



Outdoor Learning Policy

St Hilary's actively promotes democracy, the rule of the law, individual liberty and mutual respect of those with different faiths and beliefs. These are fundamental British Values which underpin all that we offer, as does our School Motto 'Not for oneself but for all.'

“The beauty of teaching outdoors is that the children often do not perceive it as ‘learning’ and yet they learn some of their most valuable lessons there. The lack of walls means that they feel less inhibited – both physically and mentally- and it allow them to join up their thinking by applying it in a real-world context.” Woodland Trust Scotland.

‘Every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development whatever their age, ability and circumstances.’
[Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto (2006)].

Introduction: What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes outdoor play, school grounds projects such as the school garden or wildlife pond, environmental education, cross-curricular learning and personal and social development.

Outside Learning extends the children's experience from within the classroom, giving them opportunity to broaden their understanding of particular subjects. By committing to learning both inside and outside the classroom, we can teach children that learning occurs everywhere, at all times, helping to bring learning alive. Active learning readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and co- operative learning.

Aims

We aim to encourage and inspire individuals of any age, through an innovative, educational approach to outdoor play and learning in a woodland environment.

- To develop reflective and inquisitive thinking along with problem-solving approaches in ‘real’ situations, where resilience and adaptability can result
- To encourage holistic development of children
- To provide opportunities for risk assessed but not risk-free activities, which in turn allows children to become more self-aware and confident, recognising hazards
- To provide opportunities for cross-curricular study, linking topics from other subjects and learning about them in a different environment
- To develop collaborative-working and communication skills

- To provide positive health benefits – both physically and mentally – and assist gross and fine-motor development
- To develop a lifelong love of the outdoors, respecting the environment within which we interact
- To further develop the school site to include use of the school pond and garden area

Objectives

- To provide opportunities for curriculum objectives to take place outdoors (Learning outside the classroom LOtC), making learning ‘hands-on’ and relevant.
- To offer experiences which have meaning, and which are led by the child.
- To enable children to work both individually and co-operatively outside.
- To 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.
- To help children to take responsibility and care for the outside environment and resources within it.
- To observe, assess and record outdoor learning, ensuring that there is adequate provision for children to extend their learning.
- To encourage children to respect their environment and to reflect on their surroundings.

Teaching and Learning

All classes are led by a Fully Qualified Teacher with Forest School Accreditation. Other staff members also accompany the groups dependent on year groups and classes

The curriculum is currently being rewritten in order to take more areas of the curriculum outdoors: from literacy and maths to geography and art. The curriculum is being linked to the St Hilary’s long term and medium planning to provide a broad range of experiences. Within this curriculum, we will also offer time for exploration and child-led activities, supporting the children in taking and managing risks within a safe and secure environment. This will include use of age-appropriate tools and associated activities. Staff members will ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others.

Lessons are planned to provide opportunities for pupils to develop, apply, and make progress within the wide range of the outside environment.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The OL teacher uses ongoing informal assessment to inform planning, to ensure that work is matched to the needs of the children and to ensure progression. Where appropriate the OL teacher makes notes about the children or takes photos of activities, applying the attainment targets to both pupil’s achievements and their personal development as well as curriculum objectives. Feedback from OL lessons are regularly given to form or subject teachers.

Resources and Access/Inclusion and Equality

The school has an extensive outdoor environment which provides an excellent resource for outdoor learning. Our OL lessons will mainly take place in the wooded area near the tennis courts. This area provides easy access for all children with a variety of individual needs. This area has a marked fire circle with benches, log seating and/or room for wheelchair access. We have a wooden house on stilts, which provides some shelter. Adults accompany children who require 1-1 to lessons as appropriate.

The children also have use of the school pond and garden areas and a newly planted willow tunnel. The wildlife pond area is situated adjacent to the woods and is protected by a wooden fence, with room for log seating. The gate is secured for pupils' safety and can only be accessed with adult supervision.

Medical Needs, Health and Safety

All the OL areas are close to the Hiorns Centre. At the centre we have access to running water, toilets and First Aid equipment, as well as being able to telephone the main school office in an emergency. The OL also has an alarm bat and First Aid kit.

Classes in Pre-Prep have 1:6 adult:child ratios or at least 3 adults and in Prep at least two adults are always present. This ensures that adequate provision is given for a safe learning environment. 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. Risk assessments are in place for the school site, activities and tools. Children are regularly reminded about safety rules. The OL teacher is a qualified first aider and an emergency action plan is in place.

At St Hilary's we continue with our outdoor education lessons in all weathers. All children are regularly advised to bring suitable clothing such as long-sleeved tops, waterproof coats and trousers, so they can go outdoors. However, in extreme conditions such as ice/snow, high winds or heat, the decision to go outside will be assessed on the day. Children are advised to bring a sun hat and suitable clothing for hotter days, 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. A parent information leaflet is sent out in advance.

Reviewed: October 2022

Next review date: June 2023

Person responsible: Susie Page (Outside Learning Teacher)