

Hallbrook Primary School



Outdoor Learning Policy for the Early Years

Policy Updated: December 2018

Review: September 2019

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Introduction

"To be effective, an Early Years curriculum should be carefully structured. This includes planned and purposeful activity that provides opportunity for teaching and learning, both indoors and out."

(Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007)

Outdoor Learning is an integral part of the Early Years Curriculum. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has found that "there is evidence that when learning outside the classroom, children:

- attain higher levels of knowledge and skills
- improve their physical health and increase their motor abilities
- socialise and interact in new and different ways with their peers and adults
- show improved attention and enhanced self-concept, self-esteem and mental health
- 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. All children have the right to experience the unique and special nature of being outdoors. At Hallbrook Primary School we feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning throughout the year and it is an important part of the Early Years.

Aims

At Hallbrook Primary School we aim:

- To provide opportunities for all children to access a well-planned outdoor environment and to meet their needs and interests through a range of resources and experiences.
- To provide equipment which not only develops physical skills but also skills across the whole curriculum.
- To create a stimulating outdoor environment in which children can feel safe, secure and confident to use the activities.
- To develop or change activities to further stimulate the children.
- To make good use of outdoor space so that children are enabled to learn by working on a larger, more active scale than is possible indoors.
- To provide opportunities to work independently and collaboratively with enthusiasm and perseverance.
- To support the children's learning in the outdoors by sharing in their experiences and interests.
- To provide appropriate adult intervention to help the children make progress in their learning and to develop and enhance the children's learning through play.
- For children, appropriately dressed, to access the outdoor areas and activities in most types of weather.

- To provide the opportunity for children to develop their gross motor skills and their general health and fitness in the outdoor environment.
- To promote social and emotional development and negotiating skills through talking with friends and sharing in their outdoor play.

Policy into Practice

At Hallbrook Primary School we have:

- A separate outdoor areas for the Early Years children to access.
- Defined boundaries in which the children can feel safe, secure and confident.
- Watchful adults to provide appropriate intervention to engage children in the learning process.
- A range of large and small equipment and cross-curricular activities which help to promote interactive and independent play and sharing and physical skills.
- Space for growing and caring for plants.
- Opportunities for self-initiated activities under adult supervision.
- Access to the wider environment of the school field, playground and play equipment as well as the outdoor classroom.

Planning

Careful planning for the outdoor environment will ensure that it enriches all areas of the Early Years Curriculum. Reference to the Revised Early Years Foundation Stage and relevant documentation contribute to our planning.

See Early Years Policy for more detail.

Assessment, recording and reporting

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

Assessment:

Assessment is by systematic observations of each child's achievements and interests and by interaction with the children during their play.

All assessments inform current and future planning.

Recording:

Observations are recorded by all staff, to be added to the children's learning journeys and observation files and are used to inform Early Years Profile assessments on Target Tracker.

Reporting:

Observations and achievements are reported to parents or carers in confidential interviews during parent's evenings and by formal written reports at the end of the school year. A summary of each child's attainment against the 17 Early Learning Goals and a narrative on how a child demonstrates the three characteristics of effective learning are also given to parents at the end of their Early Years in school.

Informal discussions are encouraged and can take place with parents or carers at any mutually agreed time. See Early Years Policy for more detail.

Inclusion

The outdoors curriculum of shared and physical activities is an important part of a child's overall development. At Hallbrook Primary School we are committed to providing for each child, whatever their individual need and/or Special Educational Need and Disability, the

opportunity to access all areas of the Early Years curriculum. We adapt the facilities and activities whenever possible, to enable all children to use them. Please refer to our school inclusion policy.

Health and Safety

As children participate in the various outdoor activities they will be learning the significance and importance of being aware of others in a physical situation. We aim to provide safe and yet challenging experiences within a controlled environment, which naturally develop children's abilities and awareness.

Risk Assessments of the playground have been undertaken (supported by the Premises Officer) and will be reviewed as necessary. Further risk assessments (linked to activities) will be carried out when necessary. School Health and Safety Policy will be followed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The outdoor curriculum is monitored by the Early Years Co-ordinator. The effective use of our outdoor spaces and equipment, for delivering all areas of the Early Years, is evaluated through observation and by monitoring the children's progress. Medium and short term planning are regularly reviewed.

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