

WRENTHORPE ACADEMY OUTDOOR EDUCATION POLICY



Outdoor Learning Lead – Miss Brown

Outdoor Learning supports teaching across the curriculum

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes:

- outdoor play in the Early Years
- school grounds projects
- environmental education
- adventurous activities
- personal and social education
- team building
- education for sustainability and much more.

Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core, using the outdoor environment to enrich the teaching and learning of others. 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.

Outdoor Learning aims to foster children's love of learning. At Wrenthorpe Academy, 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. For example, outdoor learning can spark greater creativity for pupils in English. Students' imaginations can be fired and first-hand experiences can be provided as a basis for writing. Stories based in the outdoors, using artefacts and natural objects are all hooks to engage children and get them enthused about their learning experiences. Equally in other subjects such as Science and Maths, being outdoors is useful for making abstract concepts real. The experiential and hands-on nature of outdoor learning experiences makes the curriculum come alive for pupils.

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, teamwork 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 into resilient and reflective learners.
- To encourage children to be more resilient about weather conditions.
- 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.

Outdoor learning supports health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing are important pupil outcomes of Outdoor Learning. Offering children the space to reflect and allowing them to escape the pressures of the classroom are vitally important. This provides children with the opportunity and time to be physically active, an ever-important factor in today's society.

Outdoor learning supports Character Education

Impacts on learning outcomes such as social skills, engagement, confidence and self-esteem is linked with outdoor education. Outdoor Learning is reported as supporting features of Character Education. The value of confidence in successful learning has been highlighted for years. Being outside leads children to have greater confidence in their own abilities, sometimes through taking more risks, so they are willing to try different challenges within and outside the classroom.

Outdoor Learning has also been seen to encourage and develop social skills, communication, teamwork, new friendships, kindness and leadership. It consistently enthuses and motivates children, resulting in greater engagement with learning. If engagement is achieved, attainment will be increased as children will be interested and focussed on what is presented to them.

The opportunity to develop key character skills as well as taking ownership in their learning in contexts outside the classroom also contributes to improved behaviour. Studies have shown enjoyment of fresh air, new experiences and a practical context are all important to children and their conduct around school.

Getting the whole school on board

Children in the Early Years have fantastic outdoor experiences which they access daily. Throughout the rest of their school experience children continue to benefit from these enriching experiences. Subject lead outdoor learning days are ways in which all staff plan to get outside and see the impact Outdoor Learning can have.

Staff training (for example whole school INSETS/staff meetings) can be used to develop skills and build confidence in taking children outside for periods of learning. Monitoring and Evaluation Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process.

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. 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.

All Staff and Authorised Volunteers will:

- Ensure that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, co-operate with the school's policies, procedures and risk assessments and follow any information, instructions or guidance documents made available to them.
- Ensure that safe working practices are adopted at all times and comply with the findings/other outcomes of risk assessments, whether in school, as part of extended provision and or on educational visits.
- Attend health and safety training courses/events as appropriate.
- Undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments within their areas of responsibility/ for activities to be undertaken as directed by the head teacher
- Bring to the attention of the Head Teacher any accidents, near misses, dangerous equipment, defects or situations which may occur whilst in school or on educational visits.

- Report to the Head Teacher any problems that they feel they cannot deal with themselves.
- Have the responsibility to do what they can to take care of themselves, their colleagues, pupils and visitors. In particular employees should co-operate with their managers.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The school grounds:

At Wrenthorpe Academy, we are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds which offer excellent facilities and opportunities for both formal and informal learning.

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. These also support our work in developing enterprise education and our desire to develop more business links. 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 places:

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working. For instance, through staying at outdoor and adventure centres children are provided with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning

Outdoor Learning offers opportunities for children to include 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. Outdoor Learning allows 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.

Wrenthorpe Academy will communicate the benefits of Outdoor Learning 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.