



**EVERY CHILD MATTERS ACADEMY TRUST**  
**WELLGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Outdoor Learning Policy**

*The terms Trust and School (and levels within e.g. governors and trustees) are interchangeable and apply to all schools within the Trust*

### **Introduction**

This policy is aimed at developing outdoor learning for all of the children in our school. Currently these range in age from three and four year olds in our nursery to children aged ten and eleven in Year 6. Our school grounds provide a variety of different activities, terrains and habitats already, but we hope to develop these further to support this agenda.

We believe that the outdoor learning environment has much to offer children. It can provide relevant, engaging experiences that support learning in all areas of the curriculum. These can be presented as building on existing outdoor play, transferring activities normally carried out indoors, school garden projects, environmental education or off-site visits.

### **Benefits of Outdoor Learning**

- 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.
- Outdoor learning enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions. Outdoor learning contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Outdoor learning can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Outdoor learning contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a Healthy lifestyle.
- Outdoor learning 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.
- It raises learner's attainment, promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.

### **Aims**

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning across school.
- To provide suitable outdoor learning activities for all ages (3 to 12) which will include out of classroom experiences such as school trips, 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.

- Develop an awareness of their local environment.
- Make learning fun and memorable.
- To provide engaging and healthy activities to support team building, social skills and health and well-being at break times.
- Develop learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, social skills, problem solving, to become independent and co-operative learners.

Therefore, we seek to offer outdoor experiences that allow children to:

- Find space to be alone or interact in social groups of different sizes
- Plan, build, evaluate and sometimes demolish
- Find similarities and differences, observe and classify
- Be energetic, adventurous and assess risk
- Make marks, use large scale media, be messy
- Plant, grow and harvest
- Hide explore and discover
- Investigate, make predictions, test theories
- Imagine, pretend and reflect
- Measure, locate, transport and record

### Wider school aims/ethos

At Wellgate, 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 be 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.

This policy supports our school vision and aims of 'Learning for Life'.

### Consultation

**Staff** have been consulted and asked to consider how outdoor learning is included in their curriculum planning. Visits off site and use of our school grounds are used to enable pupils to learn about the people and place in which they live. By planning and undertaking various aspects of outdoor learning pupils are able to learn across the curriculum in a manner that is active, holistic and contextualized. Outdoor learning is linked to developing physical skills and persistence during PE and the daily mile. Outdoor learning takes place at break times and lunchtimes.

**Pupils** have been consulted through School Council meetings about the kind of facilities or equipment that is needed to encourage Outdoor Learning and to consider the implications for safety, maintenance and fair usage of anything that is placed in the school grounds.



**Parents/Carers** are consulted with details about their child's activities that take place out of the classroom. Activities that involve off-site visits will be notified to parents. Permission is needed for visits in the vicinity of the school i.e. the park or local walks and all visits that require transport.

**External advisers** from Early Excellence and the Local Authority have supported FS1 and FS2 to develop their outdoor areas to support children's learning in the early years. The aim for the future is to develop this good practice for children as they move through school.

## Procedures and practice

### Managing the delivery of outdoor learning:

#### Equipment and Safety

- All play apparatus and equipment is installed subject to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Risk assessments are carried out on large play equipment and play spaces
- Play equipment and playground areas are frequently assessed for condition and safety by the school caretaker and staff using the area. Should there be damage to or concerns surrounding the safety of any playground equipment, these will 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.
- 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 and only taken out when it is being used. It is to be put away safely when it has been used.
- Weather -Sun Protection- all children are encouraged to wear hats during the hot weather. Parents are advised to apply sun cream to their children before coming to school. If necessary children will be asked to top up their application with sun cream provided by their parents. Teachers are able to supervise this, but are not able to apply sun cream to children. Other weather conditions are risk assessed as to clothing needed and playground conditions.
- All children should have access to their own water source for when they are thirsty.

#### The role of the adult

- The roles should be similar to those indoors and staffs that are outdoors are aware of their roles.
- Where there are opportunities for outdoor learning it is included on the year group's medium and short term planning.
- Children should be allowed opportunity for undirected free play with minimal adult intervention, except when required.
- Staff who are outdoors must make necessary safety checks
- Staff who are outdoors must be aware of "focus" children or children with special educational needs.
- Staff outdoors should encourage imaginative play and facilitate spontaneous play, talk and exploration.



- Staff must encourage children to assist in tidying up after using the outdoor facility.
- Staff should look out for the many varied opportunities for supporting and encouraging children to explore and extend their experiences.
- Children should have opportunity to access the outdoor areas every day – all year round.

### Where should outdoor learning take place

**The school grounds** - We are really lucky to have extensive grounds which offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. We have the wild wood with a pond, grassed areas, field and planted area, the poly tunnel and various hard surfaces.

**The local environment** -The locality around school harbors a wealth of opportunities within relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment through visits to churches, businesses, library and parks.

**Places further afield** -teachers are encouraged 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 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 Centre's such as Kingswood and Robinwood, provides children with an opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel.

### Organisation of supervision

- There are rotas for playtimes and lunchtime supervision.
- Members of staff supervise children at playtime on both KS1 and KS2 playgrounds.
- At lunchtimes children are supervised by lunchtime supervisors in different areas of each playground.
- Weather conditions should be viewed as an opportunity to develop children's learning.

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

- EYFS - ratios for adults/children on school visits is 1:6
- KS1 - ratios for adult/children on school visits is 1:6
- KS2 - ratios for adult/children on school visits is 1:10
- It is a priority of this school that all visits and off-site activities are safe, well managed and educationally beneficial.

The Headteacher will:

- ensure all visits and off-site activities have specific and appropriate educational objectives.
- approve all visits and activities, based on compliance with the council and school health and safety policy.



- ensure off-site programmes are led by competent staff who are appropriately experienced to assess the risks, manage the activity and manage the specific group.
- check that the staffing ratio is suitable for each visit (including support for any children with specific needs).
- ensure party leaders have access to a planning checklist.
  
- check that risks have been assessed, significant risks recorded and any appropriate safety measures are in place.

## Aspects

### **Definition:**

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

### **Equal opportunities:**

We endeavor to ensure that all children whatever their abilities are able to play and explore outdoors within the school grounds and further afield. Activities are not offered on the basis of gender and we try to balance out over time the specialist visits offered to children. At all times we aim to respect cultural issues such as dress and inappropriate off-site visits.

### **Health and safety:**

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. It is important to 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. Risk Assessments will be carried out where appropriate. School Health and Safety Policy will be followed.

### **Planning:**

Outdoor lessons will be planned by class teachers where possible and appropriate and will be found in teachers short and/or medium term planning. For example; measuring areas outside would be suitable for math, looking at the community you can see from our playground for geography. EYFS where appropriate should adapt and enhance their outdoor environment to support learning and development. (See EYFS outdoor learning policy.)

### **Teaching:**

There are some implications for teaching outside for example weather, safety of the children and some equipment. When planning activities, the weather forecast should be consulted prior to the day of learning. However, letters can be sent home for children to come in appropriate clothing, such as waterproof coats and/or wellies if it is necessary to the activity. Teachers should ensure they have an adequate amount of staff to support the activity they have chosen. As the saying goes, 'there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes.'

### **Organisation:**

Individual teachers should consult with other members of staff to see if areas are available. Outdoor physical education is timetabled in for the afternoons therefore this should be



considered when planning activities outside. Playtimes and lunch times are monitored by staffs that have areas allocated to ensure safety of all children.

### **Homework - parent/carer partnership:**

Wellgate is hoping to develop an outdoor activities passport to encourage children to be active outside the school grounds. We will work closely with parents/carers informing them of how this further develops over the next year.

### **Resources:**

We have access to many different areas here at Wellgate. We have an amazing wild wood, with animal habitats and a pond area that is safe and secure behind a gate for all to access. There is also a bird watching shed situated within the wild woods. We also have a large and secure school field with race track markings. The building is surrounded by a large playground which again has marking for games and activities. Lunch time activities and resources can be found in the playtime garage situated near to the entrance of the school. All resources are monitored by the subject leader. We also have a poly tunnel that is maintained and resourced by gardening club, within the science garden at one end of the school.

### **Assessment:**

Assessment and recording 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:

- Generalize
- Apply exceptions
- Give explanations
- Make predictions
- Evaluate
- Find examples
- Find solutions
- List strategies or argue by analogy

Assessment may be teacher led, peer or self-assessment. Most importantly it should be applied to determine next steps.

## **Concluding notes**

Outdoor learning is a key factor in helping children develop some of the main aspects of daily living and school life. We as a school and as teachers should be aiming to provide outdoor learning experiences for the children of Wellgate. Assessment of the children’s learning should be valued equally both indoors and outdoors and should follow the same process. Subject leaders will be responsible for monitoring and supporting their subject area outdoors. This policy should be considered alongside Wellgate’s other relevant policies, in particular the EYFS



outdoor policy, PE and PHSEe policies. It will be reviewed by the governing body as part of its schedule of policy review

**Monitoring and review:**

The governor with responsibility for outdoor learning is primarily responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy. This will be through annual discussion with the subject leader and consideration of the evidence included in the subject leader portfolio. The governor will report on this to the curriculum committee annually. The work of the subject leader will also be subject to review by the head teacher as part of our performance management arrangements.