

# LETHBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY

### VALUE STATEMENT

At Lethbridge, we value outdoor learning because it allows learning to become fun and memorable.

The opportunity to play outside throughout the year, in all different kinds of weather is as important as playing inside. Nearly everything that is provided inside can be provided outside and some of the best learning can only happen outside. For many children, the learning that happens outdoors is the most important. It is every child's entitlement.

"The best classroom *and* the richest cupboard is roofed only by the sky" Margaret McMillan.

At Lethbridge, we believe that well organised and supervised, "risky freedom" helps all children to find out about themselves and their capabilities. It helps develop self-confidence, independence and lays the foundations for a healthier life. We are aware that there can risks associated with outdoor learning experiences; however it is important that children recognise risks and how to manage them and this is a part of their growing up. It also helps them to develop new skills. As teachers we are aware that a balance is needed between risk and fun. This policy seeks to minimise the risk and maximise the fun.

As part of Outdoor Learning we operate a Forest School which takes place in the designated 'Forest School area', adjacent to the main school car park, which provides a safe environment. Miss Jones is the qualified Forest School leader and is also trained in First Aid. Forest School sessions are carried out with all year groups under the leadership of Miss Jones together with Class teacher, TA and additional helpers if needed for ratios.

### AIMS

*Outdoor learning offers opportunities to:*

- Provide suitable outdoor learning activities for all ages (4-11) this includes out of classroom experiences such as school trips, welly walks, visits within the local community, taking the classroom in to the outdoors, taking the curriculum topics outside the classroom building in relevant outdoor experiences.
- Make learning fun and memorable.
- Develop learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, to become independent and co-operative learners.
- Develop an awareness of their local environment.

Forest Schools provides children with the opportunity to experience and explore nature in a hands-on way. Children's learning within the classroom is extended or reinforced where appropriate. Sessions are structured to promote child-led learning, where the children are

encouraged to become independent, explore and attempt new tasks whilst developing the ability to recognize and manage risks. Activities carried out during the sessions are designed to stimulate children's imaginations and creativity, as well as developing communication, social and team skills.

## **Managing the delivery of outdoor learning**

### **Equipment & Safety**

- All play apparatus and equipment is installed subject to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Risk Assessments are carried out on all large play equipment and play spaces.
- Play equipment and playground areas are frequently assessed for condition and safety by the school caretaker. Should there be damage to, or concerns surrounding the safety of, any playground equipment, these will either be addressed immediately or the equipment will be taken out of use until the matter is resolved.
- Apparatus is only used by children of the appropriate age, skill, and physical abilities.
- We may devise a rota to ensure that all children have the opportunity to use play equipment, but that it does not get overcrowded and therefore dangerous.
- It is understood by all staff that they have the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that the outside play area is safe. Any concerns need to be reported to the Head teacher and the school caretaker.
- Some equipment is stored in special areas and is only taken out when it is to be used. It is put away safely when not in use.
- Sun Protection - all children must wear hats during the hot weather. We expect our parents to apply sun cream to their children before coming to school. If necessary children will be asked to top-up an application with sun cream provided by their parents. Teachers are able to supervise this but are not able to apply the sun cream to children.
- All children should have access to their own water source throughout their play time.
- Before a school trip takes place, a risk assessment of the journey and the risk assessment of the chosen 'school trip' is carried out. Each adult helper on the trip is given a copy of this on the day of the trip.

### **Additional information for Forest School – also see Forest School handbook.**

Before Forest School sessions a safety sweep of the area is carried out by the Forest School Leader. This ensures a safe environment for the children to explore. Risk assessments for the Forest School area are looked at termly and are updated as appropriate. Children are informed or reminded about the Forest School safety rules at the beginning of each session (**See page 22 Forest School Handbook**). Parents are provided with a leaflet on what their children should wear to Forest Schools e.g. long trousers to protect themselves from brambles, warm clothing etc. During some sessions children use tools - each tool has its own risk assessment and management strategy which can be found in the **Forest School Handbook pages 19-22**. Children are not allowed to use tools unsupervised or without wearing 'gardening gloves'. Within the Forest School area tools are only used in designated areas, which are clearly marked. The handbook detail emergency and incident procedures to be followed. **Forest School Handbook pages 23- 24.**

### Role of the Adult

- The roles should be similar to those indoors. It is made clear to all outdoor staff exactly what their roles are.
- Outdoor staff and Out of School staff must ensure that planning for outdoor play is integral with the overall planning for the School and Out of School provision is planned for, this is included in Year group's medium and short term planning.
- At Lethbridge we strongly believe that children should be allowed regular opportunity for undirected free play, with minimal adult intervention, except where required. This type of play fosters independence in problem solving and creative imagination. Furthermore it is an opportunity for children to develop negotiation skills and to devise rules for games and approaches to play, thus building essential relationship skills.
- Outdoor play staff and Out of School provision staff must ensure that specific staff have been identified to support all activities.
- Outdoor play staff and Out of School provision staff must set up equipment and make necessary safety checks.
- Outdoor play staff and Out of School provision staff must be aware of "key" children, "focus children" or children with special needs.
- All staff must encourage imaginative play and facilitate children's spontaneous play, talk and exploration
- Staff must encourage children to assist in tidying up after using the outdoor facility.
- Staff must look out for the many varied opportunities for supporting and encouraging children to explore and extend their experiences.

### Additional information for Forest School – also see Forest School handbook.

Any adults involved in participating in Forest School sessions are given a 'designated responsibility' card before leaving the school building. This gives a clear outline of roles and responsibilities of individuals in the session. **See page 25 in Forest School Handbook.**

They are also given a 'responsibilities while in Forest Schools' card which summaries key things to remember whilst supporting Forest School sessions. This includes health and safety rules and a reminder about adult intervention, remembering this should only occur if necessary during child led activities. The card also has emergency contact numbers for the school if a serious incident arises.

## **Planning and Organisation**

There is an expectation that children will have access to outdoor play every day - all year round.

Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. In playing, they behave in different ways: sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play.

- Rotas for playtimes and lunchtime supervision are clearly displayed on the staff room notice board.
- Two members of staff supervise children at play times on both KS1 and KS2 playgrounds.
- At lunchtimes children are supervised by Lunchtime assistants: there are 3 Lunchtime assistants allocated to each playground.
- The provision outside should show clear links to the planned indoor curriculum and build on children's interests. Weather conditions should be viewed as an opportunity to develop children's learning.
- In the EYFS a shelter covers the outdoor space enabling the children to play and learn in the area at all times, therefore outdoor experiences are not interrupted by weather conditions.

### **Staff/pupil ratios required for learning experiences in the wider environment -**

#### **EYFS**

Ratios for adult/children on school trips, town gardens, around the school.1:6

#### **KS1**

Ratios for adult/children on school trips, town gardens, around the school 1:6

#### **KS2**

Ratios for adult/children on school trips, town gardens, around the school.1:10

*The role of staff is crucial:*

- Planning and resourcing a challenging environment;
- Supporting children's learning through play and planned play activity
- Extending and supporting children's spontaneous play; and
- Extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

Our staff are expected to understand and practice the ethos that play, in a secure environment, with effective adult support, children can:

- Explore develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world
- Practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills
- Learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules
- Be alone, be alongside others or co-operate as they talk or rehearse their feelings

- Take risks and make mistakes
- Think creatively and imaginatively
- Communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems
- Express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

**Additional information for Forest School – also see Forest School handbook.**

In accordance with Forest School recommendations the adult to children ratios are as follows:

**KS1/KS2**

- 1 adult to 15 children

**EYFS**

- 1 adult to 8 children

Class teacher and class TA will attend Forest School sessions.

**ROLE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR**

The role of the outdoor learning co-ordinator is to:

- Co-ordinate the outdoor learning areas in the school, in particular developing the EYFS outdoor learning area. This involves making the area aesthetically pleasing and stimulating for the children with suitable equipment/resources and activities.
- To monitor the outdoor learning experiences of all Year groups, ensuring teachers are planning outdoor experiences for children in their short term and medium term planning.
- To provide information for the school development plan.
- To support staff and inform them of any outdoor learning experiences that may be relevant for or will provide a rich learning experience for their year group.

**Additional information for Forest School – also see Forest School handbook.**

The role of the Forest School Leader is to:

- Plan and lead sessions.
- Carry out safety sweeps before each session, removing anything that is dangerous e.g. glass
- Check all persons have appropriate clothing.
- Delegate jobs to adult helpers/children.
- Head count/register of children.
- Leading the forest school session – reminding children of H&S/rules/signals game/activity.
- Responsible for tools/equipment.
- Contact the school if there is an emergency.

**RECORD KEEPING**

Outdoor learning activities/experiences will be found in teachers short and medium term planning. Evidence of learning is provided from children's work and a record of photographs kept by the class teacher. Forest school sessions are recorded through observations carried out by the class teacher, if suitable, photographs of the sessions are taken and are usually uploaded on the school website for parents and children to view. Updated risk assessments are kept in the Forest School handbook, which are updated if necessary. Safety sweeps are carried out weekly using a 'checklist'. A copy of the Forest School handbook is available from the Forest School Leader or it can be found on the school sever under 'Policies', 'Forest Schools'. The handbook is taken out on each Forest school session as a reference if needed for emergency/incident procedures.

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