

Westmoor Primary School



Outdoor Learning Policy

Autumn 2018

Agreed by Staff: Autumn 2018

Agreed by Governors:

Review date: Autumn 2019

Policy on Outdoor learning

Rationale

The Department for Children, Schools and Families have 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 Westmoor Primary School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment to support and nurture a love of learning throughout the year. We have recently been fortunate enough to have lottery funding to help aid the development of the Early Years Outdoor Area. The Foundation Stage has seen the addition of a mud kitchen, water pump and other natural materials. The outdoor area offers endless opportunities and experiences and the breadth and depth of what these experiences offer young children is truly remarkable.

1 Aims and objectives

- To raise the profile of outdoor learning
- To encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating 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

2 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 raises learners' attainment, promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion
- There is clear evidence that boys in particular are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment.

3 Health and Safety

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. 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. In the first instance the school's policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to and 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 acknowledge that a degree of residual risk remains. We therefore discuss with parents their views regarding outdoor learning – and the degrees of risk that apply to the varying activities. 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. The following expectations are understood by all pupils. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

4 Where should outdoor learning take place?

School

We are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. We have a woodland garden which is used during the school day and for a gardening afterschool club which takes place weekly.

The Local Area

The locality around school also harbours a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance for example, 'The Killingworth Lake'. Learners are keen to explore and can develop their skills and knowledge by visiting their local environment.

Places further afield

We actively encourage teachers to plan 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. 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 also take place at Westmoor Primary school including our, 'London trip' and 'Robinwood'. Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working, for example. These residential visits provide children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.

5 Planning

The expectation is that teaching and learning across all subjects incorporates Outdoor Learning opportunities during each school half term. Due to the cross-curricular curriculum we have, Outdoor Learning will be planned as part of our creative topics from nursery through to Year 6. Teaching staff will ensure that there is adequate adult supervision for groups of children working outside and that outdoor learning planned for as and when needed. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that a risk assessment is in place for planned activities and individual children where health and safety may be at risk.

6 Weather

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 opportunities.

7 Able Children

Outdoor learning offers opportunities to deepen and enrich subject learning, for example through conducting research and developing enquiry and thinking skills and a personal understanding of the natural world around them.

Outdoor learning acts as a bridge to higher order learning and thinking opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.

8 Disability Discrimination, Equality and fairness

At Westmoor Primary school we work hard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities
- Eliminate disability related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled people

9 Monitoring and evaluation

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

Policy Reviews

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

Signed: H Hewitt

Date: Autumn 2018