



Outdoor Learning Policy

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Status: Non-statutory

Excellent teaching gives children the life chances they deserve.

Enjoyment is the birth right of every child. Children learn better when they are excited and engaged – but what excites and engages them best is truly excellent teaching, which challenges them and shows them what they can do. When there is joy in what they are doing, they learn to love learning.

Excellence and Enjoyment (DCSF-2003)

Introduction

Our Outdoor Learning policy aims to foster children's love of learning. At Micklands Primary, we believe that all children have the right to experience quality learning opportunities in a more natural environment as well as in the indoor classroom. As a school we are fortunate to have various outdoor spaces - some of which our children may not have access to outside of school. As part of our commitment to educate the whole child we believe it is vital that children have as many rich and varied learning opportunities as possible whilst with us at Micklands.

Aims and Objectives of this policy:

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
- To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- To encourage children to care for their environment

What do we mean by Outdoor 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.

There are two main types of learning that come under the umbrella of OL referred to in this policy. The first is taking a lesson outdoors because the space may be better and richer learning can take place outdoors rather than in the classroom – eg a science lesson about air resistance is better taught outdoors with natural wind.

The second reference to OL is learning about the outdoors – nature walks, orienteering and such like.

Why take our learning outdoors?

Outdoor Learning can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. Research shows that there is considerable evidence that good quality learning outdoors adds value and enriches learning when back in the classroom. It can lead to a deeper understanding of concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which can be challenging to teach effectively using classroom methods alone.

Direct experience of the outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility. Through skilled teaching, outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning. Impact on behaviour is often positive and immediate. The hands on style of learning can engage those that might be less suited to traditional teaching styles. Allowing children to explore the outdoors and physically take part encourages them to burn off excess energy so that they are calmer and more focussed when returning to the classroom.

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:

- It 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.
- It enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions.
- It contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- It can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- It contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle.
- It 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, promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.
- There is clear evidence that boys in particular are more engaged in their learning in an outdoor environment.

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 understand that a degree of residual risk remains. Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor learning. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe.

There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

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 closely monitor the use of outdoor learning as a key element of the learning experience at Micklands Primary School. 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 encourage children to be more resilient about weather conditions.

Residential places

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working, for example. For instance, through staying at outdoor and adventure centres such as Rhos Y Gwaliau Outdoor Education Centre, provides children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.