by rainwater. Additionally, an outdoor classroom has been installed which is used by the whole school for a range of activities. We have a well-maintained pond area that is home to a variety of wild and marine life. We also have a mud lab and a tree-lined timber trail that inspires free and imaginative play

We advocate that the pace of learning can be enhanced by using the outdoors and those 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.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The School Grounds. We are lucky to have grounds that offer opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. School buildings can also provide a useful resource for learning about energy use and waste for example – tying in well with the school's Eco School Council agenda. Forest School originated in Scandinavia and was brought to the UK in the early 1990s. Children are not taught, but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through introduction, risk taking and exploration.

Risk Assessment – Pond Use

Risk Assessment – Using the pond			
Hazard	People Harmed	Risk Control	Further Action
Falling into the water	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the number of children at the pond edge at any one time to 4 • Appropriate level of supervision in place taking into account age of pupils and any special needs • Children waiting should wait outside the fenced area • Slip / tripping hazards eliminated from the surrounding area. • Stand sideways at the water's edge • Adults should empty nets into observation trays • Children should lay down when using the overhang platform • Do not use the overhang platform in slippery/wet conditions 	<p>Pond area kept locked when not in use.</p> <p>Adults should demonstrate safe stance at water's edge</p>
Hygiene Infection / disease Weils disease, Poisoning (bluegreen algae)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate provision for hand washing available after pond use • Provide paper towels rather than communal hand towels. • Do not allow children to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are washed. • Younger pupils should be seen to wash their hands. • Cuts / abrasions covered with waterproof plaster • No eating in the pond area • Prevent access to the area by cats/dogs, check always made of the area to remove (hygienically) any faeces before children enter the area. • Any algal scum should be removed, avoiding skin contact. Pupils should be supervised carefully so that they have no opportunity to eat any parts of the plants growing in or around the pond. 	<p>Have hand sanitiser available to use</p> <p>Have visible signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking only in pond area, • Wash hands thoroughly after pond activities, • Only 4 children in pond area at any one time

References:

“Learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils’ personal, social and emotional development.”

Ofsted – Learning Outside of the Classroom report

<http://www.lotc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Ofsted-Report-Oct-2008.pdf>

KCC provides all schools with a Kent Framework for Safe Practice on Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Activities to support and guide schools in the safe planning and management of outdoor learning activities and educational visits. The Kent Framework for Safe Practice on Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Activities can be found here:

<http://www.kelsi.org.uk/Curriculum/outdoor-education>

Contact the Outdoor Education Advisory Service for further information on service packages, support and training – outdoor.education@kent.gov.uk or 03000 410 901.

This Guidance Note and Model Policy Statement for Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning forms an extension to the main KCC Health and Safety Policy for Schools. The policy can be found here -

http://www.kelsi.org.uk/___data/assets/word_doc/0010/41779/health-and-safety-policy-for-school.docx

Useful Information and Resources

- Kent Framework for Safe Practice on Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning – <http://www.kelsi.org.uk/Curriculum/outdoor-education>
- Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) National Guidance for Educational Visits and Activities – <http://oeapng.info/>
- DfE Guidance on the Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits - <http://www.kelsi.org.uk/policies-and-guidance/health-and-safety-guidance/curriculum-topics>
- Emergency Planning Guidelines for Kent Schools - <http://www.kelsi.org.uk/running-a-school/maintenance-and-operations/emergency-planning>
- Guidance on First Aid for Schools – A Good Practice Guide Managing Medicines in Schools and Early Years Settings - <http://www.kelsi.org.uk/policies-and-guidance/health-and-safety-guidance/risk-assessment>
- KCC Incident/Accident Reporting - <http://www.kelsi.org.uk/policies-and-guidance/health-and-safety-guidance/accident-reporting>
- KCC Health and Safety Inspection Proforma - <http://www.kelsi.org.uk/policies-and-guidance/health-and-safety-guidance/management-of-health-safety>

Useful Contacts

- KCC Health and Safety Unit
Health and Safety Advice Line: Tel: 03000 418456 / Email: HealthandSafety@kent.gov.uk
Location: Room 3.32 Sessions House, Maidstone, ME14 1XQ
- The Outdoor Education Advisory Service
Tel: 03000 416539 / Email: outdoor.education@kent.gov.uk
Location: The Swattenden Outdoor Centre, Swattenden Lane, Cranbrook, TN17 3PS

- KCC Insurance and Risk Management
Tel: 03000 416440 / Email: insurance@kent.gov.uk
Location: Room 2.53 Sessions House, Maidstone, ME14 1XQ
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
Enforcement of Health and Safety Legislation. -
<https://extranet.hse.gov.uk/lfservlet/external/F2508IE>
Tel: 0845 345 0055 online reporting.
- RIDDOR Incident Contact Centre
The reporting service for work-related health and safety, RIDDOR incidents to the HSE.
Website: www.riddor.gov.uk. E-mail: riddor@connaught.plc.uk
- Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sport
Association for Physical Education (AfPE) - www.afpa.org.uk
Tel: 0118 378 6240, Email: enquiries@afpe.org.uk