

Thomas Harding Junior School



Learning Outside the Classroom Policy

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Our Learning Outside the Classroom Policy aims to further enhance our children's love of learning. At Thomas Harding Junior 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.

What is Learning Outside the Classroom?

Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) is a broad term that includes: outdoor play (learning through play), school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development, work within the local community and more. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core in that Learning Outside the Classroom can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom. 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 that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility. The results from outdoor learning can be instantaneous as well as active and therefore impact on behaviour as well as tapping into the learning styles of the more kinaesthetic learner. Through skilled teaching, outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning. Active learning readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning. Learning Outside the Classroom can help to bring learning alive. For that reason the outdoors can have a significant impact on areas of the curriculum as well as attainment and enjoyment. LOtC also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Aims of this policy

- To raise the profile of Learning Outside the Classroom and to provide high quality LOtC provision.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing them to thrive.
- To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, to develop resilience and to become 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, the local and wider communities 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.
- To develop LOtC as an entitlement for children.
- To ensure the curriculum is designed so that it includes LOtC experiences for children.

Benefits of Learning Outside the Classroom

- LOtC helps to ensure that children are successful learners enabling them to develop knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday learning experiences.
- LOtC enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon their attitudes, beliefs and self perceptions.
- LOtC contributes towards creating independent learners with high self esteem, self awareness and self sufficiency.
- LOtC can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.

- LOfC contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle.
- LOfC has a positive impact 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.
- LOfC raises attainment, promotes and strengthens communication skills, problem solving skills, leadership skills, team work and sense of cohesion.
- LOfC broadens horizons and raises aspiration by enabling children to believe that they can achieve.

Embedded LOfC within the Curriculum

Thomas Harding Junior School offers a curriculum which is balanced and based on promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

A challenging and stimulating curriculum encourages our children to learn and think independently and ours is designed to enable each child to reach their full potential. Learning is fun and meaningful and learning outdoors, in our extensive school grounds and the local area, broadens and deepens our children's experiences further. Beyond the classroom, our children take part in a wide range of enrichment activities including Science and Nature, Sports, Arts including Music, Technology and Maths.

Teachers ensure LOfC opportunities are exploited by:

- Including LOfC within curriculum planning
- Planning cross curricular links especially with regards to English, Maths, Communication and STEM
- Promoting our school APSIRE values
- Providing links with the local and wider community
- Utilising the extensive grounds for curriculum activities
- Communicating with parents and the wider community on the benefits of Learning Outside the Classroom
- Ensuring LOfC is valued and emphasis is provided on the benefits and the impact it has
- Being committed to continuously improve and review LOfC provision within the curriculum.

This policy should be considered alongside other curriculum policies, including the Teaching and Learning Policy.

Where might outdoor learning take place?

The school grounds

We are exceptionally lucky to have extensive grounds and a 'community garden', which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning.

The local environment and community

The locality around our school harbours a wealth of opportunities within an accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment including places of business, places of worship, parks, woodland areas and libraries as well as the excellent transport links with accessibility to our surrounding areas and Central London.

Residential places

Staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self esteem, communication and team working. Our residential visits provide children with an

opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.

Inclusion

We ensure Learning Outside the Classroom provides opportunities for all children, regardless of ability, special education need, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic background. Differentiated activities are well planned for by teachers and children are given opportunities to work both independently and in groups. We support children who are working below the level of their peers whilst also ensuring children are challenged by offering opportunities to engage in extended research, with the intention of developing a greater understanding of the natural world; through the rigours of scientific enquiry, good thinking skills and a strong understanding of learning processes. Learning Outside the Classroom acts as a bridge to higher order learning and opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.

Leadership and Management

Learning Outside the Classroom will be an integral part of the School Development Plan (SDP), which is written by school leaders and Governors. Curriculum leaders will be responsible for monitoring LOfC activities within their subject areas and ensuring it is a fundamental part of the school's timetable. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be responsible for monitoring at whole-school level. Evaluation of the impact of LOfC will be provided within the school's Self Evaluation Framework (SEF). We provide support and professional development to enable staff to feel confident developing their expertise and knowledge base in order to adapt their practice to include opportunities for learning beyond the confines of the classroom.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning e.g. forward planning meetings, observations and drop-ins, teacher's self evaluations, summative assessment records and other school procedures we will closely monitor the use of Learning Outside the Classroom as a key element of the learning experience at the school. Assessment of the children's learning through LOfC may be by:

- Pupil interview
- Staff INSET and conversations with teachers and leaders
- Planning and work scrutiny
- Parental newsletters

Health and Safety

We support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils are 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. LOfC opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. In the first instance the schools policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to and applied prior to any LOfC 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 LOfC. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe and maintaining the high expectations of behaviour we expect at this school. This policy should be considered alongside our behaviour policy.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils:

- There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking Learning Outside the Classroom
- LOfC is an important part of our learning journey.

- We must uphold our school expectations of being safe at all times when we participate in outdoor learning.
 - We must never go to the pond area without an adult.
 - We must always walk on the path at the front of school and be aware of oncoming traffic.
 - We must stay with our group.
 - We must always ensure that we close all doors behind us.
 - We must be sensible and ensure that we achieve our learning.
- If we follow the expectations above, we will enjoy learning and be safe.

Review date: July 2022