

OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY

September 2018

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Rationale

Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster the children's love of learning. At Dovers Green School, we believe that all children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. We further believe that it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning.

Aims

That each child should:

- Be empowered to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- Be encouraged to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- Develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- Develop and build positive relationships with their peers and adults.
- Have access to a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- Develop their own confidence and self-esteem.
- Develop their fine and gross motor skills through the learning opportunities provided for them.
- Be encouraged to care for their environment.

Provision

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

EYFS Provision

Outdoor learning is integral part of the school day in the Foundation Stage, so the range of activities provided can be endless. Children have free access throughout each session, with a variety of free flow and planned activities provided. Children can choose from a wide range of resources in the outdoor area, such as large wooden planks, the mud kitchen, road safety kits, obstacle courses, large role play areas, mark marking areas, large numicon and more.

KS1 Provision

In KS1, all classes have access to a covered outdoor area, which is accessible from each individual classroom. The children are provided with activities linked to the learning which occurs inside the classroom, and all teachers try to utilize the outdoor space as much as possible. Opportunities to take learning outside are seized and taken full advantage of, and include activities such as performing poetry on the outdoor stage, using the hundred square and snakes and ladders in maths and active phonics lessons using the playground.

The School Grounds

We are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play.

Opportunities are planned for the children to explore the pond area, and take part in pond dipping activities. All children have access to the outside gardening areas, the greenhouse and vegetables patches. The greenhouse is used to germinate seeds and the gardening area is equipped with raised beds for growing

vegetables and fruits. Harvested vegetables are used in cookery lessons and during our 'Let's Get Cooking' club, to promote healthy eating and sustainable living.

Forest School

Every child takes part in a Forest School session, once a week. The sessions are planned and led by one of the numerous Forest School leaders that we have at school. Before each session, the leader will complete a Safety Sweep Evidence Form, to ensure that the area is safe for the children to use. The children are taught the Forest School Rules, and recapping the rules, forms the introduction to each Forest School session.

At Forest School children take part in fun and engaging activities that encourage creativity and exploration. Sessions are planned, based upon seven 'Overarching Principles', which are: Communication and language, building positive relationships, collaborative working, managing feelings and behaviour, looking after themselves, developing confidence/self esteem and developing fine and gross motor skills. The Forest School ethos aims to promote the children's confidence, social skills, sense of self-worth and emotional well-being in an outdoors environment. Children are taught certain skills, as laid out in the 'Progression in Learning in Forest School' document, and are also encouraged to find things out for themselves through play, for example games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play the children develop their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learn 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. Forest School activities might include den building, fire building, crafts such as making photo frames, games, listening activities, flora and fauna identification, as well as retelling stories and mathematical activities.

Dovers Green Forest School is a small area of mature woodland in which Forest School learning and activities take place. Every activity carried out in the outdoors will have an effect on the immediate environment and so we have developed a 'Sustainable Woodland Management Plan', which manages the impact of the area being used by the ten classes and the Children's Centre. During the first half of the Spring Term, the Forest School area is left to recover and sessions do not occur during this time.

After-school Provision

We want to offer the scope for each and every child to find a passion, develop a talent, spark an interest or simply find pleasure in doing an activity with others. After-school clubs are a fantastic way of achieving this and we are excited to offer a wide range of clubs. Many of the clubs we have available take place in the outdoor environment. Clubs range from team games, running, gardening and Forest School.

Challenge Days

Twice a year, the parents are encouraged to join us at school, to help to improve the grounds.....

Health and Safety

Dovers Green will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. The children 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 the risk associated with the planned activity.

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, acknowledge that a degree of residual risk remains.

Managing the delivery of Outdoor Learning

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning e.g. 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 Dovers Green 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.

Special Educational Needs

Moving beyond the classroom has been found to have a range of advantages for children of all abilities and backgrounds. A particular benefit for those children 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 children's social skills and behaviour. Risk Assessments are undertaken if appropriate to ensure children with SEND can access outdoor learning opportunities.

Provision for special needs in outdoor learning will be in line with the Special Needs and Disability Policy. This includes the three principles for inclusion:

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individual and groups of pupils

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

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process. In Forest School sessions, observations will be taken of all children related to the seven 'Overarching Principles'.

Equal Opportunities

The National Curriculum secures for all pupils, irrespective of social background, culture, race, gender, differences in ability and disabilities, an entitlement to a number of areas of learning to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for self-fulfilment and development as active and responsible citizens.

The four main purposes of the National Curriculum are:

- to establish an entitlement
- to establish standards
- to promote continuity and coherence
- to promote public understanding

The school has guidelines in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2010 our school will be taking measures to include the views of parents and children who have a disability. These will be used to make any necessary changes to our school policies, promoting positive behaviour/discipline procedures and other aspects of the life and work of our school. At Dovers Green School we will work hard to:

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

Resources

Resources for Outdoor Learning are kept in the EYFS sheds, the storage boxes on the year one terrace and the storage boxes on the year two terrace. Equipment for pond dipping and gardening activities are kept in the storage boxes next to the pond. Forest School resources are kept in the Forest School shed.

This curriculum policy should be read in conjunction with our:

Progression in Learning at Forest School document
Forest School Handbook
Teaching and Learning Policy
EYFS Policy
SEND Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Equal Opportunities Policy
Assessment Policy
Inclusion Policy