Wootton Bassett Infants' School

Outdoor Learning Policy

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Vision

At Wootton Bassett Infants' School we believe that all children have the right to experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors. We believe that safe and stimulating outdoor experiences will enable children to ask questions, volunteer ideas, set out to solve problems and take risks. Outdoor learning actively contributes to the school's development plan and vision.

A wealth of research is available that indicates that being, and learning, outside is vital for children's physical health and development, emotional wellbeing and promotes cognitive development, in turn leading to a positive impact on their education and achievement. When outdoors, children have the freedom to explore and develop their physical boundaries, to take risks and to learn about and appreciate nature using all of their senses.

Aims

We believe that the outdoor environment is a rich, dynamic and natural space for learning and development in children of all ages and it is important for all children to have experience of this. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- The outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being, engagement and helps all aspects of children's development, including physical, emotional, social, team-work and communication skills.

- Playing, learning and exploring outdoors all offer opportunities for children to engage, solve problems and do things in different ways as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

- Being outdoors gives children first-hand experience with the weather, seasons and the natural world and helps develop a connection with the natural environment.

- The outdoor environment offers children the freedom to explore, use their senses and inspires different movement from that indoors, usually on a larger scale. This is vital for young children to develop their coordination, and experiment with moving their bodies.

Definitions

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that can include learning through outdoor play, school grounds projects, environmental education, personal and social development, and more. Outdoor Learning is highly cross-curricular but has a common theme in the sense that it offers learning opportunities that are not available indoors, enables children to experience the natural world, enables learning through the senses, physical exercise and learning on a larger scale. Good quality outdoor learning adds value to classroom learning.

Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Rich and varied outdoor experiences support children's learning and development by giving children the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe yet challenging outdoor spaces.

Curriculum

Learning outside the classroom can be at its most successful when integrated into long-term planning and has close links to classroom activities. Children are given opportunities to learn outdoors in a variety of ways throughout their time at Wootton Bassett Infants' School. All members of the school community enjoy events such as Outdoor Learning Day and Eco day, and weekly planning provides opportunities for learning to be taken outside. In KS1 the outdoor environment is used across the National Curriculum to bring learning to life and provide 'hands-on' experiences. We offer each class a termly outdoor session with a focus on being active, PSHE and wellbeing, changing and managing risks and the natural environment. Opportunities for trips and visits are also available. The children also have regular opportunities to enjoy our outdoor kitchen and digging pit.

We also have regular access to Vale View Gardens. This is a community garden project at the end of our road that we have actively been involved with from the outset: submitting ideas for the design of the garden, taking part in the official opening of the garden, planting, weeding, harvesting and taking care of the plants in the garden, using the garden to support our science curriculum and our eco school status and much more. The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust have also been secured through a local grant and the children benefit from outdoor experiences at Vale View linked to horticulture, farm-to-fork initiatives and how the outdoor environment changes with the seasons. Each class receives 2 sessions a year.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Within the EYFS pupils have daily access to a purpose-built outdoor area. This is resourced to provide age-appropriate learning experiences and continuous provision to stretch and challenge pupils in line with the EYFS curriculum. Additionally, the wider school grounds are used for learning outside the classroom. Learning experiences and resources enable pupils to explore the natural environment, seasons and their own interests and fascinations.

Monitoring and Assessment

Assessment of children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process. Teachers will use work produced in the outdoor environment alongside observations and teacher judgement to inform assessments in all areas of the National Curriculum.

In the EYFS evidence is collected through observations of learning, practical activities, conversations, play and both adult directed and child-initiated activities. Learning is also recorded in our 'Book of Wonder'. At the end of the EYFS this evidence is used to make judgements based on the Early Learning Goals.

Health and Safety

Taking risks is an important part of learning and enables us to manage risks appropriately as adults. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. We support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils are taught to be aware of and manage risks and the importance of staying safe. 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.

- Children are supported in taking risks within a safe and secure environment.
- The outdoor area offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others.
- Teachers ensure that all outdoor learning activities conform to the School's Health and Safety Policy.
- The school applies robust safety to effectively manage and minimise risks in all activities and trips.
- Risk Assessments are always carried out when visiting places off site or for activities within the school.

Inclusion

Moving beyond the classroom has been found to have a range of advantages for children of all abilities and backgrounds. A particular benefit for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) can be the visual and sensory stimulation they experience when learning in an outdoor environment. Risk Assessments are undertaken if appropriate to ensure children with SEN can access outdoor learning opportunities.