Ladygrove Primary School

Outdoor Learning Policy

September 2024

Review date September 2025

Aims

At Ladygrove, we believe that giving children opportunities to learn outdoors enhances their well-being, promotes curiosity, and encourages exploration. We have two outdoor learning areas; The Spinney and The Little Spinney. These areas are visited by all year groups, from Nursery up to Year 6. During these Outdoor Learning sessions, children engage in a variety of activities that allow them to build self-esteem, develop their imagination and form rich connections with nature.

We want to provide all children with the opportunity to develop positive relationships with the natural world. Outdoor learning sessions allow children to develop their overall holistic development – this includes social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual development.
The Forest School Association defines Forest School as:

A child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

Forest School at Ladygrove Primary School involves:

- Spending time outdoors within nature
- A child-centred learning approach
- Links with the National Curriculum
- Sessions delivered by a Forest School Level 3 Leader (if sessions involves tools/fire)
- Learning about nature – identifying plants, trees, animals
- Facilitating learners to build positive relationships and develop a sense of community

Outdoor Learning at Ladygrove Primary School involves:

- Providing children with opportunities to learn outside of the conventional classroom
- Enriching the curriculum by using our outdoor learning areas
- Providing children with opportunities to deepen their knowledge linked with the national curriculum
- Providing children with trips
- Exploring our local area

Aims:

- To provide a safe learning environment in which children feel confident to take risks, initiate their own learning and make considered choices
- To help children understand the importance of natural environments and learn to care for and appreciate nature
- To develop practical life skills in an outdoor environment
- To provide equal opportunities to all children, considering and meeting the needs of all children

- To develop social and emotional skills to help children form positive relationships
- To enable children to become independent, resilient, confident individuals
- To develop empathy and consideration for the needs of others
- To create a fun, happy, safe environment in which children feel confident in their abilities
- To provide new experiences and varied, stimulating activities appropriate to the needs and development of the child

Putting Policy into Practice

Our policy and scheme of work have been written with reference to the National Curriculum. Outdoor learning aims to develop children's sense of place. Children will be taught to appreciate the world around them, respect their local environment, abide by safety rules, work cooperatively, and develop their sense of awe and wonder. Children in the EYFS visit The Spinney areas weekly. Year 1 visit The Spinney during Autumn Term and at other points in Spring and Summer Term when linked to the curriculum. Year 2 and KS2 visit The Spinney when learning lends itself to these outdoor sessions. During these sessions the teachers make relevant connections to Science, Art and Geography curriculum.

- In Early Years, free flow enables children to choose to use the outdoor areas throughout the day, regardless of the weather. Outdoor learning in Early Years is largely led by the children's interests.
- In Early Years, the outdoor areas are well resourced and these resources are easily accessible to children.
- The outdoor area is used as a context and a natural resource for learning.
- Throughout the school year extra-curricular clubs use the outdoor environment to provide a range of experiences for all children.
- Children are provided with a range of experiences that help develop key life skills, including personal learning, enquiry and thinking skills.
- Children can explore, grow and nurture plants through class-based work.
- Children have the opportunity to engage with imaginative, investigative and creative play using the outdoors.
- The locality around school harbours opportunities within relatively accessible distance (e.g. the mound.)
- Teachers plan for children to develop their history, geography and environmental skills through exploring their local environment.
- A residential trip is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working.
- Trips out are planned in every year group.

Curriculum for all:

All pupils receive a wide range of opportunities to develop socially and emotionally as well as academically through outdoor learning and play.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Outdoor Learning is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be of conservation issues of the wild area around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and careful consideration of the environment around us. Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of life at Ladygrove. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave.

Health and Safety at The Spinney/Little Spinney

Legislation is very important and one of the main considerations we must take into account is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of school's adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out for Outdoor Learning are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind, children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Outdoor Learning risk assessment is regularly reviewed to ensure that all children and staff are safe at all times. Teachers will carry out a thorough sweep of the site being used for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

The Outdoor Learning curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A first aid kit is taken on all sessions as well as relevant medication that the children will need. Outdoor Learning is carried out on site and all emergency contact details are within easy reach. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, emergency contacts are stored within the office and a walkie talkie is carried.

Outdoor learning sessions may need to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds, or blizzards, thunder and lightning or fog. Adapted classroom activities will take place instead.

Routines

Prior to the session children will be toileted and put on their relevant clothing. The Outdoor Learning safety rules will be shared with the group and the children will walk in pairs to the site.

During the session children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by playing games that also encourage respect for the environment.

Back at school children will remove wellies outdoors before entering the classroom. On return to school, children will wash their hands thoroughly.

Children go to the toilet prior to the session. However, if they need to go during a session, they will be escorted by an adult.

Clothing List

Children will go out in all weathers so children will need:
*At least three layers of clothing
*A warm coat – this may get muddy!
*Wellies
*Waterproofs - trousers and jacket
*Old pair of warm trousers (if no waterproofs)
*Gloves and hat
*2 pairs of socks (Feet can get very cold in Wellies in the winter!)

Resources:

• Pond dipping equipment.
• Soil sampling equipment.
• Science equipment
• Selection of wood for construction and small art and design projects.
• Gardening tools.

Monitoring and Assessment:

- Assessment of the children's learning is valued equally indoors and outdoors.
- As the outdoors can enrich all areas of the curriculum, subject leaders monitor planning to see how the outdoors is being used to support the teaching of their subject.
- Outdoor learning throughout the curriculum will be monitored on a termly basis by the teacher responsible for leading outdoor learning.

Policy – document status:			
Date of policy creation	September 2023	Named responsibility	Jemma Jewell
Date of review	September 2024	Named responsibility	Jemma Jewell
Inception of new policy	September 2024	Named responsibility	Kirsty Stewart
Date of policy adoption by the governing body			September 2024

Appendix 1 – Letter for parents

Dear Parents and Carers,



At Ladygrove, we believe that giving children opportunities to learn outdoors enhances their well-being, promotes curiosity, and encourages exploration. It also provides children with the chance to build positive relationships (Team Ants), build resilience (Tough Tortoise), become resourceful (Resourceful Squirrel) and gain a greater understanding of the natural world (Wise Owls).

This term children will have the exciting opportunity to use our Spinney as part of outdoor learning. While at the Spinney they will learn: **INSERT AIMS OF SESSIONS HERE**. Their Spinney day will be on **INSERT DATE HERE.** Children need to come in their uniform and get changed into their outdoor learning clothes at school. We have included a list of clothes your child will need for these sessions below.

Your child will need:

*At least three layers of clothing
*A warm coat – this may get muddy!
*Wellies
*Waterproofs - trousers and jacket
*Old pair of warm trousers (if no waterproofs)
*Gloves and hat
*2 pairs of socks (Feet can get very cold in Wellies in the winter!)

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours Sincerely,

TEACHERS NAME