



Outdoor Learning Policy

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Statutory policy:	No.
Source:	School

Our School Vision

Our school vision is based on the theme of '*Taking Care*'. We strive to encourage our children, staff and wider community to 'take care' of one another through the core Christian Values of:

Kindness, Hope, Courage and *Respect*.

Our vision is inspired by the words in Corinthians:

"Let love and kindness be the motivation behind all that you do."

(1 Corinthians 16.14)

Ravenshead C of E Primary School is committed to valuing diversity and to equality of opportunity. In biblical tradition, children in particular are seen to hold a special place in the priorities of God. Furthermore, we hold to the foundational belief that all people are created in God's image and are intrinsically valuable. Everyone should be treated as fundamentally precious, irrespective of behaviour, achievements or potential.

Therefore, we aim to create and promote an environment in which pupils, parents/carers and staff are treated fairly and with respect and feel able to contribute to the best of their abilities. The school's biblical foundation provides a model of Christian community described as the 'body of Christ', in which everyone has a part to play, and everyone without exception has God-given gifts which are to be used for the benefit of others.

Why is Outdoor Learning important?

Outdoor learning is a long-term learning process using our amazing natural outdoor space. The learning focuses on processes and understanding rather than producing something and it allows time and space for children to develop at their own rate. The use of the woodland empowers the children to take responsibility for their own learning and development in a natural space and in all weathers, enabling them to connect to the natural outdoor space and develop respect and awareness for the world around them. It also provides an opportunity for children to develop an appreciation of the natural world and their environment.

There are many reasons that spending time outdoors is beneficial:

- **Physical Health benefits** – Increased oxygen levels outside increase brain function. Increased gross motor movement reduces chance of obesity and increases bone density (reducing chances of osteoporosis). Sunlight increases vitamin D production. Increased resilience to illness.
- **Mental Health benefits** – Spending time in green spaces reduces Cortisol (a stress chemical) levels in the brain, therefore has a calming influence. The reduction in Cortisol also increases receptivity for building neural pathways (learning) in the brain.
- **Social benefits** – Research suggests that in natural play areas the leaders tend to be the most intelligent and imaginative, compared to hard-top play areas where the dominant children are those who are the physically strongest. When playing outside communication, teambuilding and language skills are developed.
- **Risk Awareness** – Playing outside allows children to learn about risk assessment and taking. Children that are exposed to acceptable levels of risk at a young age are less likely to make bad judgements in the future.
- **Behaviour** – Due to the calming effect on the brain and the increase in physical space outside, improved behaviour is often noticed.

Why is the aim of our Outdoor Learning curriculum?

The children will be able to take responsibility for their own learning and development through child-led learning and learning through play. Through the children having some choice, this will increase enjoyment, participation and motivation.

Children are set up to achieve, and supported to take appropriate risks through developing trust in themselves and in others.

The natural environment provides stimulus for all senses, all areas of development and all learning styles; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

Outdoor Learning encourages emotional growth, self esteem, confidence and independence. It gives learners the time and space to be themselves, find peace and communicate with others in a safe and caring environment.

Outdoor Learning instils a deep respect and awareness for the natural world and reconnects participants to their environment.

Being in nature allows learners to observe real life, witness cause and effect and consider our roles and responsibilities towards it.

We currently have one member of staff trained at Forest School level 1 and another with a level 2 qualification.

When does Outdoor Learning take place?

Forest School takes place for 1 session a week for Foundation, 1 session each week for Key Stage 1 and a session every two weeks for Key Stage 2. Occasionally, the timetable has to be adjusted to fit around other school events or due to extreme weather conditions, such as high winds.

Our curriculum planning is in three phases: long term, medium term and short term. The long term progression map for the woodland, outlines the overall skills and themes to be explored. The year group MTP will indicate when the overall skills and themes are to be explored and the short term plans for each year group will offer more detail into each session. The subject leader for Forest Schools oversees the range of activities and offers support to staff for planning and resourcing sessions.

The progression map for the woodland, sets out sessions for each year group, ensuring progression and coverage of skills. This is to be followed by each year group, but may be added to where appropriate on the MTP and STP.

How is Outdoor Learning taught?

All sessions should start in a communal space – the marquee or the fire circle. It is so important that it is explained to the children the Health and Safety risks (depending on activities) and recap the core rules rules (see separate document). It is incredibly important that expectations are also explained to the children. This includes: -

- Coming back to the main circle when the horn/whistle blows
- Looking after all equipment
- Look after each other
- Packing away after equipment is used. **The Forest must be tidy after each session ready for the next session – this is non-negotiable. This includes ensuring that everything is back where it was found, including sticks and twigs – leave no trace behind.**
- Seek an adult for first aid
- Not to leave the forest unless gained permission
- Not climbing trees or accessing the pond without adult supervision.

During the session, teacher/TA input is with a small group. This is normally because the activity may carry more risk or be more complex so cannot be left unattended. The other children will have had their input and expected to facilitate their own learning. The other adult (who isn't with a small group) must circulate the forest area to check on the children.

After the session, gather back in the marquee to discuss the learning. Whilst the teacher is leading this part of the session, the other adult should go and check the forest and ensure that all the areas are clear. Children may want the opportunity to share their learning and something they have created. This should be supported. Allow time for this. At this point, it may be a good idea to share the next steps of learning and what next week may look like.

Zoned boxes (e.g. maths box) must be securely closed to prevent flooding and be ready to use. If you find you are running low on materials, contact one of the forest leaders. All items removed from the boxes must be replaced. Boxes will have a list of items that are stored there.

Any items linked to fire use or tool work are kept in a locked box, locked in the headteacher's office. When required, they should be taken out by the lead member of staff and returned and locked away. They must not be left unattended.

Any staff leading activities linked to tool work or fire use must be trained before carrying out any activities with the children.

Sessions may be based upon developing skills such as cooking or wood craft. We also try to link other areas of the curriculum to the woodland so the children may take part in artistic activities, physical activities, role play or investigation of the natural world for example.

The types of outdoor activities learners undertake may include the following, and countless more. Activities selected will depend on the learner's age, stage of development and interests:

- Field Studies Activities – minibeast hunts, pond dipping, tree identification, bird watching, life cycle games
- Sensory Activities – games to do with colour, smell, sound, touch, blindfold games
- Bushcraft – shelter building, knot use, fire lighting and cooking, whittling
- Woodland crafts – natural jewellery, weaving, natural dyes
- Teambuilding and trust games – blindfold games, circle games, problem solving activities, team games
- Wildlife conservation – tree planting, nest box construction, fence/path building
- Imaginative activities – story telling, drama, role play, songs
- Physical play – tree climbing, balancing, log dragging, digging
- Construction – shelter building, rafts, rope swings, tree houses, pulleys

How are all learners supported?

We recognise that some children may require more support or challenge and provide suitable learning opportunities by:

Setting common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses.

Setting tasks of varying difficulty, enabling all children to work to their full potential.

Providing challenge or support using different resources.

Using teaching assistants to support the work of individual children or groups of children.

Following individual risk assessments for SEND children to enable them to take part as fully and as safely as possible.

Which Outdoor Learning resources are available?

Resources will be kept in the shed in the woodland. This must be closed correctly and locked after resources have been returned. Each box should be returned to its named location in the shed. If any resources are lost or broken, it is the responsibility of all staff to inform forest leaders so that they can be replaced. Children are not allowed in the shed.

Any resources that have been used must be cleaned e.g. mud kitchen and cooking equipment.

Tools and fire starting equipment are kept in a locked box in the headteacher's office. These must be locked away after use and must not be left unattended.

We have a selection of teacher reference books packed with ideas and techniques to be used. These are kept in the shed.

How is Outdoor Learning monitored?

The Forest School leaders are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the subject. The programme of study is reviewed each year through, when relevant:

- Staff questionnaires
- Pupil interviews
- Photos or videos of sessions
- Spending time with classes in the Forest

Following this review process, the forest school leaders will deliver any training or support required to staff. Through the above methods, the leaders will be able to judge whether the quality of experiences are in line with the rationale and aims of Forest Schools.

How is health and safety managed?

Staff will inspect the woodland area through dynamic risk assessments prior and during sessions. They must let leaders know if they spot anything concerning so that it can be repaired or moved away from pupil areas. Mrs Johnson//Mrs Keightley/Mr Dykes to inspect as part of their school safety inspection.

Risk assessment is completed, reviewed and shared with staff.

Pupils will be reminded not to eat anything taken from the woods.

Cooking equipment must be cleaned before and after use.

All equipment with sharp edges e.g. saws, drills, knives, peelers and hammer will be kept in the headteacher office in a locked box. These must be returned and locked away after use and not left unattended.

Pupils will be reminded at the start of each session of the rules and expectations, including sticking to the woodland boundaries.

Ensure that enough staff are present to supervise the children (teacher per class plus adults needed for 1:1 SEND support).

If setting a campfire, follow safety rules regarding positioning of children and handling of fire starting tools. Ensure water is taken out and that the fire blanket is accessible – see separate guidance on fire safety.

Ensure children are supervised when climbing trees (see risk assessment).

Children must be supervised in a small group when using tools and should wear safety glasses and gloves.

Staff leading tool work or fire use must be trained before attempting these activities with children.