Outdoor Learning Policy (including Children in the EYFS)

Introduction

Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster children's love of learning - outdoors. At Caversham Preparatory 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.

Aims and Objectives

- 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 children to care for their environment

Benefits of 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.

EYFS

Within the EYFS document 'Effective Practice: Outdoor Learning', the key principles and systems of outdoor learning are outlined as follows:

- The outdoor environment has unique characteristics and features.
- Outdoor learning has equal value to indoor learning.
- Outdoor learning has a positive impact on children's well-being and development.
- Children need the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning.
- Outdoor learning is enhanced by an environment that is richly resourced with play materials that can be adapted and used in different ways.
- An approach to outdoor learning that considers experiences rather than equipment places children at the centre of the provision being made.
- 'Children can learn to make decisions, solve problems and grow in confidence in their own abilities outdoors and they need plenty of time to investigate their outdoor environment

purposefully. They will make predictions about what may happen based on their previous play experiences and test out these ideas and theories.' (EYFS Outdoors 2007)

The EYFS staff apply the above principles and procedures when planning outdoor learning activities for the children. Each school day we provide the children with equal indoor-outdoor access and freedom to choose outdoors if they wish, according to the principles of the EYFS framework.

Gross motor learning and physical activity are ongoing outside. However, an additional curricular provision is put in place. Each week, the learning indoors and outdoors is planned around our focus topics linked to a book and also through observation and assessment of children's interests and needs. This opportunity allows for children to master skills by applying them in a range of contexts and for staff to assess the children's understanding and mastery across the curriculum of specific knowledge and skills.

The planned activities using the outdoor area are specific to the outdoor – they are not activities that could just as well be done indoors. They are activities that take advantage of the outdoor learning environment. For example, when our focus text near Halloween is 'Room on the Broom', we enhance our mud kitchen area with petals and potions bottles so they can explore with a new context. When we want to focus on understanding of gravity and forces or check for understanding of this, we will specifically set up the guttering and stands and bring out items that can roll down (or not). Or when it is winter and we know it is going to freeze, we leave out the water tray and place items inside to if they freeze!

To ensure our children experience a breath of activities outdoors, we plan taking account of their interests and do encourage them to take risks and try something new. We get actively involved to engage the pupils to try the activities on offer as we would do indoors.

Teaching staff must ensure that assessment is ongoing and sharply focused on how well the children are mastering skills and knowledge.

EYFS Provision

There are no boundaries to outdoor learning within the EYFS. Outdoor learning is integral part of our day – the range of activities can be endless. Children have free access throughout the sessions, with range of free flow and planned activities. Children can choose from a wide range of resources and activities, including a mud kitchen, large loose parts for climbing and building water and sand areas.

Outdoor Learning Resources

We are lucky to have grounds which 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 schools Eco School programme. We are extremely

proud to hold the Green Flag Award and recognise the importance of making links between Eco studies and outdoor learning wherever possible.

- The School Garden, Learning Garden, Playground
- Queen Anne's Fields
- Balmore Park
- The Thames
- Caversham and its environs
- School Excursions
- Outward Bound Weekends
- Junior Camp

Woodland Experiences in the EYFS and Key Stage 1

Woodland activities are included within the EYFS and KS1 curricula. During our woodland trips, children take part in engaging and memorable activities that encourage creativity and exploration.

Children are not taught in the same way as the classroom but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through exploration, for example games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play the child develops their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns resilience and resourcefulness (perseverance and determination), how to give and ask for help and support from peers (emotional intelligence and teamwork), and how to appropriately self-manage risk in an increasingly risky world.

Our woodland activities can include den building, crafts such as dream catchers or whistles, games, flora and fauna identification, as well as stories and sharing.

The benefits of improved co-ordination and physical health from doing activities outside are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative; problem solving and perseverance. Children are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help, and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks -all crucial emotional skills to take with them into the adult world.

One of the principles of our Woodland trips is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

We aim to promote respect for wildlife and our woodland environment. This will be achieved partly through detailed long-term, medium-term and lesson planning.

Gardening Opportunities

Children from Reception to Year 6 have access to outside gardening areas. They have a potting shed and greenhouse to germinate seeds and store tools. Additionally, the garden areas are equipped with raised beds for growing vegetables and fruits. Harvested vegetables are used in cookery lessons to promote healthy eating and sustainable living. In the garden we have a bug hotel, hedgehog house, bird table and bee house.

After-school Provision

We offer a range of after school clubs, many of which are outdoors. Clubs range from hockey and fencing to gardening club and art club.

The Local Environment

The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment, for example, geography trips to the River Thames in Caversham or Henley or history fieldwork, surveys and collection of data etc.

Further Afield

Each year group has a planned programme of educational visits which complement and extend learning. These 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.

Residential Visits

Children have the opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel during the year 5/6 residential trip. They enjoy a stay at a Skern Ledge in Devon where they take part in a wide range of outdoor and adventurous activities including climbing, abseiling, canoeing and rafting.

Roles & Responsibilities

Children need the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning. Young children need all of the adults around them to value and enjoy the outdoors themselves in order to feel safe and secure outside. Attitude, understanding and positive thinking is important, as well as skills to use the outdoor space to make the most of what the space has to offer. Adults are role models for children and need to display qualities that we would like young children to develop; enquiry, motivation, willingness to try and a positive attitude. The role of the adult outside should be much the same as the role of the adult inside; to scaffold learning, observe and record. Children should be encouraged to make their own choices and lead their own learning with appropriate support from an understanding adult. Through observation, adults should have a deep understanding of how individual children learn best, their interests and personal motivations and are therefore able to offer appropriate individualised support to them.

All staff are responsible for setting up and clearing away equipment and must all be aware of the children's safety. A security and safety check of the outdoor play area must be completed before children go outside.

Children are supervised at all times whilst outside and are in an enclosed area.

Inclusion

The outdoors curriculum of shared and physical activities is an important part of a child's overall development. We are committed to providing for each child, whatever their individual and/or special need, the opportunity to access all areas of the EYFS Curriculum. We adapt the facilities and learning opportunities whenever possible, to enable all children to use them.

Health and Safety

All staff 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. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. Risk Assessments will be carried out where appropriate during sessions outdoors but there is also a general risk assessment for the outdoor provision.

We look after our resources by covering certain resources overnight, so they do not get rained on or soiled by birds and trees. Items are wiped down regularly using Milton. Children always wash their hands before and after using the outdoor areas. Items are checked regularly for damage and thrown away and replaced when appropriate.

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 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 never walk across the car park area.

- We must stay with our group.
- 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.

There are detailed risk assessment for all areas of the school grounds and risk assessments are written for all trips out of the school grounds.

Policy Administration

Linked Policies

This policy also needs to be in line with other school polices and therefore should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Early Years Foundation Stage
- PSCHE
- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Quoted Legislation and Guidance

None

Review Schedule

This policy is subject to 3 yearly reviews unless circumstances require an earlier review.

Update and Review Log

Updated/ Reviewed By	Date	Notes
J Lawson	Jan 2019	Reviewed
Andrea Hutchison	23.1.21	Reviewed
A Lawson	Sep 2022	Formatting and Updating Links
J Lawson	August 2025	Amalgamated the EYFS and School Outdoor Learning Policies for ease of use.