



# Ravenswood Outdoor Learning and Play Policy - January, 2021



## “Muddy hands, happy hearts!”

### Rationale: The Right to Play

EVERY child at Ravenswood Primary School has the right to play, as outlined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

“Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.”

Article 31

Play is an intrinsic part of human nature and development and should take place indoors and outdoors. The Scottish Government has enshrined children’s right to play outdoors every day in its national Health and Social Care Standards, ‘As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment.’

## What Constitutes as Outdoor Learning and Play?

Outdoor learning is a broad term that includes learning and playing outdoors using school grounds, local areas, involvement in community projects, environmental education, and recreational and adventure activities.

The outdoors should integrate play, fun and learning! It should offer a range of resources and spaces that cannot be replicated inside the classroom. Outdoor learning should serve as a means for children to access a range of curricular areas, and make use of a range of skills.

Outdoor learning and play should allow children freedom. An outdoor environment filled with adult-directed learning and play doesn't allow for this and prevents children from following their own interests. Outdoors should be open-ended, with opportunities for risk taking, collaboration, expansive play and lots of personal choice.

The responsibility for learning and play outdoors should be shared between the adults and the children. Adults should take on the role as a facilitator. Intervening only when necessary, modelling where appropriate to ensure children's safety, following the children's interests and learning and playing along with the children.

## The Benefits of the Great Outdoors

Playing outdoors enhances learning and is fundamental for children to thrive in health, wellbeing and development. Some key benefits of learning and play outdoors are:

- Increased physical activity.
- Promotes mental, social and emotional wellbeing by helping to reduce stress, increase self-esteem and confidence, develop resilience and manage risks.
- Promotes the development of social skills, essential to helping children build lasting relationships.
- Increases creativity, imagination and understanding. This allows opportunities for challenge, enquiry, critical thinking and reflection.
- Helps children to understand, value, enjoy and protect the natural world as they become more connected to their environment.

## Outdoor Learning and Play Aims

At Ravenswood we strive to provide outdoor learning and play opportunities to achieve the following aims:

- To empower children to take ownership of their learning.

- To encourage children to develop problem solving skills, resilience and a growth mindset.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage their own risks.
- To encourage children to care for their environment.
- To encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- To encourage children to become 'Ravenswood Rangers' and develop a love for the outdoors!

### Outdoor Learning and Play at Ravenswood

We strongly value outdoor learning and play at all stages, recognising that opportunities to enjoy local landscapes and green spaces contributes to children's health, well-being and happiness as well as to their learning and their ability to learn. Most importantly learning and playing contributes to children's ability to thrive and survive.

At Ravenswood we believe that we can make a positive contribution to children's lives by valuing their urge and desire to explore and connect with the outdoors.

### Outdoor Areas:

Outdoor learning and play at Ravenswood takes place both on and off the school grounds. We are very lucky to have our own 'Outdoor Classroom' which offers a vast green space, as well as a pond, gardening opportunities and most importantly, mud! This is equipped with a range of resources and loose parts materials to help promote learning and play.







The Ravenswood Marsh, located near our school, provides excellent opportunities for outdoor learning and play beyond the realms of Ravenswood. Exploring this area provides new learning and play opportunities which not offered by our Outdoor Classroom. We also take a role in working alongside Cumbernauld Living Landscapes to

help maintain this area, providing children with a sense of ownership.



Another area used is Braeface Woods, also within walking distance from our school. Again this provides children with a different open space to explore, investigate and enjoy.



### Health and Safety:

All Ravenswood Rangers are supported in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Children will be taught to manage risks. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers these challenges. All children are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe, in accordance with the 'Safe' SHANARRI health and wellbeing indicator.

The following health and safety points are shared and understood by all Ravenswood Rangers:

- Only visit the outdoor classroom when a member of staff is present.
- Keep yourself and others safe by listening carefully to instructions and following adult signals – such as whistles and bells.
- Respect boundaries, staying within the boundaries marked out by an adult. Ensure that you can always be seen.
- If harmful items are found do not touch them and alert an adult straight away.
- When carrying large loose play items ensure you walk safely and check there is no one else around you.
- When visiting off school outdoor grounds ensure that you stay with your class, walking to and from the grounds sensibly.
- When visiting off school outdoor grounds wear a hi-vis vest at all times.

- Tidy away all resources before leaving the outdoor area, ensuring that everything is stowed away safely.



- Ravenswood Rangers should dress appropriately for the weather and conditions. Wearing old clothes, hooded jackets and sensible footwear such as wellies.



## How to Support Outdoor Learning and Play

Some things you can do to support and encourage a love of the outdoors:

- Ensure that your Ravenswood Ranger is always appropriately dressed for the weather and conditions, allowing them to fully participate in all of the fun.
- Let us know if you require waterproofs, or wellies as we are happy to provide these.
- Provide your Ravenswood Ranger with a change of clothes – including socks and footwear.
- Make time for outdoor play at home. Please see <https://www.playscotland.org/play/playful-learning/outdoor-play-and-learning/> for lots of fun, outdoorsy play ideas you can try at home. Or introduce daily/weekly walks, or gardening into your home routine.
- Please get in touch with us if you have any loose parts for donation.
- Live by our motto, “Muddy hands, happy hearts!”

