# St Mary’s Catholic Primary School Axminster

# Living, loving and learning with God

**Outdoor Learning Policy**

**Created by Headteacher**

**Date reviewed: 03.2020**

**Date for next review: 03.2023**

Introduction :

Excellent teaching gives children the life chances they deserve. Children learn better when they are excited and engaged – but what excites and engages them best is truly excellent teaching, which challenges them and shows them what they can do.

When there is joy in what they are doing, they learn to love learning. Excellence and Enjoyment (DCSF-‐ 2003)

Our outdoor learning policy aims to foster children’s love of learning through an outdoor approach. 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 do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

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... Outdoor learning 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. It also stimulates language acquisition and is a powerful motivator for deep learning.

Outdoor Learning can help to bring learning alive. For that reason the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and personal and social development. Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning:

-‐Outdoor learning contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.

It also promotes problem-solving skills as well as encouraging children to approach tasks and learning in new and innovative ways.

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.

Aims and Objectives of this policy:

* To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
* To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
* To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and 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 and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.

Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. In the first instance the school’s policies relating to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should be referred to and applied 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.

The following expectations are understood by all pupils. There is a shared understanding of how pupils safeguard themselves and others when undertaking outdoor learning.

* Outdoor Learning is an important part of our learning journey. We must uphold our school values and work to be the best that we can be when we are in the classroom and at all other times. We behave well at St Mary’s because it is good for us – not because adults are in view.
* We should treat each other with respect. We should quickly apologise if we have made a wrong choice. All children have the right to say STOP and to TELL.
* We are role models for our school at all times.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessment of the children’s learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors and should be part of the same process.

Policy Review

This policy should be considered alongside other relevant policies. It will be reviewed by the governing body as part of its schedule of policy review.

Managing the delivery of Outdoor Learning

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning, planning, pupil conferences, classroom observation, teacher’s self-evaluations, summative assessment records and other school procedures we will closely monitor the use of outdoor learning as a key element of the learning experience at St Mary’s. . We will 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.

We will encourage children to be more resilient about weather conditions.

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning through quality play opportunities :

We recognise that outdoor learning enhances and support all learning. We particularly recognise the importance of developing pupil’s learning in their ‘free time’ ( at lunchtime and breaks. We seek to develop children’s relational skills as leaders, as role models for each other and as problem solvers. We work to encourage play that develops social, physical and creative play using resources that offer both directive and open ended opportunities.

We seek to identify ways to support all areas of the curriculum with outdoor learning.

We are working to develop the children’s sense of self and shared responsibility through developing their skills to manage free play. We are seeking to achieve the Unicef Rights Respect Awards and the Sports Gold Award to recognise whole school achievements.

Where Does Outdoor Learning take place?

We are exceptionally lucky to have outside space that includes a large field, a daily mile running track and two hard courts as well as an outdoor classroom. This offers opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play including large expanses of grass, a wooden trim trail circuit, a planted garden and raised beds.

We actively encourage teachers to plan opportunities for children to engage in learning beyond the school grounds. This may be as simple as a walk to a local stream during a rivers topic in Geography or a visit to London to access debate workshops in Parliament.

In addition, Year 4 and Year 6 residentials offer opportunities to widen children’s learning experience.

We also have strong partnerships with Axe Valley Academy and Colyton Grammar School who offer a wide range of sporting opportunities to develop skills and experience participation and competition beyond the school context.

In addition children have opportunities to take part in Bikeability Level 1 and 2.

Inclusive Practice

In all areas of our curriculum we seek to find ways to ensure that all children can access activities and develop their skills.

Policy Written 03/2020

Next Review 03/2023