



St White's Primary School

Outdoor Learning Policy

Date of Review: May 2025

Date of Next Review: May 2027

Signed, Headteacher:

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1. Aims of the policy

Our outdoor learning policy aims to foster children's love of learning. At St White's Primary, 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.

2. What is Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes many curriculum areas: outdoor play (learning through play), school grounds projects (such as our allotment), environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development, forest schools and more. 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 cooperative learning – to name only some of the benefits. This is aligned with the heart of the school – Challenge, commit, conquer and celebrate and supports pupils to develop an understanding of our school values of clear communication, 'can do' attitude, reflection and taking responsibility.

3. Where will outdoor learning at St White's take place?

The school grounds

We are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play.

EYFS Outdoor Area

The two Reception classes enjoy their own outdoor area, which provide a wide range of resources. This area is used for planned activities across the curriculum and learning objectives are stretched across both the indoor and outdoor classrooms. Two class teachers and two teaching assistants allow both areas to be supervised at all times. Large scale learning is planned outside. For example, wall paper painting, water and sand play, construction, dressing up, role play, mark making, chalk, paint junk modelling and physical development) and there are continuous provision for music and craft.

KS1 Outdoor Area

All KS1 classes have fenced outdoor learning areas. These areas are used for planned activities, especially for mathematics and English. This enables the provision of a wide range of fine and gross motor skill activities to continue to be provided for pupils who still require it.

It also enables the teachers to plan engaging and active learning sessions that make full use of both inside and outside areas, which promotes the learning of all groups of pupils.

Playground

All children have access to the two playgrounds on a daily basis. There is also a slide available on a rotation basis, as weather permits. During playtime children also have access to the MUGA, clamber stack play equipment and general playtime resources such as skipping ropes and large construction. Weather is taken into consideration when using these resources and this is taken into consideration when managing break times.

Forest School

We have a designated Forest School area on site. This includes a woodland areas, two ponds and a digging area. There is also a base camp and a covered gazebo area.

Wider School site

We are fortunate to have a large, grassed sports field, a MUGA and two large playgrounds. We have a school allotment which is maintained by the children with the support of school staff.

The local environment

The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills through exploring 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 are planned into all aspects of the curriculum and, by taking learners beyond their familiar environment, we stimulate their curiosity and imagination and motivate children in a powerful way.

Responsibilities

Class Teachers

- ✓ There is an expectation that children will generally have access to outdoor play every day weather permitting - all year round. This includes lunchtimes.
- ✓ The provision outside shows clear links to the planned indoor curriculum and builds on children's interests.
- ✓ The role of the class teacher outside should be similar to their role indoors.
- ✓ Weather conditions should be viewed as an opportunity to develop children's learning.
- ✓ All outdoor learning must be planned for. It must be included in the medium and short term planning documents.
- ✓ All pupils should be allowed regular opportunities for undirected free play, with minimal intervention, except when required. This type of play fosters independence in problem solving and creative imagination. It is an opportunity for children to develop negotiation skills and devise rules for games and approaches to play, thus building essential relationship skills.
- ✓ Class teachers and support staff must be aware of 'key' children and support accordingly.
- ✓ All staff must encourage imaginative play and facilitate children's spontaneous play, talk and exploration.

Forest School Leader

St Whites Primary School will, as far as possible, maintain a qualified Forest School Leader. All pupils will have the opportunity of taking part in a 6 week programme on a rotational basis. Each session will be two hours long. Forest schools sessions will happen in all weathers except high winds and/or thunder and lightning.

Parents

- ✓ To supply their child with appropriate clothing for outdoor learning. The school will provide waterproof coats and trousers to all children.
- ✓ To be encouraged to donate any suitable equipment

Children

- ✓ To take ownership of our outdoor areas
- ✓ To tidy up in the same way that they would indoors
- ✓ To learn how to risk take in a safe, secure environment
- ✓ To learn to make responsible decisions about how to manage themselves and their environment
- ✓ To see the outdoor areas as part of their learning environment
- ✓ To learn to love and respect outdoor life

Health and Safety

Risk assessments of all outdoor areas to be carried out annually by the Forest School leader, who will also update Forest School risk assessment on a termly basis. School Health and Safety Policy will be followed.

Children to be supervised at all times with correct adult / child ratio

Any equipment that may hold additional risks will be stored in a safe place.

Suitable clothing and footwear to be worn in all weather conditions including hats in the sun.

Children to be supported in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others.

Commitment to Outdoor Learning

As part of the school's commitment to outdoor learning we have an Eco Committee that runs each year, creating and monitoring projects centred on pupils looking after the school grounds. Together with the Eco Committee, the school has achieved the Green Schools Award and the Woodland Trust Award.

The local environment is a crucial part of our curriculum. In EYFS, children regularly visit the local woods to experience the changing seasons. In other years, the local sculpture trail is used in KS1, and pupils visit the forest to experience harvesting of trees in UKS2. We have also been lucky enough to engage with the Forest Rangers and have been part of initiatives such as releasing Beavers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process. Evidence of outdoor learning will be seen in medium term and short term planning. Evidence of learning is provided from the children's work and a record of photographs kept by the class teacher.