

St Andrew's CE Primary School



Outdoor Learning Policy

Summer 2021
Next review Summer 2022

Outdoor Learning Policy

Every Child A Champion in Their Own Right. Matthew 5.16 - "Let Your Light Shine."

Rationale

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has found that "there is evidence that when learning outside the classroom, children:

- attain higher levels of knowledge and skills
- improve their physical health and increase their motor abilities
- socialise and interact in new and different ways with their peers and adults
- show improved attention and enhanced self-concept, self-esteem and mental health
- change their environmental behaviours and their values and attitudes.

The outdoors can provide space and freedom for a type of learning that is difficult to replicate indoors. All children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. At St Andrew's CE Primary School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning throughout the year. It is part an important part of the "Every Child Matters" document.

Aims

- To raise the profile of outdoor learning
- 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 empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
- To provide a safe and secure environment that they can take risks in
- To encourage children to care for their environment

Policy into Practice

Possibilities for outdoor learning will be considered throughout our planning, using it as a context and a natural resource for learning.

We will:

- ensure that the outdoor space harnesses the special nature of the outdoors, to offer children what the indoors cannot. (This should be the focus for outdoor provision, complementing and extending provision indoors.)
- ensure that our outdoor area and resources within it are flexible and versatile, where children can choose, create, change and be in charge of their play environment.
- support inclusion and meet the needs of individuals, offering a diverse range of play-based experiences.
- enable children to access the school gardens and grounds on a regular basis. In the early years, children should access the outside area as much as possible, throughout the seasons. At St Andrew's we believe this provision should extend to children in all year groups.
- ensure that children enjoy energetic activity outdoors and the feeling of wellbeing that it brings, including opportunities to develop their large motor skills.

- observe, assess and record outdoor learning, ensuring that there is adequate provision for children to extend their learning.
- plan for outdoor learning with the children to offer experiences which have meaning to them and which are led by the child.
- enable children to work both individually and co-operatively outside.
- enable children to appreciate the beauty of nature; encouraging children to use a variety of natural resources.
- give children the opportunity to find a quiet space to relax.
- encourage children to enjoy and have fun outdoors in many contexts.
- work together (children, staff, parents, community) to create a better environment for all.
- organise and/or provide necessary resources (e.g. Wellington boots, raincoats).
- develop a set of rules through discussion with children.
- enable children to use resources safely and to manage and use the space and freedom responsibly.
- help children to take responsibility and care for the outside environment and resources within it.
- encourage children to respect their environment and to care for living things.

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 does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core...

It can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. Direct experience outdoors is more motivating and has more 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, interpretation or facilitation, 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 many school subjects alive as they focus on real results and consequences. For that reason the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and moral education [personal search]. Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It can lead to a deeper understanding of the concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. Quality learning experiences in 'real' situations have the capacity to raise achievement across a range of subjects and to develop better personal and social skills. When these experiences are well planned, safely managed and personalised to meet the needs of every child they can:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Provide a bridge to higher order learning.
- Develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments.

- Make learning more engaging and relevant to young people.
- Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment.
- Nurture creativity.
- Provide opportunities for informal learning through play.
- Reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance.
- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation.
- Develop the ability to deal with uncertainty.
- Provide challenge and the opportunity to take acceptable levels of risk.
- Improve young people's attitudes

Weather is often cited as a restrictive factor. Currently the school takes an assertive stance towards encouraging the children to be more resilient about weather conditions to ensure outdoor learning is a key feature of the day. The development of outdoor learning areas is a priority for the school.

The POP Group are also asked to assess current provision of resources and the range of opportunities available. They are encouraged to make proposals for consideration by the school community to further develop the outdoor learning environment.

Playground improvements need to be continually on the agenda – including access to playground games. Resources will also be purchased from time to time to support a range of activities.

Time is often cited as another constraining factor – but we advocate firmly that 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. It should also be noted that there is clear evidence that boys in particular, are more active in their learning in an environment where there is natural light.

We believe that outdoor learning should take place:

- In the school grounds
- In the local environment
- During residential visits to Raywell
- In places further afield

STATEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

At St. Andrew's Primary School, our school community has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are our pupils. This means that we have a Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy and Procedures in place which we refer to in our prospectus. All staff including our volunteers and supply staff must ensure that they are aware of our procedures. Parents and carers are welcome to read these on request.

Sometimes we may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare. We will always ensure that our concerns about our pupils are discussed with their parents/carers first unless we have reason to believe that this is not in the child's best interests.

PUPIL VOICE

Children are included in the planning process of activities. Their ideas are respected and encouraged.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

It is our firm belief at St. Andrew's that all pupils should be able to have equal access to educational activities, in all areas of the curriculum. This then helps children to develop a sense of worth and the valuable place they hold in society.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

St. Andrew's is an inclusive school and as such this policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Every Child Matters policy statement.

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. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. Risk Assessments will be carried out where appropriate. School Health and Safety Policy will be followed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process. Subject leaders will be responsible for monitoring their subject area outdoors.

Policy Review

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies, particularly the Early Years Foundation Stage Policy and PSHE Policy. It will be reviewed by the annually as part of our schedule of policy review.