

CHURCHFIELDS THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY

[Genesis 1:1](#)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Rationale

“When learning outside the classroom (LOtC) 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 to learning.”

Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto DfES 2006

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 Churchfields the Village School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning throughout the year. Wilshire Council Schools and Education Department is a signatory to the *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto* and as a Local Authority school we also share this commitment to developing excellent learning outside the classroom opportunities.

Policy Aims

- To raise the profile of outdoor learning.
- To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems developing resilient, resourceful and reflective learners.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative 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 and manage risks in.
- To encourage children to care for their environment.

Policy into Practice

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

We will endeavour to :

- ensure that we make the most of the fantastic outdoor spaces we have available and use it 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 take charge.
- ensure that children enjoy energetic activity outdoors and the feeling of well-being that it brings, including opportunities to develop their gross 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 can often be led and/or developed further 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.
- for the children to experience the cycle of planting, growth, harvest and cooking produce
- give children the opportunity to find a quiet space to relax and reflect.
- encourage children to enjoy and have fun outdoors in many contexts.
- communicate the benefits to parents and the wider community of Learning Outside the Classroom so that there is a greater understanding of its value and importance and provide a greater awareness of the safety standards the school adopts.
- work together (children, staff, parents, community) to create a better environment for all.
- organise and/or provide necessary resources to ensure every child is included (e.g. Wellington boots, raincoats).
- develop a set of rules through discussion with children that 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.

With the above in mind we shall set ourselves a set of expectations which will be reviewed annually which will outline our aims for outdoor learning as we progress on our journey towards fully integrating outdoor learning into our everyday practice

See appendices:

1. *EYFS outdoor learning areas expectations*
2. *Towards embedding outdoor learning in the Churchfields curriculum*

Resources

We are a staff that openly share great practice and ideas and are fully committed to our own continuing professional development. Outdoor learning is included in our SDP and CPD programme and subject leaders are encouraged to consider outdoor learning development and opportunities in individual subject leader action planning.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The school grounds

We are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds, at both bases, which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. At Churchfields the Village School we have fantastic outdoor spaces that are continuously being developed and improved: playgrounds with markings, covered areas

which allows for all-year all-weather outdoor activities, water and sand trays, gazebos with seating, basketball nets, hedges and trees, sheds containing toys for outdoor play, beautiful fields with hedgerows, ponds, willow structures, adventure play equipment (monkey bars, balance beams, climbing ropes) with all-weather base to allow play even in wet weather, wildlife areas, Forest School areas with fire circles, bird boxes, raised vegetable beds an enclosed garden with raised beds, a greenhouse and a shed containing a variety of hand tools (at the Atworth Base).

The local environment

The locality around our school harbours a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment. Equally we should seek to make links with local businesses and personnel with expertise in outdoor learning opportunities e.g. our local farmers, bee keepers, garden centres.

Visits further afield and Residential places

We plan for regular day trips further afield which are closely linked to learning in the classroom but also value them as opportunities for pupils to grow in confidence and expand their horizons, for instance visits to the theatre, a contrasting locality such as the coast, museums and galleries, places of worship, urban environments. By taking pupils out of their familiar environment we hope to stimulate curiosity and fire imagination.

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self esteem, communication and team working, for example. This provides children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.

All visits need to have a thorough risk assessment, processed through the Evolve online system for approval by the School's Education Visits Coordinator (EVC – The head teacher) and/or the Local Authority.

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. All activities should be considered for a risk assessment, but only those which might deliver activities not normally undertaken in school should proceed to full risk assessment. Off site visits and any activity involving ponds, pools, the beach streams etc must have an approved risk assessment before the activity goes ahead.

Weather

All children are regularly advised to bring coats to allow them to go outdoors. Each base has a small store of outdoor clothes to allow children who have forgotten or do not have suitable clothing to be included.

Extreme wind can bring other dangers against which children cannot be wrapped up such as flying debris, or simply being blown over. Decisions to work outdoors should assess this possibility and decide if the activity can go ahead on any given day.

The sun too can bring its own concerns. Be aware of the slip-slap-slop code (clothing, hats and sun cream). If the activity outdoors is prolonged ensure that children remain hydrated.

Equality and inclusion

We endeavour to ensure that all children whatever their abilities are able to learn, play and explore outdoors within the school grounds and further afield. Activities do not discriminate the basis of gender and we try to

balance out over time the specialist visits offered to all children within the school. At all times we aim to respect cultural issues.

Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation

Good practice in assessing outdoor learning is no different from assessment elsewhere in school. Where possible, activities should allow children to demonstrate “performance of understanding” i.e. they should be given tasks that show they can use what they have learned to...

- Generalise
- Apply exceptions
- Give explanations
- Make predictions
- Evaluate
- Find examples
- Find solutions
- Work independently
- Work with a partner
- Work as part of a team.

Policies to be read in conjunction with this:

Health and Safety
Behaviour
Equal Opportunities
Educational visits
Charging and remissions

Policy Review

The policies and practices outlined in this document will be reviewed regularly by the Outdoor Learning Leader supported by the SLT. Normal mechanisms of school self-evaluation will be used to assess the provision, record performance and identify areas for improvement. All staff have a contribution to make in this respect.

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