

Value Statement

Learning outside of the classroom is every child's entitlement. At St Mary Cray Primary Academy, we value outdoor learning because it allows children to have fun whilst learning new skills that may not be possible within the 4 walls of classroom. Because these experiences are also very memorable, it encourages the retention of new knowledge. We believe opportunities to learn and play outside throughout the year, regardless of England's unpredictable weather, is as important as learning and playing inside. For many children, the learning that happens outdoors is the most important; it is these experiences that they remember the most and quite often, they are only exposed to these experiences at school.

Well-organised and supervised settings where children are given the freedom to manage their own risks, allows them to discover their capabilities and true potential. Furthermore, the greatest benefits of learning outside of the classroom are the development of self-confidence and independence. Not forgetting, it encourages an appreciation for a healthier life lifestyle and the environment. Understandably, 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 fundamental part of their learning. As teachers, we are mindful that a balance is needed between risk and fun to exploit as much new learning as possible. We endeavour to minimise the risk and maximise the fun and learning.

We are fortunate that the setting of St Mary Cray Primary Academy provides a wonderful environment to embrace outdoor learning. The school grounds are used to deliver the National Curriculum safely and creatively.

Facilitation/Environment

- Large playground
- Caged 5 a-side concrete football pitch with floor markings for other sports
- Trim trail
- Large field backed by St Mary Cray Recreation Ground
- Forest school area
- Separate outdoor area for EYFS classes

In addition to the above, all year groups also have access to Midfield Primary School's outdoor learning environments. These include, but are not limited to:

- Indoor, heated swimming pool
- Large grounds backed by Scadbury Park Woods
- Four developed Forest School areas
- Celtic hut
- Edible eco-garden

Aims

- To raise the profile of outdoor learning at St Mary Cray Primary Academy
- To ensure that outdoor learning is fully inclusive, enabling all pupils to access and enjoy the opportunities outdoor learning provides
- To deliver an organised and structured outdoor programme to compliment the National Curriculum
- To provide learning opportunities every term for the whole academic year
- To develop staff skills and confidence in delivering outdoor learning through training opportunities and planning support
- 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 empower children to take ownership of their learning
- To provide a safe and secure environment that children can take risks in
- To encourage children to care for their environment

Benefits of Learning outside the Classroom

- Children attain higher levels of knowledge and skills
- Children develop learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, independence and co-operative
- It can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom; direct experience outdoors is more motivating and has more impact and credibility
- Outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning
- Outdoor Learning can help to bring many school subjects alive as they focus on real results and consequences. For that reason, the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and moral education
- Children improve their physical health and increase their motor abilities
- Children socialise and interact in new and different ways with their peers and adults
- Children show improved attention and enhanced self-concept, self-esteem and mental health
- Children change their environmental behaviours and their values and attitudes
- The outdoors can provide space and freedom for a type of learning that is difficult to replicate indoors
- Children experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors
- The outside environment provides great context for learning throughout the year which can lead to deeper understanding of the concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach

- Pupils respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities that Outdoor learning provides
- Children develop awareness of risk and their own self-management of risk
- Children develop greater resilience skills through exposure to a range of new experiences
- Outdoor experiences can enhance interpersonal relationships and improve socialisation, as well as facilitating group bonding and co-operation
- Learning becomes fun and memorable
- Children develop an awareness of their local environment
- 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
- Counteracts – ‘Nature Deficit Disorder’ e.g. overuse of computer games
- Enhances teaching skills through challenging innovation in planning
- Supports inclusion and meets the needs of individuals, offering a diverse range of play-based experiences.

Organisation and Practice

St Mary Cray Primary Academy is developing a whole-school approach to outdoor learning which is delivered in the following ways:

- Opportunities for outdoor learning will be actively sought throughout all subject planning, using it creatively as a context and a natural resource for learning when appropriate
- Teachers are encouraged to look for opportunities to take learning outside the school grounds and to organise regular school trips, both local and further afield
- Outdoor areas and the resources within it are flexible and versatile, allowing children to choose, create, change and be in charge of their learning environment
- Physical Education
- Forest School
- Orienteering

Learning Outside the Classroom Timetable

Throughout the year, all KS1 and KS2 children receive three units of learning outdoors: Forest School, Orienteering and Topic. These lessons vary in time; some may last the whole morning or afternoon, others may just be for an hour. These scheduled units are in addition to any other outdoor learning, for instance, Physical Education. Objectives do not always relate specifically to the National Curriculum but help to broadly encompass and develop the skills and knowledge associated with the curriculum.

We guarantee learning outside of the classroom is specifically organised and timetables for every term, for every year group. Below is an example yearly overview for a cohort.

Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Forest School	Forest School	Topic	Topic	Topic	Orienteering

Residential Trips

At present, Year 6 have a residential trip in the summer term after SATs to celebrate the end of their primary school journey. The residential programme is currently being reorganised and revamped with scope to expand this to other year groups also partaking in residential trips.

Risk Management

At St Mary Cray Primary Academy our school community has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of our pupils. Outdoor learning, by its nature, presents risks but it also presents opportunities for children to develop their understanding of risk, and their resilience to challenges. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches children how to be safe and aware of others. We do this by supporting children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. All key areas and facilities provided for outdoor learning have been risk assessed. Where appropriate, specific activities will also be subject to risk assessment and will be included within the planning of those activities.

Teachers will ensure they:

- Organise and provide necessary resources
- Develop a set of rules through discussion with children
- Enable children to use resources safely and to manage and use the space and freedom responsibly
- Support children to manage risks
- Help children to take responsibility and care for the outside environment and resources within it
- Take responsibility for ensuring that all equipment is safe and report any concerns to the Head of School
- Consider within risk assessments additional factors such as sun cream/hats, movement of equipment, appropriateness of activity to age group, access to water etc.

Furthermore, all residential trips and class trips will be risk assessed.

Role of Co-ordinator/Monitoring

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

- Co-ordinate the outdoor learning across both key stages
- Ensure staff have equipment/resources to enable stimulating activities

- To monitor the outdoor learning experiences, ensuring teachers are adhering to this policy and providing efficient and sufficient experiences throughout the academic year
- To develop the residential programme
- To provide information for the school development plan
- To support staff in planning lessons outside of the classroom when necessary
- Inform staff of any outdoor learning experiences that may be relevant to learning outcomes
- Observe, assess and record outdoor learning, ensuring that there is adequate provision for children to extend their learning
- To liaise with subject leaders to ensure that outdoor learning is being monitored across the curriculum

Evidence

- Outdoor learning activities/experiences will be found in teachers planning
- Evidence of learning is provided from children's work and a record of photographs kept by the class teacher and shared on Dojo and school website
- Evidence of work and learning displayed within the school environment
- Reports to governors on impact of outdoor learning
- Feedback from children, parents and governors