

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School



Outdoor Learning Policy

Our Mission

Our children are all unique, beautiful **individuals** but together we are a **masterpiece**, brothers and sisters in **Christ**.

As witnesses of Christ, working together as a **Team**, we strive to promote the **Gospel Values** and Teachings of Jesus by providing a **caring, stimulating environment**, with **nurture, trust, love** and **tolerance** through our spirituality, learning and play. By making connections with Jesus, we promote **high ambitions** and **confidence** to achieve our goals.

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 being outdoors. At English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning throughout the year. It is part an important part of the "Every Child Matters" document.

Intent

Within our curriculum, we ensure all children are prepared for life, with the skills they need to achieve, aspire and accomplish both academically, emotionally, spiritually and creatively, regardless of their faith, creed or race; meeting every child's potential and their needs. At English Martyrs', this includes meeting the needs of a very mixed community representing a broad range of faiths, ethnicities, creeds and socio-economic circumstances: a significant proportion of children with high needs and are disadvantaged; children living in high social deprivation, asylum seekers, vulnerable children and families who seek security and safety in our school family.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has found that "there is evidence 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 and mental health
- Change their environmental behaviours and their values and attitudes.

Our intent is for learning without barriers so that all children can succeed.

Our intent is to meet these needs by...

- ...providing exciting opportunities for children to explore the outdoor areas within our school grounds.
- ...providing the cultural capital needed so that children are well placed for future positive outcomes.
- ...developing children's natural curiosity for the great outdoor.
- ...providing a safe environment which influences, entices and encourages children of all abilities to thrive.
- ...providing bespoke support for children who have additional needs.
- ...providing challenge for all so that all children have the opportunity to reach their potential.

...providing cross-curricular opportunities to learn in the outdoor environment.
...providing a range of opportunities for children to experience the living world.

Implementation

At English Martyrs' these intentions will be Implemented by:

Planning and Delivery

Possibilities for outdoor learning will be considered throughout our planning, using it as a context and a natural resource for learning.

We will:

- Ensure that the outdoor space harnesses the special nature of the outdoors, 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 flexible and versatile, where children can choose, create, change and be in charge of their play and learning environment.
- Support inclusion and meet the needs of individuals, offering a diverse range of play-based and practical experiences.
- Enable children to access the school gardens and grounds on a regular basis.
- In the early years, children should access the outside area as much as possible daily, throughout the seasons. At English Martyrs' we believe this provision should extend to children in all year groups.
- Ensure that children enjoy energetic activity outdoors and the feeling of wellbeing 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 relax.
- 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, in each class, 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.

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play [learning through play], school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development ... and more.

Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core:

It can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. Direct experience outdoors is more motivating and has more 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, interpretation or facilitation, 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. Outdoor Learning can help to bring many school subjects alive as they focus on real results and consequences. For that reason the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and moral education. Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change. There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It can lead to a deeper understanding of the concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. Quality learning experiences in ‘real’ situations have the capacity to raise achievement across a range of subjects and to develop better personal and social skills. When these experiences are well planned, safely managed and personalised to meet the needs of every child they can:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Provide a bridge to higher order learning.
- Develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments.
- Make learning more engaging and relevant to young people.
- Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment.
- Nurture creativity.
- Provide opportunities for informal learning through play.
- Reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance.
- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation.
- Develop the ability to deal with uncertainty.
- Provide challenge and the opportunity to take acceptable levels of risk.
- Improve young people’s attitudes

Weather is often cited as a restrictive factor. Currently the school takes an assertive stance towards encouraging the children to be more resilient about weather conditions to ensure outdoor learning is a key feature of the day. The development of outdoor learning areas is a priority for the school.

We believe that outdoor learning should take place:

- In the school grounds
- In the local environment
- During residential visits
- In places further afield

Cross-curricular links

Outdoor Learning at English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School, as well as making its own distinctive contribution to the school curriculum, also helps to develop skills in other areas. The outdoor environment provides 'first-hand' experiences for our pupils within a variety of subjects and year groups, across children's time at English Martyrs'.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

At our school, we ensure that our curriculum meets the needs of all of our children. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's different need. This involves tailoring our teaching to ensure that children can access the curriculum and make progress.

Resources

- Willow Dome
- Field
- Adventure Play
- Courtyard outside the hall for gardening
- Prayer Garden
- Fire Pit - Moveable.

Impact

The Holistic Curriculum Team will measure Impact of implementations of Outdoor Learning in collaboration with class teachers and SLT.

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. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. Risk Assessments will be carried out where appropriate, prior to activities taking part. The school Health and Safety Policy will be followed.

Assessment

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process. Subject leaders will be responsible for monitoring their subject area outdoors, following the agreed assessment tool for that subject.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The Holistic Curriculum Team, alongside SLT, are responsible for monitoring and evaluating curriculum progress. This is done through book/folder scrutiny, planning scrutiny, lesson observations, pupil interviews, staff discussions and audit of resources.

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies, particularly the Early Years Foundation Stage Policy and PSHE Policy.

Curriculum Team responsible: Holistic Team

Policy written: November 2022

Policy agreed by Governors: November 2022

To be reviewed: September 2023 (Or sooner, in light of developing initiatives)