

# RIVERSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

# Outdoor Education Policy

Date:

Review Date:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Governor)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher)



## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUTDOOR LEARNING**

Outdoor learning is 'active learning outside of the classroom' and aims to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences. The outdoor environment is an effective and stimulating place to learn. Regular outdoor learning encourages children to engage with nature and brings a host of benefits in terms of health, self-esteem, self-confidence and motivation. The outdoors also provides excellent opportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always relevant in the classroom. These can be presented as building on existing outdoor play, transferring activities normally carried out indoors, school garden projects, environmental exploration and education, or off-site visits. Providing positive opportunities for active learning, the outside environment can promote skills of enquiry, problem solving, communication, co-operation, creativity and evaluation.

## **OUR SCHOOL'S AIMS FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING**

The overall aim for Outdoor Learning at Riversdale Primary School is to enrich learning for all pupils. We aim for it to provide relevant, engaging experiences that support learning in all areas of the curriculum.

With Outdoor Learning sessions we aim to offer children the opportunity to:

- Plan, build, evaluate and sometimes demolish
- Find similarities and differences, observe and classify
- Be energetic, adventurous and assess risk
- Make marks, use large scale media, be messy
- Plant, grow, harvest and cook
- Hide, explore and discover
- Investigate, make predictions, and test theories
- Imagine, pretend and reflect
- Measure, locate, transport and record
- Observe, explore, learn about and learn to respect the natural world

## **THE OUTDOOR LEARNING CURRICULUM AT RIVERSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Outdoor Learning is a right of every pupil in the school. We plan a calendar of activities to fit the seasons and topics of learning within the school, with each class undertaking at least one outdoor learning session every half term. The activity is common to each class but is simplified for Key Stage One and extended and stretched for Key Stage Two. The topics include links to art, science, numeracy and literacy and are used as a basis for further work and development back in the classroom.

## **THE CONTRIBUTION OF OUTDOOR LEARNING TO TEACHING IN OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS**

Much research has been done on the impact of Outdoor Learning across the curriculum and on pupil's personal, health, social and emotional wellbeing. There are considered to be five main benefits:

- Increasing knowledge and understanding – children benefiting from outdoor learning perform better in reading, mathematics, science and social studies, and show greater motivation for studying science.
- Developing skills – a broad range of skills ranging from the technical to the social have been identified as an outcome of outdoor learning, particularly when it is integrated with the everyday school curriculum.
- Changing attitudes and behaviours – environment education was found to make other school subjects rich and relevant and get apathetic students excited about learning.
- Health and well-being benefits – exposure to the natural environment has been found to lower the effect of various mental health issues that can make it difficult for students to pay attention in the classroom. It can also bring about improvements in feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy.
- Benefits to schools, teachers and the wider community – the research found that teachers benefiting from outdoor learning became more enthusiastic about teaching and bring innovative teaching strategies back into the classroom.

## **INCLUSION**

We ensure that all children, whatever their individual needs, are able explore outdoors within the school grounds and further afield.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Good practice in assessing outdoor learning is no different from assessment elsewhere in school. Where possible activities should allow children to demonstrate “performance of understanding” i.e. they should be given tasks that show they can use what they have learned to:

- Generalise
- Apply exceptions
- Give explanations
- Make predictions
- Evaluate
- Find examples
- Find solutions

Assessment may be teacher lead, peer or self-assessment. It should be broad based against the development of a child as a whole, rather than for individual tasks and activities.

## **CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT**

To ensure that the teaching of Outdoor Learning is effectively implemented in the school, the Outdoor Learning Subject Coordinator:

- Ensures the school policy is updated.
- Orders, updates and allocates resources as required.
- Provides all staff with an up to date inventory list of resources we have available in school.
- Attends appropriate courses on the development of Outdoor Learning and relays information back to staff.
- Leads staff meetings to ensure all staff are confident outdoors and are aware of the latest developments.
- Liaises with partner schools.
- Contributes to the school development plan.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEWING**

Throughout the school year, the Outdoor Learning Subject Co-Ordinator and Outdoor Learning Teaching Assistant (where applicable) will monitor the effectiveness of the policy and delivery of outdoor learning in the school by:

- Evaluating each lesson after it has taken place
- Reviewing the effectiveness of each annual plan
- Undertaking a Science forum with children from every year group
- Talking informally to the staff and pupils

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Child should be informed of any potential risks and the need for self-awareness and good hygiene before all Outdoor Learning sessions. Care must be taken to ensure children do not put their hands into their mouths or eyes during the session, and hands must be washed thoroughly in on return into school. Consideration should be made to suitable clothing for outdoor sessions, and parents informed in advance. Outdoor, off-site visits should consider the weather before departing, and no visits should take place if there is a forecast of a storm and/or lightning.

All activities should be considered for a risk assessment, but only those which might deliver activities not normally undertaken in school should proceed to full risk assessment. All off-site visits must have an approved risk assessment before the activity goes ahead.