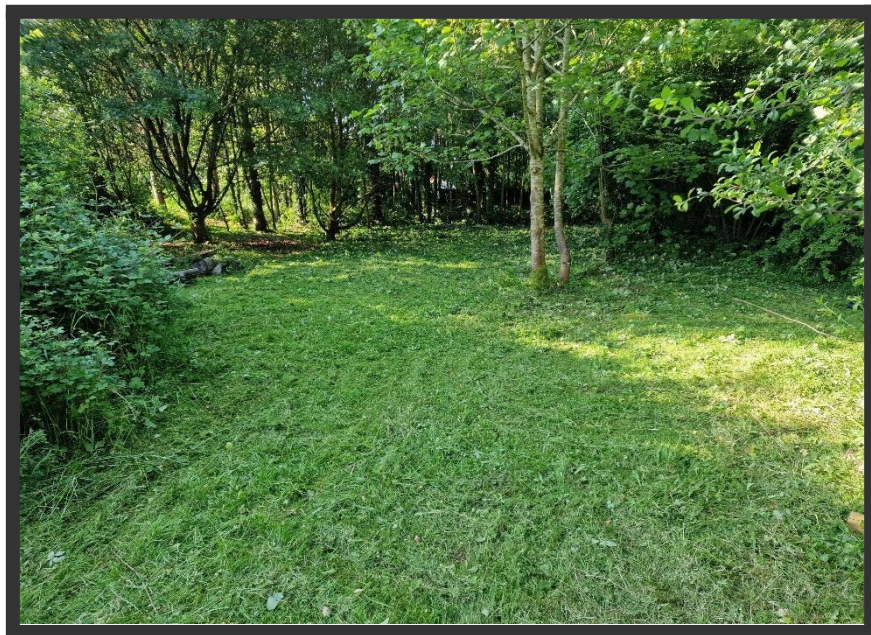


St Mark's CofE Primary School

Outdoor Learning Policy



Introduction

This document provides the rationale, policy and procedures for outdoor learning. It should be read in conjunction with other policies, including the Forest School Handbook.

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor learning through play, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development, the school farm, Forest School and more. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core.

Outdoor learning can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It leads to a deeper understanding of concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. Through skilled teaching, 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, experimentation, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning – to name only some of the many benefits. Outdoor Learning can help to bring learning alive. For that reason the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and personal and social development.

We believe that outdoor learning very much supports and develops St Mark's values and learning behaviours, which are key aspects of our school. These are clearly defined in our school ethos poster below.



Benefits of Outdoor Learning

- 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.
- Outdoor learning enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Outdoor learning contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Outdoor learning can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Outdoor learning contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Outdoor learning has a positive impact upon children's personal and social development. It can also bring about community cohesion and allow children to develop as responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to their wider community. It can create pride in the school and wider community and promote community involvement, renewing children's pride and creating a sense of belonging and responsibility.
- It can raise learners' attainment, promote and strengthen communication skills, team work and sense of community belonging.
- There is clear evidence that boys in particular are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment.

Aims and Objectives of this policy

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning throughout our school.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
- To encourage children to develop the skills to problem solve, developing resilience and to be reflective learners.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To develop empathy, compassion and care for our outdoor environment, nature and animals.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- To encourage close links with parents/carers and the school in celebrating our whole school outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- To encourage children to care for their environment – both in school and further afield.

Health and Safety

We will support our 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 have an awareness of others. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk – as appropriate.

In the first instance the school's policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to. These will be applied 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/carers acknowledge that a

degree of residual risk remains.

Our children are taught to manage risks in regards to outdoor learning. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe. Children are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

Risk assessments for Forest School and farm activities must be kept up-to-date and reviewed.

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 stay with our group or our teachers when outside.
- We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning outcomes when in outdoor learning activities.
- If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy our learning and we will be safe.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and is part of the same process.

Policy Review

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies. It will be reviewed by the governing body as part of its schedule of policy review.

Managing the Delivery of Outdoor Learning

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning e.g. forward planning meetings, classroom observation, teachers' self-evaluations, summative assessment records and other school procedures we monitor the use of outdoor learning as a key element of the learning experience at St Mark's. We provide support and professional development to enable staff to feel confident developing the expertise or knowledge base to adapt their practice to include opportunities for learning beyond the confines of the classroom.

We also encourage our children to be more resilient about our varying weather conditions.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning:

We have recently invested in the development of the outdoor learning area for Forest School.

The school will communicate the benefits to parents/carers and the wider community of outdoor learning so that there is a greater understanding of its value and importance and we will also provide a greater awareness of the safety standards the school adopts.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The School Grounds

We are exceptionally lucky to have large grounds, including an extensive woodland and farm, which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. We aim to make it evident in all aspects of the life and work of the school, in exactly the same way physical and mental health promotion permeates throughout our school.

The Local Environment

The locality around school gives a wealth of opportunities within an accessible distance.

Learning further afield is actively encouraged. Teacher's plan regular opportunities for children to engage in learning beyond the school grounds. Each year group has a planned programme of educational visits which complement and extend learning through their topics.

These take learners beyond their familiar environment, stimulate their curiosity and imagination and motivate children in a powerful way.

Residential Experiences

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, learning new facts, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working, for example:

- A 3 day, 2 night residential in Year 4 based around our history curriculum.
- A 5 day, 4 night residential in Year 6.

Each residential provides our children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel, all linked to the year group curriculum.

Disability Discrimination, Equality and Fairness:

The school has guidelines in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Our school takes measures to include the views of parents/carers and children who have a disability. These are used to make any necessary amendments to our school policies, promote positive behaviour/discipline procedures and other aspects of the life and work of our school. We work hard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination Promote equal opportunities
- Eliminate disability related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability
- Encourage an active participation by people with a disability

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