

CALSHOT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Outdoor Learning Policy



'At Calshot we aim to provide the highest quality of learning and care for ALL children in a safe and enjoyable environment, nurturing personal values, in partnership with parents, carers and the wider community. We expect everyone in our school to strive to achieve their full potential.'

Approved by the Achievement & Curriculum Committee on 12th May 2022

OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY

Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster children's love of learning. At Calshot Primary 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.

The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto, launched by the government in 2006, provided a breath of fresh air for the educational agenda. With the aim of persuading teachers to make the most of outdoor learning opportunities, the Manifesto states that *'Every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development whatever their age, ability and circumstances.'*

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, and personal and social development. 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 co-operative 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.
- Enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Impacts positively 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.
- Raises learner's attainment; promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.
- Motivates boys to be more active in their learning.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy Practice described in this Policy aims to:

- Raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- Empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- Encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- Develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- Provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- Encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- 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. Staff 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 teachers will refer to and apply the schools policies relating to Health and Safety, and Risk Assessment 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.

Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor learning. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe. 'Be Safe' is a school expectation and children are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe.

There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning. The following expectations are understood by all pupils:

- Outdoor Learning is an important part of our learning journey.
- We must uphold our school expectation to be safe at all times when we participate in outdoor learning.
- We must always walk on the path at the front of school and be aware that cars may approach through the front gate.
- We must never walk across the car park area unless supervised.
- We must stay with our group.
- We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning objectives.
- If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy learning and stay safe.

Managing the Delivery of Outdoor Learning

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning, we closely monitor the use of outdoor learning as a key element of the learning experience at Calshot Primary 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.

EYFS Provision

There are no boundaries to outdoor learning within the EYFS. Outdoor learning is integral part of our day – the range of activities can be endless. Children have free access throughout the sessions, with range of free flow and planned activities. Children wear appropriate protective clothing.

KS1 Provision

In KS1 we try to utilise the outdoor space as much as possible. Opportunities to take learning outside are seized and taken full advantage of. KS1 have access to the KS1 playground where they can grow plants and participate in seasonal/topical outdoor activities.

KS2 Provision

KS2 also faces barriers to outdoor learning. However, teachers endeavour to take lessons outside whenever possible. For example, science lessons involve studying the weather, and geography lessons may involve work in the locality, river studies, orienteering, and following maps. Additionally, children enjoy tending to the raised beds.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning

We have recently invested in the development of the outdoor learning area. The KS1 and KS2 playgrounds have benefited from a large financial investment to provide water boxes and planting boxes. Additionally, an outdoor classroom has recently been installed which will be used by the whole school for a range of activities.

We advocate that the pace of learning can be enhanced by using the outdoors and those children who may find the classroom too constraining will perform and behave better outdoors, reducing the time spent on explanation and behaviour management. There is clear evidence that boys in particular, are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The School Grounds

We are lucky to have grounds which offer opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. School buildings can also provide a useful resource for learning about energy use and waste for example – tying in well with the schools Eco School Council agenda.

Forest School originated in Scandinavia and was brought to the UK in the early 1990s.

Children are not taught, but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through play, for example games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play the child develops their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns 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.

Outdoor learning activities might include den building, cutting firewood and fire building, crafts such as dream catchers or whistles, games, rope swings, flora and fauna identification, as well as stories and sharing.

The obvious benefits of improved co-ordination and physical health from doing activities outside are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative; problem solving and perseverance. Children are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help, and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks -all crucial emotional skills to take with them into the adult world.

Gardening Opportunities

Children from Reception to Year 6 have access to outside gardening areas. There are raised beds for growing vegetables and fruits. Harvested vegetables can be used in cookery lessons to promote healthy eating and sustainable living.

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, for example, geography or history fieldwork, surveys and collection of data etc.

Further Afield

We actively encourage teachers to plan opportunities for children to engage in learning beyond the school. Each year group has a planned programme of educational visits which complement and extend learning. For example, children learning about the Romans have the opportunity to visit a Roman Villa, thus enhancing their learning and understanding of the topic.

These are planned into all aspects of the curriculum and, by taking learners beyond their familiar environment, stimulate their curiosity and imagination and motivate children in a powerful way.

Residential Visits

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self- esteem, communication and team working, for example. Children have

the opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel. Year 5 children spend two nights away at Whitemoor Lakes, a thrilling outdoor centre where they take part in a wide range of outdoor and adventurous activities including climbing, abseiling, canoeing and rafting. Residential visits offer so many benefits including the opportunity to participate in first-hand learning.

Children with Additional 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.

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.

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.

Policy Review

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies, particularly the PSHE Policy. It will be reviewed by the Achievement and Curriculum Committee as part of its schedule of policy review.