

Outdoor Learning Policy at Sherborne Primary

Achieving, Belonging, Caring



Aims and objectives

Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster pupils' love of learning. At Sherborne Primary School outdoor learning is defined as experiential learning within an outdoor environment to support pupils' personal, social, and educational development, improve health and wellbeing, physical literacy, and develop environmental awareness. The outdoor space in which learning takes place is an integral part of the learning process. Sherborne Primary believes that all pupils have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. We further believe that it is important to enable pupils to use the outside environment as a context for learning.

We use an 'experience, learn, develop' approach where pupils learn through what they do, what they encounter, and what they discover. Delivered by adult learning practitioners, the experience is holistic and the impact comes from looking at an individual's whole self, their individual capabilities and outcomes.

The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto, launched by the government in 2006, states that 'Every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development whatever their age, ability and circumstances.'

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes outdoor play, school grounds projects, environmental education, and personal and social development. 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. Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has 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, 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 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. Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning Outdoor learning:

- Helps to ensure that pupils are successful learners enabling children to develop knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday learning experiences.
- Enables pupils to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon pupils' attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Can have a positive impact upon pupils' behaviour.
- Contributes towards the promotion and pupils understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Impacts positively upon pupils' personal and social development. It can also bring about community cohesion and allow pupils 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 pupils' pride and creating a sense of belonging and responsibility.
- Raises learner's attainment; promotes and strengthens communication skills, teamwork and sense of cohesion.
- Motivates pupils' to be more active in their learning

Aims and Objectives

To

- Raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- Empower pupils to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- Encourage pupils to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- Develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- Provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which pupils can take and manage risks.

- Encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- Encourage pupils to care for their environment

Health and Safety

We will support pupils in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. Staff ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the pupils how to be safe and aware of others. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. It is important that staff always carry a first aid kit and walkie talkie so that the office can monitor any need.

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.

Our pupils 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 pupils are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils:

- 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 listen to instructions, so we achieve our learning objectives.
- If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy learning and stay safe.
- If we are going to the field -We must always walk on the paths carefully and remember that children in classes are learning as we pass by.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The School Grounds

We are lucky to have grounds with an array of play areas, school field, sensory garden and access to allotments which offer opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play.

Pupils are not taught but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through play, for example games, stories, creative expression and sharing.

Through play the pupil develops their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns resilience and resourcefulness (perseverance and determination), how to give and ask for help and support from peers (emotional intelligence and teamwork), and how to appropriately self-manage risk in an increasingly risky world.

Outdoor learning activities might include forest school activities, den building, pond dipping, crafts such as dream catchers or bird feeders, games, flora and fauna identification, as well as songs, stories and sharing. The obvious benefits of improved co-ordination and physical health from doing activities outside are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative; problem solving and perseverance.

Pupils are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help, and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks -all crucial emotional skills to take with them into the adult world.

Children with Additional Needs

Moving beyond the classroom has been found to have a range of advantages for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. A particular benefit for those pupils and young people with learning difficulties or SEND can be the new, and sometimes therapeutic, visual and sensory stimulation they experience when learning in an outdoor environment. This can be liberating for those who struggle in a structured school atmosphere and is often demonstrated through improvements in pupils' social skills and behaviour.

More 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 their place in the natural world. The above issues allow opportunities to access discussion on a moral code, ethics, humanity, sustainability, science in its widest sense, problems pertaining to globalisation and philosophical enquiry, for example. Outdoor Learning acts as a bridge to higher order learning and opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.

Legislation

Outdoor Education Bill 2024-25

A Bill to require that every child be offered at least one outdoor education experience during primary school years and at least one such experience during secondary school years; and for connected purposes.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by our Eco and outdoor learning Co-ordinator.

Document Control Table			
Document Title	Mobile Phone Policy		
Author	Felicity Griffiths- Head of School		
Version Number	1		
Date Approved	Spring 2026		
Approved by	Academy Committee- Paul Carling- Chair		
Date of Next Review	Summer 2027		
Document History			
Version	Date	Author	Notes of Revision