

Weston Turville CE School

**Mission Statement –
TO PURSUE WISDOM WITHIN A CHRISTIAN ETHOS**

Outdoor Learning Policy

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Policy produced by	Mrs S Warnes
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Introduction

At Weston Turville CE School, we believe that learning need not take place solely within the classroom. Learning outdoors often provides the most memorable learning experiences and helps children to make sense of the world around them, and therefore our outdoor learning policy aims to foster and enhance children's love of learning through access to a broader range of learning environments. Our school grounds provide a variety of different activities, resources and equipment, and our overall goal is to develop the physical, emotional and social well being of our children through outdoor endeavours.

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

The term 'Outdoor Learning' is a broad one, which encompasses outdoor play, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, and personal and social development. While its boundaries cannot be clearly defined, it has a common core.

It is widely accepted that children need to be outside, and that they benefit from the opportunity to learn beyond the confines of the classroom. Outdoor learning is far more kinaesthetic, and includes a naturally multi-sensory approach that can benefit all learners. Taking learning outside optimises the use of language, as talk is actively encouraged and often essential. As formality relaxes, working alongside each other in the open, moving physically and mentally, relationships between peers often flourish. Self-esteem and self – confidence soar and a language rich environment captures the minds of many; particularly those who are limited by the confines of the classroom.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning has the potential to;

- Ensure that all children are given the opportunity to be successful learners, developing their skills and knowledge in ways that add value to their classroom experience.
- Enables children to grow into confident individuals, and building their self belief, positive attitudes and enhancing self-perception.
- Contributes towards creating independent learners with healthy self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Positively impact upon children's behaviour.
- Contribute towards children's understanding of a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Introduce a sense of community cohesion, allowing children to develop into responsible citizens able to make a positive contribution to their wider community.
- Create pride in the school and wider community, creating a sense of belonging.
- Raise learners' attainment, while promoting and strengthening communication skills and teamwork.

Aims and Objectives

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning in our school, by offering high quality opportunities.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- To encourage children to develop the necessary skills to solve problems, in order to create resilient, reflective learners.
- To develop children's communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment in which children can take and manage risks.
- To encourage close links with parents and the school, celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.

- To encourage children to care for their environment through increased awareness.
- To allow learning to be 'hands on', enabling practical application of different skills.

Supporting the Curriculum and Personal Development

The school has a scheme of work for outdoor learning which links with the class topics across the school. Each class enjoys at least one specific outdoor learning activity each half term, but also spends time outside at other times when it is appropriate to support the curriculum and personal development.

Pupils also spend time outside helping to maintain the outdoor areas, including planting and harvesting vegetables, re-filling and maintaining the bird feeders and pruning back shrubs in the Nature Reserve.

Settings and Resources

EYFS

The two Foundation Stage classes (F1 and F2) share a diverse outdoor learning space, which is equipped with a wide variety of resources. This area is considered in planning and used for a wide range of learning opportunities by both classes. A full time TA allows for this area to be accessible to children at all times, enabling it to be used as part of free flow activities in addition to planned, structured sessions.

The outdoor area is home to a well considered range of resources, such as bikes, to promote the development of gross motor skills, sand and water resources to support sensory development. English, maths and other activities from inside are replicated on a larger scale outside to suit the needs of the children.

KS1

The Year 1 classroom benefits from its own outdoor space, which acts as an 'overflow' to the classroom. Children use this area both to extend their learning in core subjects, but also to enjoy outdoor learning activities, such as keeping their own plants.

The EYFS/ KS1 playground is equipped with a variety of apparatus, including a large sports board, to encourage the development of gross motor skills, core strength, balancing, turn taking and social interaction. The playground floor is painted with number ladders and hopscotch, as well as sports markings to facilitate team games. The outer perimeter boasts a large, well established hedge which offers the children the opportunity to hunt for minibeasts.

KS2

The KS2 playground provides children with a range of apparatus to promote the development of gross motor skills, core strength, balancing, turn taking and social interaction. There are lines painted onto the playground to facilitate both imaginative games and gross motor skills. The football goals offer children the opportunity to participate in active team sports.

The Gazebo Area (also known as the 'Pitstop')

The gazebo area is located between the two playgrounds, and access is available to all pupils. During playtime this is promoted as a quiet space. The space is well set up for outdoor learning during lesson time, with several tables for outdoor learning. There is a large clock painted on the floor to support maths learning, and the gazebo itself offers a unique space for discussions, circle time or stories.

The Field

We are lucky enough to benefit from a substantial field, which all children have access to during playtimes when the weather permits. The field is home to the schools climbing apparatus, which all children are given the opportunity to access on a rota basis. It is also well utilised for PE lessons, giving children an opportunity to participate in a wide range of sporting activities, including match fixtures against local schools and annual sports days with the support of their families.

This space includes a wide range of different trees and plants, which the children have access to during playtimes, but that also provide staff with a fantastic resource when planning outdoor learning.

The Courtyard

The courtyard sits between the five school blocks, and is home to several different types of trees and flowers. There are two sundials, one large and one small, available to support in Maths understanding, and the more confined space lends itself nicely to short or quiet outdoor learning activities. There is a large 'storytelling' chair for stories and small group discussions under a large tree, and birdfeeders to encourage wildlife. The edges of the courtyard, next to the buildings, have several flower beds, which the school gardening club maintain and use to grow vegetables.

The Nature Reserve

The school is extremely fortunate to have a diverse four acre nature reserve as part of its grounds. This is home to a fantastic range of plants and wildlife, including foxes and deer.

There is enough seating for a class and there are paths mown throughout the space so children can walk around. Several years ago all our children planted trees which have now matured and children contribute to the ongoing care of the area.

Identification signs

Around the site there are several large identification keys to support science. These focus on trees, birds, wild flowers, minibeasts, pond animals and mammals.

At the front of the school there is a large pond for pond-dipping.

Residential Opportunities

Year 4

In Year 4, all children are given the opportunity to participate in a 3 day trip to Woodrow High House in Amersham, Buckinghamshire. While at Woodrow, children take part in different outdoor and adventurous activities, which include (but are not limited to):

- Low ropes
- Scavenger hunt
- Archery
- Night line
- Team building exercises
- Campfire and songs
- Raft building and swimming
- Mini beast hunt
- Orienteering
- Snake talk

Year 6

In Year 6, all children are given the opportunity to participate in a 5 day trip to River Dart Country Park in Ashburton, Devon. While at River Dart, children take part in a wide range of outdoor and adventurous activities, which include (but are not limited to):

- High ropes
- Canoeing and Kayaking
- Rock Climbing
- Caving
- High Beams
- Pampa Pole
- Crate Stacking
- Walking

Health and Safety

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.

All staff regularly discuss staying safe, risk and challenge in the outdoors. This includes clear safety instructions for individual activities. Outdoor equipment, such as the climbing apparatus, is checked regularly and a reporting system is in place to ensure that any health and safety issues that may arise from these items can be managed by the caretaker.

Staff ensure that children dress appropriately for the weather; wearing coats and hats etc in the winter, and sun hats and sun cream during the summer. Children are given the opportunity to change into more appropriate shoes (such as trainers or wellies) where appropriate before carrying out activities on the field or in the Nature Reserve.

Role of the Adult

'The Adult' may refer to a class teacher, teaching assistant or volunteer. Their roles include:

- Provide planning and resources for a challenging and stimulating outdoor learning experience.
- Set up and store equipment safely.
- Observe key children and plan appropriately.
- Be an active role model, interacting with and supporting children's learning and planned play.
- Provide varied opportunities to support and encourage children to explore and extend their experiences.
- Extend and develop children's language and communication in their play.
- Consult and involve children in their planning.
- Ensure appropriate ratios are maintained.
- Wear appropriate clothing and, where necessary, advise parents and carers on clothing suitable for outdoor learning.
- Display a positive attitude for outdoor learning.
- Observe and monitor children's learning and play in the outdoors.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children's learning is valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process. It is expected that at least one lesson of quality outdoor learning should take place each half term in every class. As outdoor learning can enrich all areas of the curriculum, it is the duty of subject leaders to ensure that outdoor learning is being used effectively to support teaching in their subjects.

Monitoring may be done through photographs, filming, observations, class assessments or follow up work.

Inclusion

The Outdoor Learning Policy runs in conjunction with our Equal Opportunities Policy.