



REDLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL OUTDOOR  
LEARNING/FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

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| Reviewed by   | Sian Evans – June 2024 |
| Date of Issue | July 2024              |
| Review Date   | June 2026              |

# Redland Primary School Outdoor Learning/Forest School Policy

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Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster children's love of learning. At Redland Primary School, we believe that all children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. We further believe that it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning.

The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto, launched by the government in 2006, states that 'Every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development whatever their age, ability and circumstances'.

## **What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?**

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, and personal and social development. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core.

Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility. The results from outdoor learning can be instantaneous as well as active.

Active learning readily develops many learning skills- such as enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning – all benefiting the learner.

Outdoor Learning is a way of teaching that uses the school grounds and local green spaces (local parks, canals and rivers) to enhance teaching and learning right across the curriculum and to deliver a wide range of associated benefits, including promoting children's social and emotional skills and their engagement in learning.

Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

## **How Forest School ethos are embedded into Outdoor Learning.**

Forest School originated in Scandinavia and was brought to the UK in the early 1990s. Children are not taught, but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through play, for example games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play the child develops their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns resilience and resourcefulness (perseverance and determination), how to give and ask for help and support from peers (emotional intelligence and teamwork), and how to appropriately self-manage risk in an increasingly risky world.

Forest School and Outdoor learning activities might include den building, cutting firewood and fire building, using tools and crafts such as dream catchers or whistles, games, rope swings, flora and fauna identification, as well as stories and sharing. The obvious benefits of improved co-ordination and physical health from doing activities outside are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative; problem solving and perseverance. Children are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help, and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks -all crucial emotional skills to take with them into the adult world.

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## **Benefits of Outdoor Learning:**

- Helps to ensure that children are successful learners enabling children to develop knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday learning experiences.
- Enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle.
- Impacts positively upon children's personal and social development. It can also bring about community cohesion and allow children to develop as responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to their wider community.
- It can create pride in the school and wider community and promote community involvement, renewing children's pride and creating a sense of belonging and responsibility.
- Can raise learner's attainment; promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.
- Provides experience of the outdoors and nature for those children who live in flats / other homes without regular access to outdoor space.

## **Aims and Objectives of this Policy aims to:**

- Raise the profile of Outdoor Learning for pupils, staff and parents.
- Provide a framework and resourcing for all teachers/staff to feel empowered to teach any curriculum lesson outdoors anywhere in the school grounds, at any time not just during timetabled outdoor learning sessions.
- Embed outdoor learning as a whole school ethos.
- Empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- Encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- Develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- Provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- Encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- Encourage children to care for their school and wider environment.

## **Health and Safety**

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. Staff ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others.

Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. In the first instance teachers will refer to and apply the schools policies relating to Health and Safety, and Risk Assessment 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. Our children are taught to manage risks in regard to outdoor learning. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe and dynamic risk – risk assessing on the go. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning. Children wear appropriate protective clothing when needed.

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## **Managing the Delivery of Outdoor Learning**

A dedicated Outdoor Learning/Forest School teacher is employed to develop the teaching and learning and support teachers in their own development. Through the monitoring of teaching and learning, we monitor the use of outdoor learning as a key element of the learning experience at Redland Primary School. 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.

## **EYFS Provision**

There are no boundaries to outdoor learning within the EYFS. Outdoor learning is integral part of our day – the range of activities can be endless. Children have free access throughout the sessions, with range of free flow and planned activities.

## **KS1 Provision**

In KS1 we try to utilise the outdoor space as much as possible. Opportunities to take learning outside are seized and taken full advantage of.

## **KS2 Provision**

In KS2 teachers endeavour to take lessons outside whenever possible. For example, science lessons involve studying the weather and rocks, and geography lessons may involve work in the locality, river studies, orienteering, and following maps. Additionally, children enjoy tending to the raised beds.

## **Where should Outdoor Learning take place?**

The School Grounds

We are lucky to have grounds which offer opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. At Redland School there are many opportunities for Outdoor Learning from the field, playground, raised beds, pond area to the woodland.

## **Gardening Opportunities**

Children from Reception to Year 6 have access to outside gardening areas. There are raised beds for growing vegetables and fruits. Harvested vegetables can be used in cookery lessons to promote healthy eating and sustainable living.

## **Pond Area**

Children from Reception to Year 6 have access to the pond area. There are opportunities to pond dip and identify insects, frogs and newts.

## **Resources**

As a school we have a variety of resources for use within Outdoor Learning lessons. Some of these (knives, saws, hammers, drills, flint and steel etc.) carry their own risk factors and should be used in conjunction with an appropriate risk assessment and safety procedures. Resources must be treated respectfully and returned following use.

## **Inclusion**

At Redland Primary School we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. Moving beyond the classroom has been found to have a range of advantages for children of all abilities and backgrounds. A particular benefit for those children and young people with SEND can be the new,

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and sometimes therapeutic, visual and sensory stimulation they experience when learning in an outdoor environment. This can be liberating for those who struggle in a structured school atmosphere and is often demonstrated through improvements in children's social skills and behaviour. We provide dedicated nurture Forest School groups to enhance the learning in the outdoors through small groups.