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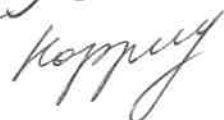
Acting Headteacher: Mrs Hopper

Outdoor Learning Policy

Reviewed on: 11th September 2025

Next Review due: Summer 2027

Signed by:  Chair of Governors

Signed by:  Acting Headteacher

Introduction

There has been much discussion recently about the benefits to children's health and well-being from spending time outside. As well as concerns regarding children's excessive use of technology, we also have a record high level of children suffering from mental health issues. Adding these to a global concern regarding the future of our planet, there has never been such a crucial time to make a difference to the lives of the children in our care. Therefore, at Ranelagh Primary School we are committed to a whole school approach to embedding Outdoor Learning into the school curriculum.

As a school we are reviewing our action plan to develop the outdoor learning spaces at Ranelagh, with the aim to provide a selection of varied environments, to maximise the learning potential that the outdoor space has to offer and to link in with the goal of making Ranelagh a sustainable school.

Currently the children have a large playground space, with designated areas for quieter activities. There is an Astro-turf area for football and other ball games. There is a fenced-off, woodland area and a sensory garden.

EYFS – Have a large under-cover area, with a large sand-pit. They have a grassed area with a summer house. There is a mud kitchen and bug hotel, in a natural part of the garden. They also have access to a smaller playground area for wheeled toys and they can access the Astro-turf for part of the day, for ball games and physical activities.

What is Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is an umbrella term that stretches across a broad range of activities and learning opportunities outside.

EYFS - In Early Years, outdoor learning is an integral part of the free-flow curriculum. The outdoor environment provides opportunities for learning through continuous provision.

At Ranelagh there is an expectation that children should have access to the outdoors every day in some form from Nursery to Year 6. Outdoor learning may be included within other lessons, be part of an on-going project, include off site trips or be part of a physical education. There are endless possibilities for cross curricular links, especially with Science, Geography, Maths and English.

It is widely accepted that children need to be outside and that they benefit from the opportunity to learn outdoors. Many of our best childhood memories are formed around activities outside where we could be free and breathe with a sense of freedom. The space that outdoors offers means that everything can be bigger! It can also be messier outside so art projects and science experiments can be enjoyed on a much larger scale. Being outdoors allows children to be far more active. Learning is far more kinaesthetic with a multisensory approach that benefits all learners. Being outside increases the use of language as talk is encouraged and

often essential.

As formality relaxes, working alongside each other in the open, moving physically and mentally, relationships often flourish. Self-esteem and self-confidence, frequently with children who struggle within a classroom setting, soar and a language rich environment captures the minds of many.

Outdoor learning suits long term projects, those involving changes in season or weather. Using real life data and making results relevant to real life increases the chances of understanding and links cementing them in the child's memory. Creative thinking and being imaginative are opened up in an outdoor setting, ideas can grow and there is a higher chance of spontaneous thought. Being outside, in a classroom with no walls and no roof, a child can explore, be more spontaneous, experiment and set self-imposed goals. They can take essential risks and approach open-ended challenges, problem solve and apply their knowledge in places where their minds have space to open.

Being outside is shown to engage and motivate children, to help them form a deeper understanding of concepts and reach higher order thinking. The aim of this policy is to ensure the children at Ranelagh have access to high quality outdoor learning opportunities across the school, to increase their awareness of the environment, and for children to recognise and appreciate the living and natural world around them.

The Aims and Objectives for Outdoor Learning at Ranelagh Primary School:

- To raise the profile of outdoor learning across the school and develop an entitlement for all children
- To ensure high-quality provision through better planning and evaluation of outcomes for children
- To deliver a wide range of progressive and frequent Learning outside the Classroom activities for all year groups
- To provide children with Learning Outside the Classroom experiences that promote all Characteristics of Effective Learning
- To make good use of outdoor space so that children are able to learn by working on a larger, more active scale than is possible indoors
- To provide a safe and secure environment that children can manage and take risks ·
- To encourage children to care for their environment
- To provide opportunities to work independently and collaboratively with enthusiasm and perseverance

- For children, appropriately dressed, to access the outdoor areas and activities in most types of weather
- To provide the opportunity for children to develop their gross motor skills and their general health and fitness in the outdoor environment.

Outdoor Learning Planning:

The expectation is that teaching and learning across all subjects incorporates Outdoor Learning opportunities during each school half term. Teaching staff will ensure that there is adequate adult supervision for groups of children working outside and that outdoor learning is well planned. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that a risk assessment is in place for planned activities and individual children, where health and safety may be at risk. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. In the first instance the schools policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to and applied prior to any outdoor learning activity that may require additional support beyond the reasonable activities one would normally apply within the classroom.

Monitoring:

The Outdoor Learning subject leader must regularly monitor Outdoor Learning across the whole school:

- To provide resources that will help and support teaching staff to plan for enriching outdoor learning
- To provide clear, safe guidelines in terms of risk assessments, staff ratio and outdoor equipment
- To ensure that all outdoor equipment is looked after and maintained

The Outdoor Learning subject leader will also monitor:

- Safety (including weather considerations)
- Risk assessments of all outdoor areas to be carried out and updated annually
- All equipment to be checked regularly and used as per manufacturer's instructions
- Rotas and timetables to be easily available and clear

- Communication book to be kept in a central location to log any accidents, breakages or repairs
- Any equipment that may hold additional risks must be stored in a safe place out of the reach of children
- Weather precautions e.g., sun cream, hats, water continually available

Characteristics of Effective Learning:

The ways in which children engage with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas of the school curriculum, including Learning in the Outdoors. This supports children to remain effective and motivated learners

The requirement of at least one lesson of outdoor learning explicitly planned for each half term was communicated to staff September 2015. Record keeping through photographs, filming, observations, and class assessments or follow up work.

Resources:

The Outdoor Learning coordinator will bid and purchase resources/training on behalf of the school from available curriculum budget as well as looking for opportunities to source funding through other grants and available funding streams.

Inclusion

Staff should consider individual needs of their children when using the outdoor area to ensure it is accessible and safe.

All outdoor learning will be taught alongside the Equal Opportunities Policy of Ranelagh Primary School.

The role of staff outdoors

Outdoor learning should be included in short, medium and long term planning. The quality of outdoor learning is dependent upon both available resources and the way in which they are utilised.

Staff mention behaviour as an obstacle to taking learning outdoors, so planning management strategies and ensuring good organisation, are vital.

Staff should have access to training, how to prepare for outdoor learning and how to provide the best opportunities for the children to learn and demonstrate their learning.

The role of the adult outside can be quite different to inside and minimal adult intervention is considered best practice. Scaffolding through careful questioning and working alongside the children; guiding rather than directing work to achieve the best open ended learning.

Assessing through observation, conversation and discussion often help to push the learning to a higher level than textbook answers. Imaginative play and creativity flourish outdoors and staff can encourage this spontaneous activity.

Children should be encouraged to take ownership of outdoor areas and tidy up in the same way as they would indoors. Appreciating their school environment and respecting the outdoors is just another benefit to taking children outside. Staff can model turn taking, rulemaking, boundary setting and exploration of new spaces. The rules are different outside and, although risks are taken, they must still be considered risks and led with adult support.

Role of Outdoor Learning Subject Leader

- To provide timetabling and suitable opportunities for all year groups to enjoy all outdoor spaces
- To provide teaching staff with suggestions for planning outdoor learning across the curriculum
- To provide teaching staff with a skills progression map, outlining the plan for outdoor learning, for children to make progress across the curriculum
- To maintain outdoor areas and provide stimulating resources that will aid and assist outdoor learning across the school
- Engage children and inspire them to love and respect the outdoor areas
- Motivate parents to join in with maintenance of outdoor areas and contribute to resources (den building, plants, and clothing)
- To work with site managers to maximise use and suitability of outdoor areas

Parental involvement

Outdoor Learning can benefit hugely from donations as some of the most useful resources are very simple and inexpensive. Ranelagh Primary School parents are asked to donate old blankets, sheets, wellies, and waterproofs. Parents can also help to maintain the outdoor areas in school.