



St John's Primary School

Outdoor Learning Policy



'The journey through education for any child in Scotland must include opportunities for planned, quality outdoor learning experiences that are progressive as well as purposeful' (Scottish Government, 2010).

Introduction

This policy outlines the important role that outdoor learning plays in a child's education at St John's Primary School.

Extensive research suggests that there are many benefits to providing children with quality outdoor learning opportunities including, but not limited to:

- the promotion of health, safety and resilience*
- equity of opportunity for achievement*
- understanding and engaging with sustainability*
- supporting learning and attainment across the curriculum.*

This policy endeavours to provide well planned, progressive learning opportunities that support learning and help our children become more confident, resilient and independent. Outdoor education will be fully embedded into everyday practice.

Our curriculum design encourages the development of each child's individual skills, talents and abilities in line with the articles of the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). All children are entitled to an education which develops their mental and physical abilities as well as ensuring their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. All

children at St John's have the right to an inclusive education that ensures equity as far as possible in terms of social background, race, gender and disability (Article 2, UNCRC).

Frequent and regular outdoor learning encourages children and young people to engage with the natural and built heritage. Scotland's countryside and urban areas provide ideal settings for children and young people to understand the global significance of sustainability issues and inform personal decisions that contribute towards a greener Scotland.

The outdoors provides excellent opportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always visible in the classroom. Becoming aware of such skills can fundamentally change personal, peer and staff perceptions and lead to profound changes in life expectations and success.

Outdoor learning activities span social divisions and can help build stronger communities. Some organisations have therapeutic programmes where outdoor learning plays a central role. Children and young people have opportunities to develop skills to assess and manage risk when making decisions.

Staff will plan, lead and deliver opportunities for quality outdoor learning experiences and monitor the quality of outdoor learning experiences through evaluation and moderation.

Aims:

- To allow learners opportunities to become safer and stronger by exploring their environment, making community links and developing their risk assessment skills
- To develop, utilise and maintain all the available outdoor space at St John's school
- To ensure that all staff and pupils have a clear understanding of the principles of outdoor learning and outdoor play

- To create meaningful outdoor learning and outdoor play opportunities across the curriculum – especially within numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing
- To collaborate with parents and with other local community organisations (e.g. Water Works)

Key objectives:

All learning experiences planned as part of the outdoor curriculum are based on the design principles and planned from the experiences and outcomes from the Curriculum for Excellence.

St John's Primary School have a trained Level 3 practitioner who is responsible for incorporating the principles of Forest Schools into the outdoor learning curriculum. Our objective is to fulfil the evidence of known benefits of outdoor learning including:

- Increasing self-esteem and self-confidence
- Developed social skills
- Improved language and communication skills
- Increased motivation and concentration
- Broader knowledge and understanding of outdoor learning
- Improvement of physical motor skills
- Raised attainment for all through outdoor education in Numeracy, Literacy and Health and Wellbeing

Risk Assessment

St John's ensures children have opportunities to develop a sound understanding of how they can keep themselves safe. Developing the capacity to assess risk is a crucial part of this process.

All outdoor learning environments are subjected to a risk-benefit analysis before being used. Staff ensure the outdoor environment is safe to allow children to engage in challenges with minimum risk.

To ensure the safety of all members of the school community when learning outdoors, the risk benefit analysis will be reviewed regularly. At St John's we ensure the provision and availability of suitable outdoor clothing and equipment for all members of the school community.