



ASHBOURNE HILLTOP

Primary & Nursery School

OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY

Rationale

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has found there is evidence to prove that when learning outside the classroom, children:

- attain higher levels of knowledge and skills
- improve their physical health and increase their motor abilities
- socialise and interact in new and different ways with their peers and adults
- show improved attention and enhanced self-concept, self-esteem, mental health and emotional intelligence
- change their environmental behaviours and their values and attitudes.”

The outdoors can provide space and freedom for a type of learning that is difficult to replicate indoors. All children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of learning outdoors. At Ashbourne Hilltop School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning throughout the year.

Aims

- To ensure learning in the outdoor environment is planned across all subjects.
- To ensure opportunities to apply skills are embedded across the whole school curriculum.
- 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 empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- To provide a safe and secure environment that children can take risks in.
- To encourage children to care for their environment.

Policy into Practice

Opportunities for outdoor learning are planned across all subjects within the school curriculum, using it as a context and a natural resource for learning.

We will:

- ensure that we make the most of the extensive outdoor space we have available and use it to offer children what the indoors cannot. (This should be the focus for outdoor provision, complementing and extending provision indoors.)
- ensure that our outdoor area and resources within it are inclusive, flexible and versatile, where children can choose, create, change and be in charge of their learning and play environment.
- ensure that children enjoy energetic activity outdoors and the feeling of well-being that it brings, including opportunities to develop their gross motor skills.
- observe, assess and record outdoor learning, ensuring that there is adequate provision for children to extend their learning.
- plan for outdoor learning with the children to offer experiences which have meaning to them and which are led by the child.
- enable children to work both individually and co-operatively outside.
- enable children to appreciate the beauty of nature; encouraging children to use a variety of natural resources.
- give children the opportunity to find a quiet space to reflect.
- encourage children to enjoy and have fun outdoors in many contexts.
- work together (children, staff, parents, community) to create a better environment for all.
- organise and/or provide necessary resources (e.g. Wellington boots, raincoats).
- develop a set of rules through discussion with children. Enable children to use resources safely and to manage and use the space and freedom responsibly.
- help children to take responsibility and care for the outside environment and resources within it.
- encourage children to respect their environment and to care for living things.
- have an 'eco-group' made up of children from Year 1 to Year 6. They will work on Projects aimed at encouraging the school to 'reduce, reuse and recycle'. They will also plan 'themed days' to further improve our outdoor space.

Resources

The school has an extensive outdoor environment which provides an excellent resource for outdoor learning. A wildlife pond area is situated at the back of the school playing fields and is protected by a wooden fence. There is a viewing platform. There are many species of trees and numerous wild bushes, flowers and plants in the uncut borders around the field. Additional trees have been planted by the staff and pupils to enhance the variety. We have a stone pathway that leads around the field to ease access.

All classes have direct access to the outdoors and nursery and reception have the space for mud and water kitchen, water trays, pots, pans and measuring jugs.

There is a willow tunnel that was planted by the children. There is an outdoor classroom in the reception area and large playing equipment to explore in the nursery playground. Both areas have playhouses and hard surface areas, nursery has a 'train'.

The courtyard area has a large protective umbrella to shield children and staff from the sun.

Health and Safety

We will support children 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. All activities should be considered for a risk assessment, but only those which might deliver activities not normally undertaken in school should proceed to full risk assessment. Children and staff are advised about possible risks before entering the area. A qualified first aider will be present at all times and an emergency action plan is in place.

Weather

At Hilltop Primary School we continue with our outdoor education lessons in all weathers. All children are regularly advised to bring coats to allow them to go outdoors. Extreme wind can bring other dangers against which children cannot be wrapped up such as flying debris, or simply being blown over. Decisions to work outdoors should assess this possibility and decide if the activity can go ahead on any given day. The sun too can bring its own concerns. Children and parents are advised to bring a sun hat and suitable clothing, as well as applying sun cream before they come to school. If the activity outdoors is prolonged we ensure that children remain hydrated and stay under shelter from the sun. School provides each classroom with wall mounted sun cream dispensers, there are also dispensers in the playground areas.

Equality and inclusion

We endeavour to ensure that all children whatever their abilities are able to play and explore outdoors within the school grounds and further afield. Activities are not offered on the basis of gender and we try to balance out over time the specialist visits offered to all children within the school. At all times we aim to respect cultural issues.

Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation

Good practice in assessing outdoor learning is no different from assessment elsewhere in school. Where possible activities should allow children to demonstrate “performance of understanding” i.e. they should be given tasks that show they can use what they have learned to...

Generalise

- Apply exceptions
- Give explanations
- Make predictions
- Evaluate
- Find examples
- Find solutions
- Work independently
- Work with a partner
- Work as part of a team.

Policy Review

The policies and practices outlined in this document will be reviewed at least every three years by the head teacher. Normal mechanisms of school self-evaluation will be used to assess the provision, record performance and identify areas for improvement. All staff have a contribution to make in this respect.

Date of next review: February 2021