

# Orchard Community Primary School



## Outdoor Learning Policy

This policy was approved by the Governing Body of Orchard Primary School at their meeting on.....

Signed..... Chair of Governors

Version	Date	Author	Reason for Change
1	23.03.2021	L. Owen	No previous policy

Review Frequency	Next Review Date
Every 3 years	2024

## 1. Aims and objectives

1.1 As a school we feel it is important to enable all children to use the outside environment as a context for learning as much as possible. Children 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 provide regular, authentic outdoor learning contexts and to ensure that the environment is used in a stimulating and meaningful way. This includes time usually spent in class, breaks, lunchtimes and after-school activities. 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. Children learn and play in real settings and apply skills and make connections across subject areas in relevant contexts.

1.2 The aims of outdoor learning are:

- To encourage children to have a healthy lifestyle, making the most of the benefits of learning outdoors to both physical and mental health.
- To enable children to express themselves creatively, problem solve, investigate and explore.
- To motivate children and make 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.

1.3 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 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.

## **2. Teaching and learning style**

2.1 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 built heritage and related issues of sustainable development. There is a growing body of evidence strongly indicating that time spent in green spaces brings a host of health and well-being benefits in addition to providing opportunities for children to learn how to evaluate and manage risks. The outdoors provides excellent opportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always relevant in the classroom.

2.2 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 academic achievement
- be a bridge to higher order learning
- 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

## **3. Outdoor learning curriculum planning**

3.1 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, taking classes outdoors should be seen as an integral part of classroom activities and used to meet both the curricular and non-curricular needs of students.

3.2 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. The outdoor learning leader works this out in conjunction with teaching colleagues in each year group.

3.3 Our medium-term plans identify which areas of the national scheme of work are covered in each topic. The outdoor learning leader reviews these plans on a regular basis.

Because we have mixed-age classes, we do the medium-term planning on a rotation cycle. In this way we ensure that children have complete coverage of the National Curriculum but do not have to repeat topics.

3.4 Each class teacher creates a plan for each lesson. These daily lesson plans list specific learning objectives. The class teacher keeps these individual plans, and can discuss them with the outdoor learning leader on an informal basis. There is a pool of outdoor activity plans available on the staff server.

#### **4. Foundation Stage**

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

#### **5. The contribution of outdoor learning across the curriculum**

##### **5.1 English**

The outdoor environment provides both the context and the inspiration for learning to speak, listen, read and write. As a context, or backdrop to learning, there are a number of outdoor areas which are used for reading in particular, with covered seated areas and benches. The outdoor areas, with field, trees, woods, pond, door-ways and dens are used to act out and perform stories in a multi-sensory method. The log circle in the school woodland, with throne for the reader / performer, is used to make learning engaging and exciting. The outdoors is used for inspiration events, which also provide incentive and challenge. Examples include; Foundation Stage finding a message from Ana and Elsa in the frosty playground and the children writing a response, and the Superhero inspiration day in KS1, where the children have to look for and read clues all around the outside area, in order to complete the challenge.

##### **5.2 Mathematics**

Outdoor maths is fun and meaningful at our school. Outdoor maths games, using the 100 square in the playground, scavenger hunts to find numbers of items or shapes, are regularly planned for, to make maths

learning active. Other examples include; children in KS1 learning about symmetry with natural found objects, measuring the circumference of trees, exploring capacity with water, learning about space, area and angles with chalk shapes and string tied around tree trunks to make giant triangles, and the rounding challenge with numbers on the playground in KS2. With a mastery approach to maths, these outdoor activities only serve to deepen the learning and provide another layer to our children's mathematical understanding.

### 5.3 Computing

Computing is used to support learning outdoors where appropriate. Children use ICT to enhance their skills in presenting written work. They research information through the Internet, which supports outdoor learning. We also offer children the opportunity to use digital cameras / iPads to record and use photographic images. Children become familiar with online maps and can locate aerial views of the school.

### 5.4 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Outdoor learning contributes significantly to the teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship. Outdoor learning has been shown to have huge benefits to both good physical and mental health, so where possible, learning takes place outdoors to support healthy choices. Activities like den building and scavenger hunts, provide excellent opportunities for the children to hone skills such as teamwork, communication, resilience, whilst boosting their self-confidence. The active outdoor learning at our school encourages children to make decisions and be independent, from choosing suitable clothing for outdoor activities, to managing challenges and risk. Children learn important 'real life' skills which they will carry with them for the rest of their life.

### 5.5 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

There are a number of ways in which outdoor learning contributes to SMSC here at Orchard. By discussing our Woodland Code and teaching our children to respect the outdoor environment, we are teaching the fundamentals of responsibility, right and wrong, participation, and inviting the children to talk about morals and ethics. The outdoors opens our eyes to our immediate surroundings, and creates opportunities to learn about the many differences in the wider world. We use the outdoor classroom as a place in which to find calm, use our imaginations and explore spirituality. Eco-club at lunchtimes has been a great success in recent years in promoting the idea of social responsibility in the outdoors.

## **6. Teaching outdoors to children with special educational needs**

6.1 At Orchard Primary School we teach outdoors to all children, whatever their ability. Outdoor learning forms part of the school curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our teaching outdoors we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make progress. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's different needs. Assessment against the National Curriculum allows us to consider each child's attainment and progress against expected levels.

6.2 When progress falls significantly outside the expected range, the child may have special educational needs. Our assessment process looks at a range of factors – classroom organisation, teaching materials, teaching style, differentiation – so that we can take some additional or different action to enable the child to learn more effectively. This ensures that our teaching is matched to the child's needs.

6.3 Intervention groups support children with SEND needs. These often work well in outdoors spaces.

6.4 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.

## **7. Assessment and recording**

7.1 We assess the children's learning outdoors by making informal judgements as we observe the children during lessons. Outdoor learning may contribute to a unit of work in another curriculum area, where we make a summary judgement of the work for each pupil as to whether they have yet to obtain, obtained or exceeded the expectations of the unit. We record the results in our assessment files and we use these to plan future work, to provide the basis for assessing the progress of the child, and to pass information on to the next teacher at the end of the year.

7.2 The Outdoor subject leader keeps samples of the children's work in a portfolio. Class teachers are required to have evidenced some outdoor learning in topic folders or maths/literacy books (at least one piece of work each full term).

## **8. Resources**

8.1 We are continually reviewing resources in our school to be able to teach outdoors. EYFS has a dedicated outside classroom, with different areas and resources, which is used daily. KS1 have use of courtyard area with elements of continuous provision in place, including sand and water. We are blessed with large hard surface playgrounds, tree-lined field, an orchard, woodland and pond. KS2 have a covered seating area by the field. There is always a hydro-tunnel which is used to support learning about plants and growing outdoors. As well as physical resources, there is a good store of activities and ideas for outdoor learning on the school server, which is being added to and promoted by the Outdoor Lead.

## **9. Monitoring and review**

10.1 The outdoor leader is responsible for monitoring the standard of the children's work and the quality of teaching outdoors. They are also responsible for supporting colleagues in the method of teaching outdoors, for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. The outdoor subject leader gives the headteacher an annual action plan in which s/he evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement. We allocate special time for the vital task of reviewing samples of children's work, usually with photographic evidence, and for visiting classes learning outdoors and to observe teaching outdoors.

