



Small Beginnings; Endless Possibilities

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."
Matthew 13 31-32

Outdoor Learning Policy and Principles

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| Policy agreed (date): | November 2025 |
| Policy published (including on website) (date): | November 2025 |
| Next review (date): | November 2028 |

1. Vision and Ethos

1.1 Statement of Intent

Outdoor learning at our school is deeply rooted in the Christian value reflected in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31–32). Just as the smallest seed grows into the largest garden plant and becomes a tree that gives shelter, so too does our outdoor learning nurture every pupil's potential, enabling them to flourish spiritually, academically and socially. Outdoor learning provides fertile ground for fostering **compassion**, encouraging **curiosity**, and developing **courage**.

This policy seeks to firmly embed the significance of outdoor education within our holistic, child-centred approach to learning and within the context of our rural setting.

1.2 Alignment with School's Christian Vision and SIAMS Framework

In line with the SIAMS Inspection Framework (2023), outdoor learning contributes to pupils' spiritual development, resilience, and mental health. Outdoor experiences provide opportunities to explore theological concepts such as stewardship and the interconnectedness of creation, supporting Christian distinctiveness through "living well together".

2. Aims and Objectives of Outdoor Learning

2.1 Aims

- To provide a broad, balanced and creative curriculum that extends learning beyond the classroom.
- To enhance children's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- To cultivate a meaningful relationship with nature and the environment, especially in the context of the school's rural surroundings.
- To develop transferable twenty-first-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

2.2 Objectives

- Enable all pupils to achieve personal excellence through inclusive outdoor experiences.
- Promote the development of **compassion** for each other, local communities and the natural world.
- Stimulate **curiosity** through safe, explorative and rural engagement.
- Build **courage** through managed risk-taking and outdoor challenges.

3. Legislative and Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by and compliant with the following legislation, national guidance and frameworks:

- **Department for Education (DfE) Guidance:**
 - *National Curriculum in England (2014)*
 - *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto*
 - *Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sport (AfPE)*
- **Ofsted Toolkit (2025 Framework):** Recognises outdoor learning as enriching the curriculum and contributing to personal development, behaviour and attitudes.
- **SIAMS Evaluation Framework (2023):** Outdoor learning promotes spiritual flourishing, stewardship, dignity and community.
- **EYFS Framework (2023):** Emphasises outdoor exploration as central to early development.
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE):**
 - *School trips and outdoor learning – health and safety checklist*
 - Advocates for proportionality in managing risk
- **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA):** Provides outdoor safety guidance.
- **British Educational Research Association (BERA):** Promotes ethical engagement and learner voice in outdoor contexts.
- **Chartered College of Teaching:** Supports evidence-informed outdoor pedagogies.
- **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):** Highlights outdoor learning benefits for well-being, social learning and metacognition.

4. Curriculum Integration and Pedagogy

4.1 Curriculum Context

Outdoor learning is integrated across all key stages and curriculum areas, especially Science, Geography, Physical Education, and Art. In our rural setting, outdoor learning also allows for meaningful exploration of local agriculture, biodiversity, land use and environmental stewardship.

4.2 Pedagogical Approaches

- Place-based and experiential learning
- Forest school-inspired practice (particularly in EYFS and KS1)
- Inquiry-led problem-solving
- Use of local natural and farmed environments as learning contexts
- Reflective pupil dialogue and construction of meaning

4.3 Skill and Value Development

Outdoor learning promotes:

- **Compassion** through understanding interdependence within natural and rural ecosystems
- **Curiosity** by engaging with seasonal change, rural habitats and ecological systems
- **Courage** through resilience-building challenges and responsible risk management in unfamiliar contexts

5. National Curriculum-Linked Outdoor Learning Activities

| Year Group | Curriculum Area | Example Outdoor Learning Activity | Linked NC Objective |
|------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| EYFS | Understanding the World | Visit to a working farm | Explore the natural world, observe animals and seasonal change |
| EYFS | Physical Development | Climbing mounds and balancing logs | Develop strength, balance and coordination |
| Year 1/2 | Geography/ Science | Walk through local bridleways to study hedgerows | Identify common plants and describe seasonal changes |
| Year 1/2 | Science & Rural Studies | Grow vegetables in school garden | Observe how plants need water, light and suitable temperature |
| Year 3/4 | Science | Minibeast habitat survey and classification | Recognise that living things can be grouped in a variety of ways |
| Year 3/4 | Art | Natural dye making from hedgerow plants | Use materials to create art and understand historical processes |

| Year Group | Curriculum Area | Example Outdoor Learning Activity | Linked NC Objective |
|------------|--------------------|---|--|
| Year 5/6 | Geography | Study of land use and rural economy in local villages | Understand different types of land use and economic activity |
| Year 5/6 | PSHE / Citizenship | Work with local farmers on a conservation project | Contribute positively to the local community and environment |

Activities are tailored to embed National Curriculum content while reinforcing awareness of the local rural context.

6. Inclusion and Accessibility

6.1 Equal Opportunity

All pupils, regardless of physical ability, SEND status, or background, will have full access to outdoor learning. Adaptations and support will ensure compliance with EHCP provisions and our Equalities Policy.

6.2 Pupil Voice

Pupils will contribute to planning outdoor provision, and their reflections will inform future opportunities—as advocated by BERA's ethical guidelines and SIAMS emphasis on dignity, voice and participation.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Senior Leaders

- Champion outdoor learning within the school's strategic vision
- Oversee resourcing, staffing and professional development
- Embed provision in the curriculum and development plans

7.2 Curriculum and Subject Leaders

- Support cross-curricular planning for outdoor learning
- Monitor impact, evaluate provision and drive innovation

7.3 Class Teachers

- Lead responsive, child-centred outdoor learning and risk assessments
- Create opportunities for exploration of rural life and local context

7.4 Support Staff and Volunteers

- Support implementation of activities and uphold safe practice
- Attend relevant CPD relating to outdoor environments and SEND access

8. Health, Safety and Safeguarding

8.1 Risk Assessment and Safeguarding

- All activities assessed using dynamic and written risk-benefit analyses, in line with HSE guidance
- Outdoor learning activities subject to school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Offsite Visits Policy

8.2 Site Management

- Daily checks of learning areas; termly audits by headteacher and governor with responsibility for health and safety
- Specific supervision ratios adhered to as per DfE / LA guidance

8.3 First Aid and Emergency Protocols

- At least one adult trained in paediatric or emergency first aid on site
- Emergency procedures for each site visit are included in risk assessments

9. Professional Development and Research Engagement

9.1 Staff Development

- Ongoing CPD in outdoor leadership, rural education and outdoor risk management
- Access to training from organisations like Landscape Learning and Chartered College of Teaching

9.2 Evidence-Based Practice

- Use of EEF guidance to evaluate impact on behaviour, learning retention and engagement
- Insights drawn from BERA and Chartered College research enhanced with local community expertise

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact

10.1 Monitoring

- Shared planning scrutiny and learning walks

- Pupil reflections and evaluations
- Learning journals (digital or physical) for recording progress

10.2 Impact Evaluation

- Analysis of attendance, engagement and attainment
- Feedback from families, governors and pupils
- Integrated into Subject Leader reports and School Evaluation Framework

11. Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

Our rural context allows pupils to engage meaningfully in care for the environment, food growing, and biodiversity. Projects support the DfE Sustainability & Climate Change (2022) strategy and the SIAMS theme of stewardship.

Regular participation in eco-projects, wildlife surveys and partnerships with local landowners and conservation groups make children active stewards of their rural surroundings.

12. Parental Engagement and Community Involvement

- Parents are invited to participate in outdoor open days and local walks
- Partnership working with local farms, environmental groups and community projects enriches learning
- Integration of intergenerational rural knowledge through storytelling and experience sharing

13. Review Process

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Leadership Team and governing body in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. Revisions will reflect best practice, legislation updates and curriculum changes.

A Set of Principles for Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning is pivotal in fostering holistic development and inspiring a lifelong love for learning among students. The following ten key principles guide effective outdoor learning, firmly aligned with the school's vision and values: 'Small beginnings; Endless possibilities. Growing together with Compassion, Curiosity and Courage.'

- 1. Integration with the Curriculum**
- 2. Safety First**
- 3. Engagement with the Environment**
- 4. Developmental Appropriateness**
- 5. Evidence-Based Practice**
- 6. Inclusivity and Accessibility**
- 7. Collaboration and Community Engagement**
- 8. Encouragement of Curiosity**
- 9. Reflective Practice**
- 10. Evaluation and Development**

Each principle resonates with the biblical parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), illustrating how small beginnings can lead to significant growth and impact.

1. Integration with the Curriculum:

The Department for Education (DfE) Guidance, particularly the National Curriculum in England (2014), mandates that outdoor learning reinforces core subjects while enhancing vital skills such as emotional intelligence, teamwork, and resilience. Outdoor spaces serve as vibrant classrooms, promoting enquiry-based learning through real-world experiences, echoing our commitment to growing together with compassion and curiosity.

2. Safety First:

Safety is paramount in any learning context, especially outdoors. Following the guidelines in Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sport (AfPE) is imperative for risk assessment while promoting active participation. Compliance with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulations ensures outdoor activities are secure, reducing the risk of accidents. The input from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) offers insights into effective safety management, fostering exploration within a safe environment, consistent with our dedication to providing a nurturing atmosphere.

3. **Engagement with the Environment:**

The Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto articulates the importance of integrating outdoor experiences within the educational framework as a means to enrich learning, develop skills for life, and inspire creativity. It encourages the use of diverse environments—be it local parks, woodlands, or urban settings—as sites for educational exploration, aligning with our values of respect and responsibility towards the environment.

4. **Developmental Appropriateness:**

Activities must be tailored to the developmental stages of the children involved. For those teaching in early years, the EYFS Framework (2023) addresses the role of outdoor play in child development, advocating ample outdoor time for physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, reminiscent of the seed that grows into a large tree from humble beginnings.

5. **Evidence-Based Practice:**

Drawing on research from the British Educational Research Association (BERA) reinforces the importance of evidence-based practices in implementing outdoor learning. The Chartered College of Teaching provides resources and professional development opportunities, enabling educators to stay informed about the latest pedagogical trends, thereby supporting our commitment to continuous improvement and innovation.

6. **Inclusivity and Accessibility:**

Outdoor learning must be inclusive, providing all students with equal opportunities to engage, participate, and thrive. This includes accommodating diverse needs, backgrounds, and abilities, ensuring that every child feels valued and included. By embracing variations in learning preferences, educators can create engaging outdoor experiences that cater to different styles, promoting a sense of belonging and community among learners.

7. **Collaboration and Community Engagement:**

Encouraging collaboration among educators, parents, and the wider community enhances the outdoor learning experience. Connecting with local organisations can create unique opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with their surroundings, reflecting our values of compassion and community spirit.

8. **Encouragement of Curiosity:**

Facilitating a sense of curiosity allows students to explore and question their environment. Outdoor learning provides a dynamic platform for nurturing inquisitive minds, thereby stimulating a desire for discovery aligned with our vision of fostering curiosity as a pathway to endless possibilities.

9. Reflective Practice:

Teachers should engage in reflective practice to evaluate the effectiveness of outdoor learning experiences. This ongoing assessment informs future planning and pedagogical strategies, ensuring continual improvement and coherence with our school's aim of excellence in education.

10. Evaluation and Development:

The Ofsted Toolkit (2025 Framework) emphasises the necessity for varied learning experiences, recognising the potential of outdoor learning to instil independence and responsibility in young learners. This perspective is mirrored by the SIAMS Evaluation Framework (2023), which appreciates the spirituality, morality, and social consciousness developed through rich outdoor interactions, aligning with our values of integrity and compassion.

In conclusion, the implementation of these principles supports a comprehensive approach to outdoor learning that benefits the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students. By integrating guidance from key educational frameworks and safety organisations, alongside our school's vision and values, educators can create a robust outdoor learning programme that elevates the educational experience, encouraging exploration, risk-taking, and a deeper connection to learning.

"Though it is the smallest of all seeds, when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree..." (Matthew 13:32) — May our outdoor learning provision enable every child to flourish in heart, mind and spirit.