



Ysgol Gynradd Maesglas

‘Inspire, Achieve, Dream, Succeed’

Outdoor Learning Policy

April 2023

Policy review Date	April 2023
Date of next Review	April 2026
Reviewed by	Governors
Headteacher	Mrs Moses
Chair of Governors	Gaynor Evans

Rational

At Greenmeadow Primary we feel it is important to enable all children to use the outside environment as a context for learning as much as possible. All staff have a shared responsibility to provide regular, authentic outdoor learning contexts and to ensure that the environment is used in a stimulating and meaningful way. Outdoor spaces are used effectively to promote positive relationships and well-being.

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 learning outdoors. At Greenmeadow Primary School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside

Outdoor learning takes place both as part of discrete subject development and interdisciplinary learning where the outdoors and the wider community provide rich learning environments. Children learn and play in real settings and apply skills and make connections across areas of learning experiences in relevant contexts.

Why does outdoor learning matter?

All learning is important whether it takes place indoors or outdoors. However, sometimes the outdoor environment can be a more effective and stimulating place to learn than inside a classroom. Frequent outdoor learning encourages children and young people to engage with their natural environment and built heritage and related issues of sustainable development. There is a growing body of evidence strongly indicating that time spent in green spaces brings a host of health and well-being benefits in addition to providing opportunities for children to learn how to evaluate and manage risks. The outdoors provides excellent opportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always relevant in the classroom.

There is evidence to prove 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, mental health and emotional intelligence.
- change their environmental behaviours and their values and attitudes.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning

There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It leads to a deeper understanding of concepts and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility.

With well planned, safely managed and personalised experiences to meet the needs of every child, outdoor learning can: -

- Readily develop the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning.
- Help to bring learning alive and make learning more engaging and relevant.
- Enable children to be confident individuals and impact positively upon young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Contribute towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Help to ensure that children are successful learners enabling children to develop knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday learning experiences.
- Raise learner's attainment and achievement across all areas of learning experiences.
- Contribute towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment
- Nurture creativity
- Provide opportunities for informed learning through play
- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation
- Provide challenge and the opportunity to allow for managed "risk taking" to take place

Aims

At Greenmeadow Primary school the aims for outdoor learning are:-

- To develop outdoor learning within and across our school in order that it becomes embedded within the curriculum and is sustainable for the future.
- To celebrate our outdoor spaces and the rich learning that can take place there.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- To provide a safe and secure environment that they can take risks in.

- To encourage children and young people to be aware of and take care of their environment.

To provide positive opportunities for active learning at Greenmeadow Primary School, we seek to offer outdoor experiences that allow children to: -

- find space to be alone or interact in social groups of differing sizes.
- plan, build and evaluate.
- find similarities and differences, observe and classify.
- be energetic, adventurous and assess risk.
- make marks, use large scale media, be messy.
- plant, grow, harvest and cook.
- hide, explore and discover.
- investigate, make predictions, test theories.
- imagine, pretend and reflect.
- measure, locate, transport and record.

Meaningful and Effective Outdoor Learning

1. Contribute to all Four Purposes

At Greenmeadow Primary school we plan for effective Outdoor Learning ensuring that this contributes to all four purposes of the curriculum:

- Ambitious, capable learners
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Ethical, informed citizens
- Healthy, confident individuals

2. Learning across Areas of Learning Experience.

At Greenmeadow Primary School we plan for outdoor learning across all 6 areas of learning experiences within the school curriculum, using it as a context and a natural resource for learning.

- Language Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology
- Health and Wellbeing
- Humanities
- Expressive Arts.

Being outdoors allows children and young people to engage directly with the environment through a direct, hands on approach, allowing them to make connections in their learning journey. Taking classes outdoors is an integral part of classroom activities.

3. Learning for Sustainable Development

Learning for sustainability is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. At Greenmeadow Primary School we weave together global citizenship, sustainable development education, outdoor learning and children's rights to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences. Our aim is to develop an ethos of care for the planet and to help children and young people foster their own personal ethic towards sustainability. Outdoor learning offers direct physical, sensory, intellectual and effective ways of knowing the planet we depend on for survival, and developing our relationship with it.

4. Learning through Local Landscapes

At Greenmeadow Primary School by learning about the local environment, children and young people start to make sense of the social, cultural, physical, geographical and ecological make-up of the landscape – how their culture, the land they live on and the living organisms that share it with them has been shaped and is unique to them.

5. Using Student Curiosity

Children at Greenmeadow Primary School are given plenty of opportunities to explore themes that have high levels of personal relevance and interest. Effective outdoor learning is experiential by nature so helping students to find answers to questions asked through curiosity enables them to “learn how to learn” more independently.

6. Enabling Students to Take Responsibility.

At Greenmeadow Primary School we encourage the children to make decisions and to take responsibility for themselves and others. Learning outside in your local environment can provide greater opportunities to take responsibility for yourself, others and the natural world. Effective learning happens when children and young people experience situations where they need to consider different courses of action and then make decisions – the consequences of these decisions directly affecting themselves and others.

7. Community Partnerships

Effective outdoor learning should see children working across such social divisions as age, ethnicity and race. Partnerships with organisations based in the local community promotes the well-being of all involved and the local environment. At Greenmeadow we provide genuine, real-life, meaningful experiences for children to learn about what it means to be an active and responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

Health and Safety

At Greenmeadow Primary School we will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor learning. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe. 'Safe' is a school expectation and children are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe.

There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils:

- Outdoor Learning is an important part of our learning journey.
- We must uphold our school expectation to be safe at all times when we participate in outdoor learning.
- We must stay with our group.
- We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning objectives.
- If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy learning and stay safe.

All activities should be considered for a risk assessment, but only those which might deliver activities not normally undertaken in school should proceed to full risk assessment.

Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation

At Greenmeadow Primary School good practice in assessing outdoor learning is no different from assessment elsewhere in school. Where possible activities should allow children to demonstrate "performance of understanding" i.e. they should be given tasks that show they can use what they have learned to...

- Generalise
- Apply exceptions
- Give explanations
- Make predictions
- Evaluate
- Find examples
- Find solutions
- Work independently
- Work with a partner
- Work as part of a team.