

Stanley Grove Primary & Nursery  
School



## OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY



## **Introduction**

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)

Our outdoor learning policy aims to foster children's love of learning. At Stanley Grove, 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.

## **What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?**

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play [learning through play], school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development, and more. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core...

Outdoor learning can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It leads to a deeper understanding of concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone.

Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility. The results from outdoor learning can be instantaneous as well as active and therefore impact on behaviour as well as tapping into the learning styles of the more kinaesthetic learner. Through skilled teaching, outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning.

Active learning readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning – to name only some of the benefits.

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. 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:

- Outdoor learning 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.
- Outdoor learning enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions. Outdoor learning contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Outdoor learning can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Outdoor learning contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Outdoor learning 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 raises learners' attainment, promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.

- There is clear evidence that boys in particular are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment.

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 close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- To encourage children to care for their 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, including parents acknowledge that a degree of residual risk remains. We therefore discuss with parents their views regarding outdoor learning – and the degrees of risk that apply to the varying activities.

Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor learning. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe. (see separate Risk Assessments)

### **Policy Review**

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies, particularly the Outdoor Provision in the EYFS Policy. It will be reviewed by the governing body as part of its schedule of policy review.

### **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 Stanley Grove 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 and parents to be more resilient about weather conditions.

### **Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning.**

We have a long term plan for our outdoor learning which has included the training of a Forest School Lead, forest expansion on the school grounds, Development of allotment, polytunnel and school marsh area. Pupils have opportunities to visit local nature reserves, e.g. Stanley Marsh, Aire and Calder Navigation, etc.

The school will communicate the benefits to parents and the wider community of outdoor learning so that there is a greater understanding of its value and importance and provide a greater awareness of the safety standards the school adopts.

### **Where should Outdoor Learning take place?**

The school grounds:

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

The local environment:

The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment.

Places further afield:

We actively encourage teachers to plan opportunities for children to engage in learning beyond the school grounds. Each year group has a planned programme of educational visits which complement and extend learning.

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 Robinwood 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.

### **Children with Additional Needs**

Outdoor learning can also overlap with the teaching of life skills. At Stanley Grove School, we will be supporting our children by using life skills training as a motivational tool, encouraging our pupils to use a range of interdisciplinary skills to meet certain targets and objectives.

### **Able Children**

Outdoor learning offers opportunities to including personal research and develop a personal understanding of their place in the natural world, further developing an understanding of learning processes, enquiry and thinking skills; and that deepen and enrich subject learning.

The above issues allow opportunities to access discussion on a moral code, ethics, humanity, sustainability, science in its widest sense, problems pertaining to globalisation and philosophical enquiry, for example. Outdoor Learning acts as a bridge to higher order learning and opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.

### **Disability Discrimination, Equality and fairness**

The school has guidelines in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. 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 Stanley Grove 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

Signed:(Chair of Governors).....Date.....

Signed:(Headteacher).....Date.....