

Objectives of an Outdoor School

Exploring the world around you is a crucial part of childhood. As well as learning about the environment, the benefits of being outside include the development of a positive self-image, advanced social skills, confidence in your abilities and experiences in dealing with uncertainty.

- To develop children's sense of well-being through regular activities in their local environment.
- To ensure that children are confident and fully engaged with the outdoor environment.
- To develop children's desire to be fit and active in the outdoors.
- To develop children's knowledge of the ecology of their local area.
- To develop children's knowledge & understanding of sustainability within the context of their local environment.
- To develop communication skills by sharing their knowledge with others.

Over recent years we have seen for ourselves the positive effects working outside has had on the children and staff. We have seen children grow in confidence, becoming fully engaged in their learning outdoors in all weathers. Learning through these first hand experiences children enjoy a rich and broad curriculum. We are keen to develop their knowledge of the ecology in their local area and through this foster a desire to care for the wider natural world. We recognise the impact learning outdoors has had on their academic achievements through tracking children's progress in core subject areas.

The Woodland Trust has used our school as a case study to show the positive impact of outdoor learning. They have produced a short film available to download through our website. We have been awarded the Woodland Trust Bronze & Silver awards and are currently working on the Gold award.

We have shared our aims and observations with parents and have been delighted with their written feedback and their enthusiasm for Outdoor Learning. We have seen children engaging their families and revisiting their class local areas at the weekend. Many are also keen to share their experiences of the natural world with us at school. We are aware that new parents are being drawn to our school because of our very strong commitment to Outdoor Learning. Ofsted recently inspected the school & their report stated: 'The school provides numerous stimulating and exciting learning opportunities, especially outdoors'.

Each year group is committed and engaged in Outdoor Learning across the curriculum and has different identified local areas to use including a woodland, the canal & parks. Each year group plans regular, cross-curricular outdoor activities each term. Learning through natural environments is planned in every curriculum subject. We have regular staff meetings to share ideas and good practice and review the impact on learning.

As you can see our school website has a specific 'Outdoor School' area with a selection of photos of the activities the children have enjoyed. Our regular school newsletter shares with parents what classes have been doing across the school in their outdoor learning. These newsletters are also available on our website.

We regularly work with outside agencies to support our Outdoor Learning and CPD for teachers including gardening projects with The Stroud Valley Project and a visit from 'Ghost' the barn owl to promote barn owl conservation.

Recently our Science Coordinator arranged training for every class teacher for pond dipping. Tamsin Bent from Stroud Valley Project led a successful session with each class and as a result we are currently looking to develop our pond area with support from outside agencies including WWT.

Our School Governors are fully committed to Outdoor Learning regularly supporting different year groups in their outdoor activities. A Parent Governor is leading a project to revamp the school grounds. We have regular working parties of staff and parents. We have recently cleared an area to create a larger 'Growing Zone' with raised beds and composting. We have a newly installed log circle used for circle games and stories.

We are keen to support other schools develop Outdoor Learning and held a successful training day for local schools keen to become 'Outdoor Schools'.

As a result of our continued commitment to Outdoor Learning we are very pleased to have been chosen to be a beacon school in the WWT Learning in Natural Environments Collaboration.