

## **Outdoor Learning**

### **Intent**

It is increasingly recognised that creative and challenging outdoor learning activities support the progression of personal, social and thinking skills, communication, problem-solving and team work. This has been proven through a number of research projects over recent years (including DEFRA - Natural Connections Demonstration Project, 2016; DfE & DEFRA - Nature Friendly Schools' Initiative, 2019-2022). Structured outdoor activities linked to the curriculum provide a depth and relevance that is not always possible indoors. Moreover, outdoor learning programmes enable pupils to develop self-confidence as well as learn how to manage risk. In addition, the outdoor environment provides opportunity for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

### ***The National Curriculum states:***

*Pupils should be taught to take part in outdoor and adventurous activity challenges both individually and within a team.*

### ***Public Health England recommends that:***

*... green exercise and nature experiences (are) preventative strategies to counteract many contemporary physical and mental health challenges that children and young people face. (PHE, 2014a; DHSC, 2018)*

### **Implementation:**

Learning through playful engagement with the environment is now an established and widely recognised pedagogy in the early years. However, these outdoor opportunities should continue to support successful learning at any age. These are the building blocks that allow pupils to grapple with questions that have more than one correct answer, reflecting the complexity of the world around us. Outdoor learning provides opportunity for critical thinking and problem-solving, recognising the fundamental importance of team-work, collaboration and diversity of strengths.

Outdoor learning opportunities are best developed over time and linked to national curriculum content for each year group and subject (as opposed to discrete add-on activities). Learning experiences outside the classroom gradually build knowledge, concepts and understanding to enable all pupils to make progress from individual starting points. Activities will be repeated in different contexts to allow opportunities for learners to practise what they know in order to deepen their understanding. Ultimately, children will identify and pursue their own lines of enquiry, taking increasing responsibility for their learning.

Learning outside of the classroom may be a progression of lessons based in the playground to complete a unit of work in literacy. It may take the form of a leaf hunt in the school grounds to support a science lesson on classification. It could be a class trip to consolidate learning over a history topic. It could be a whole class golden time activity or directed time in the Hummingbird Garden. It could simply be a story-time session at the end of the day. Outdoor learning has the unique opportunity of taking many shapes and forms; however, the benefits will be consistent for all.

### **Impact**

All children will have the opportunity to:

- Enjoy and engage with learning activities in the natural environment
- Appreciate a connection to nature

- Develop confidence and character
- Benefit from a sense of social and emotional health and wellbeing
- Become environmentally aware
- Develop practical skills and knowledge for life
- Increase their motivation and appetite for learning
- Broaden their horizons

**If you were to take part in an outdoor learning activity at Morden, you would see:**

- **All children engaged** in the learning activity.
- **The outdoor environment used effectively** to consolidate and/or extend national curriculum objectives.
- **Natural resources being used** to support learning activities.
- **Learning activities outside the classroom** - anything from a two-minute starter, to a whole lesson, to a class fieldwork trip.
- **Children respecting** the outside environment and the natural surroundings.
- **Wellbeing opportunities promoted** and created through outdoor learning.

**Expectations (2022-2023)**

These are the following non-negotiables for outdoor learning during the school year 2022-2023:

- One fire pit session each half term **(developing fire-starting and management skills in KS2)**
- One whole school outdoor learning project in the Summer Term
- One class trip every half term to support current learning
- Circle Time assembly to be taken outside around the yarning circle or in the outdoor classroom (weather permitting) every other week
- Minimum of one learning activity to take place outside each half term
- **Monitoring and review of Sustainability Pledges for each class**
- **Directed golden time activity (whole class) each week**
- **Hummingbird Garden management – drop in options for children at break time and lunch time (can be used during Golden Time)**

**Photos**



Y6 – history freeze frames



Y4 – outdoor literacy unit



Y2 – class trip to cinema



Y3 – tree planting pledge



Y1 – jubilee celebrations



Y5 – den-building (residential)

## **Success for 2021-2022**

- Fire pit sessions took place on a half termly basis, with Year 6 building and lighting fires by the Summer Term.
- Yarning circle used frequently for PSHE and music activities.
- Whole school outdoor literacy unit completed in the Summer Term.
- 2 staff meetings took place outside to promote outdoor learning.
- Half-termly class trips reintroduced after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

## **Priorities for 2022-2023**

### **Identify:**

- 'The National Curriculum Outdoors' series of books purchased for each year group to identify outdoor learning opportunities across subjects throughout the year.
- Long term plans reviewed to map outdoor learning opportunities in line with expectations.

### **Develop:**

- Expectations for outdoor learning consistently taking place.
- Staff training – both formal and informal CPD on using the natural environment to support outdoor learning.
- Plan, prepare and deliver a playground sleep over event for Years 3 and 4 in the Autumn Term.
- Research possible alternative venues for annual UKS2 residential trip.

### **Embed:**

- Units of work planned in each year group to develop national curriculum objectives incorporating and benefitting from the outdoor environment.
- Classes regularly working outside for parts of or whole lessons (across the curriculum).
- Children will be able to identify benefits of learning outdoors.
- Children will recognise the positive impact on health and wellbeing from learning outdoors.

## **Beyond 2023**

### **Establish:**

- Children will be able to clearly identify the skills and knowledge they have developed when learning outdoors.
- Children will be able to apply new skills independently to complete and extend consequent outdoor learning activities.
- Children will show active citizenship and responsibility when learning outside the classroom.
- Children are confident to discuss the benefits to health and wellbeing of learning outdoors.
- Children show more engagement and enthusiasm for all learning and can apply skills developed outside the classroom to complete classroom-based tasks.

## **Some websites you might find particularly interesting:**

### **[Home | Nature Friendly Schools](#)**

**<https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/>**

**<https://oeapng.info>**