Lismore Primary School

Outdoor Learning Policy

**Rationale**

There is much evidence to suggest that when learning outwith 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.

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 Lismore Primary School we feel it is

important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for

learning throughout the year.

**Aims**

• To raise the profile of outdoor learning

• To encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our

outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it (Effective Contributors).

• To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their

minds and bodies to thrive (Successful Learners).

• To provide a safe and secure environment that they can take risks in (Confident Individuals).

• To encourage children to care for their environment (Responsible Citizens)

**Policy into Practice**

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.

• 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 environment.

• support inclusion and meet the needs of individuals, offering a diverse

range of play-based experiences.

• enable children to access the outdoors on a regular basis. In the early

years, children should be outside as much as possible,

throughout the seasons.

• ensure that children enjoy energetic activity outdoors and the feeling of

well-being that it brings, including opportunities to develop their large

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 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**.**

**Managing Risk**

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.

The risk/benefit tool is available on Education Scotland website to clarify thinking and establish a proper balance between risk and benefit - <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/managing-risk-in-outdoor-learning/>

Teachers/leaders should ask themselves the following safety questions from Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning:

* Is the level of challenge appropriate to the learner group?
* How will risks be assessed and balanced against the expected benefits?
* Can the rationale for this experience be justified if events don’t go as planned?
* Are the management arrangements suitable for the location selected?
* Are the leadership and supervisory staff suitably skilled, qualified and experienced?
* How do we communicate with parents and carers?
* Could we benefit from enrolling partners?
* Are there any relevant examples of good practice that we can draw on?

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

* Assessment of the children’s learning should be valued equally indoors and outdoors.
* The policy will be evaluated and reviewed annually.
* We evaluate our performance against the Quality Indicators outlined in ‘How Good is Our School’ with the following being relevant to Outdoor Learning:

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| **2.2 Curriculum** |  |
| *This indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs of learners at the centre of curriculum design and development. The structure and delivery of the curriculum should take good account of local and national circumstances. The curriculum is the totality of learning experiences across the four contexts as delivered by the school and its partners. An effective curriculum results in strong outcomes for all learners.* | **Features of highly effective practice:**  Outdoor learning is a regular, progressive curriculum led experience for all learners. |
| **3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion** |  |
| *This indicator focuses on the impact of the school’s approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people’s ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements.* | **Features of highly effective practice:**  Outdoor spaces are used effectively to promote positive relationships and wellbeing. Staff take account of research, linking benefits of outdoor learning and green space with wellbeing. |

Updated February 2021