

Milborne St Andrew First School

Outdoor

Education

Policy



The Ethos

OE is a unique educational experience and process that offers children the opportunity to succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in an outdoor environment. Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers, with the appropriate footwear and clothing. Children will work with tools, play, learn and begin to understand the boundaries of behaviour, both physical and social. They will grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world. The concept originates in Denmark, originally aimed at pre-school children, where it was found that children who had attended forest school then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. These foundations helped them to raise their academic achievements. At our School we use OE as a tool to encourage children to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- discover how they learn best
- pursue knowledge that interests them
- learn how to manage failures
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- regularly experience achievement and success
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- become more motivated
- improve their concentration skills
- improve their communication
- and explore the world through all the senses available to them

What is Outdoor Education?

Outdoor Education is a broad term that includes: outdoor play in the early years, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development programmes, expeditions and team building. Outdoor Education does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core...

All forms of Outdoor Education value direct experience

Outdoor Education can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. Direct experience outdoors is more motivating and has more impact and credibility. Through skilled teaching, interpretation or facilitation, outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and breakthroughs in learning.

Outdoor Education is active learning in the outdoors

In Outdoor Education children learn through what they do, through what they encounter and through what they discover. Children learn about the outdoors, themselves and each other,

while also learning outdoor skills. Active learning readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review and cooperative learning.

Outdoor Education provides direct contact with the natural world

Environmental issues are of increasing importance in the political agenda, yet many people live an urban life which does not allow them to experience the relationship between their actions and the elements which support life on earth. Outdoor Learning allows participants to develop values and opinions that are informed by first hand experience of the natural world.

Outdoor Education is a source of powerful learning experiences

Outdoor Education can be powerful, exciting, inspirational, developmental and rewarding in many ways. The power of Outdoor Education makes it a valued means for overcoming some of the toughest learning challenges.

Learners who usually struggle can excel in the outdoor classroom

Outdoor Education provides such a different climate for learning that children who struggle as learners often become motivated and capable learners in the outdoors.

Learners who already excel become more versatile learners

Even children who are excellent learners in indoor environments encounter very different learning experiences outdoors.

Personal development: "If I can do this, I can do anything!"

Children of all ages and abilities make personal breakthroughs, especially when taking part in adventurous activities and surprising themselves. "If I can do this, I can do anything!" is the kind of statement that signifies such breakthroughs.

Team development: "If we can do this, we can do anything!"

In Outdoor Education, especially in team building activities during the social cog, children discover just how much they can achieve when they work well together.

Rationale:

Why Outdoor Education Matters: the case for Outdoor Education

Outdoor Education is an engaging, effective and enjoyable form of learning, whether the emphasis is personal, social or environmental, or is about learning itself. Outdoor Education provides first-hand experience for learning about our natural world. It is also a powerful medium for personal, organisational and cultural change. Many socially useful purposes are readily achieved through Outdoor Education.

Benefits:

- enhanced personal and social communication skills
- increased physical health
- enhanced mental and spiritual health
- enhanced spiritual, sensory, and aesthetic awareness
- develops self-esteem, take personal responsibility, co-operate with and respect the needs of others;
- extends their personal horizons through greater appreciation and understanding of the world.
- enhanced practical problem solving and team work skills.
- promotes a positive and knowledgeable response towards personal health and well-being.

Outdoor Education isn't a single subject or class; it is an approach to learning which can be incorporated at appropriate times into every area of the curriculum. Outdoor Education brings together many different areas allowing children and young people to 'make connections' on their learning journey.

Aims and Objectives of this policy:

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
- To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- 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 care for their environment.

Health and Safety

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. Outdoor education opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk.

In the first instance the school's policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to and applied prior to any outdoor learning activity that may require additional support beyond the reasonable activities one would normally apply within the classroom. It is also important that the school applies robust safety measures to effectively manage and minimise risks. It is equally important, however, that all involved, including parents acknowledge that a degree of residual risk remains. We therefore discuss with parents their views regarding outdoor education – and the degrees of risk that apply to the varying activities during parent forum meetings.

Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor education. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe. 'Be Safe' is a school expectation and children are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor education.

Outdoor Education is an important part of our learning journey.

- We must uphold our school expectation 'Be Safe' at all times when we participate in outdoor education.
- We must stay within sight of our group.
- We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning objectives.

Only our teachers are allowed to open padlocked gates.

If we follow the expectations above, we will Enjoy Learning and Be Safe.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process.

Policy Review

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies, particularly the Outdoor Provision in the EYFS Policy. It will be reviewed by the governing body as part of its schedule of policy review.

Managing the delivery of Outdoor Education

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning e.g. forward planning meetings, classroom observation, teachers' self-evaluations, summative assessment records and other school procedures we closely monitor the use of outdoor education as a key element of the learning experience at Milbornel. We provide support and professional development to enable staff to feel confident developing the expertise or knowledge base to adapt their practice to include opportunities for learning beyond the confines of the classroom.

We encourage children to be more resilient about weather conditions.

What happens at OE

Typically, class groups of individuals (depending on child/adult ratio) take part in a programme linking with their topic, lasting for about an hour and a half. The sessions involve practical hands-on activities which aim to build up children's skills, abilities and confidence week by week. All sessions are designed and led by trained teaching staff, with the help and direction of our Outdoor Education coordinator, Jenna Wittman. However, we strongly encourage child-led learning, so as the weeks progress, learners are given more freedom and responsibility to explore their interests and therefore initiate and direct their own learning, particularly in the Early Years. Outdoor education uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation. Activities can include:

- Shelter building
- Natural art
- Using knots and lashings
- Fire lighting
- Animal tracking
- Bug hunts
- Tree investigations
- Climbing and balancing
- Woodwork using tools, e.g. making musical instruments, jewellery, decorative items
- Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- Collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- Team games

Most activities are curriculum-linked and span a number of subjects, including Math's, English, Design & Technology, Science, Music and Art. Outdoor education sits wonderfully in the enquiry based curriculum that we have at Milborne.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Education

We have recently invested in the development of a fire pit and outdoor classroom named the 'castaway camp'. At Milborne, we have developed links with Urban Healthland. Pupils are visiting this natural local resource and make comparisons to our school environment. We will continue to build upon these for the benefit of all of our children. We advocate that the pace of learning can be enhanced by using the outdoors and that children who may find the classroom too constraining will perform and behave better outdoors, reducing the time spent on explanation and behaviour management. There is clear evidence that boys in particular, are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment. The school will communicate the benefits to parents and the wider community of outdoor education so that there is a greater understanding of its value and importance and provide a greater awareness of the safety standards the school adopts.

Staff

Our OE sessions are organised and run by Jenna Wittman who has a Level 3 Award for Coordinating the Outdoor Curriculum and Adrian Goodhand who is a level 3 Forest School practitioner and Forest School trainer with many years expertise. All staff and volunteers have undergone an appropriate selection process to assess their skills and suitability for working with children and have been subject to enhanced DBS checks as well as attended fire pit safety training with Adrian Goodhand. All sessions are staffed by a qualified first aider and all staff have access to a recommended first aid kit.

Where should Outdoor Learning take place?

The school grounds site

We are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play.

Our Outdoor Education sessions take place in a small woodland area on our school field or in the enclosed wildlife area at the back of our school grounds. It is made up of mixed deciduous trees, mainly mature Hazel, Ash, Field Maple but also including Willow and some amenity species (to be determined). Around the fence area there are a mixture of climbing plants such as ivy. The woodland is managed carefully at the moment and as our Forest School progresses we hope to allow the site to go a little wilder and develop a deeper diversity. The site is within school grounds and is not accessible to the public. Children taking part in Outdoor Education are also encouraged to minimise their impact on the site. This will include:

- Finding out about the different animals and plants that live in and amongst the trees · Learning to respect animals' homes
- Careful observation of live animals
- Leaving lying deadwood in place
- Taking all materials and litter with them when they leave
- Ensuring that the site is left like they found it

The local environment

The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment.

Places further afield

We actively encourage teachers to plan opportunities for children to engage in learning beyond the school grounds. Each year group has a planned programme of educational visits which complement and extend learning. These also support our work in developing enterprise education and our desire to develop more business links.

These are planned into all aspects of the curriculum and, by taking learners beyond their familiar environment, stimulate their curiosity and imagination and motivate children in a powerful way.

Residential places

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working, for example. For instance, through staying at outdoor and adventure centres such as Hooke Court, provides children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.

Children with Additional Needs

Outdoor education can also overlap with the teaching of life skills. At Milborne we will be supporting our children by using life skills training as a motivational tool, encouraging our pupils to use a range of interdisciplinary skills to meet certain targets and objectives.

Able Children

Outdoor education offers opportunities to including personal research and develop a personal understanding of their place in the natural world, further developing an understanding of learning processes, enquiry and thinking skills; and that deepen and enrich subject learning.

The above issues allow opportunities to access discussion on a moral code, ethics, humanity, sustainability, science in its widest sense, problems pertaining to globalisation and philosophical enquiry, for example. Outdoor Education acts as a bridge to higher order learning and opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.