# Ladygrove Primary School

# Outdoor Learning Policy

## September 2026

## Review date September 2027

# 1. Purpose and Scope

At Ladygrove Primary School and Nursery, we believe that high-quality outdoor learning enhances pupils' wellbeing, curiosity, creativity and engagement. Our two designated areas, The Spinney and The Little Spinney, are used by pupils from Nursery to Year 6. Through carefully planned experiences, pupils build confidence, develop imagination, collaborate with others and form meaningful connections with the natural world.

This policy applies to outdoor learning on the school site and in the local area. It should be read alongside the school's Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, First Aid, SEND, Behaviour and Educational Visits policies. Outdoor learning supports pupils' social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual development and helps them develop a positive, responsible relationship with the natural world.

Where provision is described as Forest School, it will reflect the Forest School Association's six principles, including regular, long-term sessions, learner-centred practice, supported risk-taking, qualified leadership, sustainable use of a natural environment and ongoing observation and review.

*"A child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term programme 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 Association

**Forest School at Ladygrove Primary School involves:**

- Spending time outdoors within nature
- A child-centred learning approach
- Links with the National Curriculum
- Sessions involving tools or fire are led by a suitably trained and competent Forest School practitioner, with activity-specific risk-benefit assessments and agreed operating procedures in place.
- 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

## 2. 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

# 3. Putting the Policy into Practice

Outdoor learning is planned to enrich the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. It helps pupils develop a sense of place, respect the local environment, work cooperatively and experience awe and wonder. In the EYFS, children use outdoor areas regularly through planned provision and child-initiated learning. Year 1 visits The Spinney during the autumn term and at other points when linked to the curriculum. Year 2 and Key Stage 2 use the area when it adds meaningful value to learning. Staff make purposeful links with subjects including science, art, design and technology, geography, history, English and personal development.

- In the Early Years, continuous provision enables children to choose and use outdoor areas throughout the day, subject to safe weather and site conditions.
- Early Years outdoor provision is well resourced, accessible and responsive to children's interests and developmental needs.
- The outdoor environment is used as both a context and a resource for learning.
- Extra-curricular clubs use outdoor spaces to broaden pupils' experiences.
- Pupils develop practical, enquiry, problem-solving and teamwork skills.
- Pupils have opportunities to plant, grow and care for living things.
- Imaginative, investigative and creative outdoor play is encouraged.
- The locality around the school, including the mound, is used where appropriate and subject to suitable planning and risk assessment.

- Teachers plan opportunities to develop historical, geographical and environmental understanding through the local area.
- Residential and day visits may be used to develop confidence, independence, communication and teamwork and are managed under the Educational Visits Policy.

## 4. Inclusion and Equal Access

All pupils are entitled to meaningful outdoor learning opportunities. Staff make reasonable adjustments and plan appropriate support so that pupils with SEND, medical needs, disabilities or other identified needs can participate safely and successfully. Individual healthcare plans and individual risk assessments are followed where applicable. Activities are adapted without lowering expectations, and pupils' dignity, independence and voice are respected.

## 5. Environmental Responsibility and Conservation

Outdoor learning promotes environmental awareness, sustainability and responsible stewardship. Pupils and adults are expected to respect wildlife, habitats and living things. Planning takes account of the ecological impact of activities, seasonal changes and the capacity of the site.

Staff and pupils will leave the site tidy, minimise disturbance to habitats and avoid damaging living plants. Natural materials will be collected only when this is safe, sustainable and permitted. The outdoor learning lead will monitor the condition and use of the site and arrange maintenance or restrictions where necessary.

## 6. Health, Safety and Risk Management

The school will manage outdoor learning in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and current Department for Education and Health and Safety Executive guidance. The school's employer is accountable for health and safety, while day-to-day arrangements are implemented by the headteacher and delegated staff. Risk management will be sensible and proportionate, focusing on significant and foreseeable risks while recognising the developmental value of appropriate challenge and supported risk-taking.

A written risk assessment will cover the site and routine activities and will be reviewed at least annually, following a significant change or incident, and whenever new activities are introduced. The session leader will complete a visual and dynamic check before and during each session. Hazards will be removed, isolated or clearly communicated, and the activity will be adapted or stopped where risks cannot be controlled.

Staff will be familiar with relevant individual healthcare plans, allergy information, emergency medication and risk assessments. Appropriate supervision will be determined by the activity, location, age, needs and behaviour of the group, staff competence and current conditions; ratios will not be treated as a substitute for professional judgement.

Pupils will be taught to identify hazards, make considered decisions and understand how their actions may affect themselves, other people and the environment. This supported approach to risk helps pupils become increasingly responsible and independent.

A suitably stocked first-aid kit, a means of communication and any required emergency medication will be readily available. A trained first aider will be available in line with the school's first-aid arrangements. Staff will follow the school's procedures for recording, reporting and responding to accidents, medical emergencies, safeguarding concerns and lost or missing pupils. Emergency contact details will be accessible through the school office.

Sessions may be adapted, relocated, postponed or cancelled when weather, ground conditions or other hazards make proceeding unsafe. Particular attention will be given to high winds, thunderstorms, extreme heat or cold, poor visibility, flooding and ice. Suitable alternative learning will be provided where practicable.

## Safeguarding, Hygiene and Specific Hazards

- **Normal safeguarding procedures apply during all outdoor learning. Staff remain alert to signs of harm, maintain appropriate professional boundaries and report concerns in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.**
- **Attendance will be checked before leaving the classroom, on arrival, at agreed intervals, before leaving the site and on return.**
- **Pupils will wash or sanitise their hands after contact with soil, plants or animals and before eating.**
- **Food, fungi, berries or other natural materials must not be tasted unless this forms part of a specifically planned and risk-assessed activity led by a competent adult.**
- **Staff will check for hazards including hazardous plants, fungi, animal waste, litter, sharp objects, unstable branches, water hazards and biting or stinging insects.**

- **Any use of tools, fire or cooking equipment requires specific procedures, competent leadership, appropriate personal protective equipment and close supervision.**

## 7. Session Routines

Before each session, staff will explain the boundaries, expected conduct, emergency signal and activity-specific rules in language appropriate to the group. Pupils will be reminded not to eat or taste natural materials, to carry long sticks safely and to return promptly to the agreed base when the signal is given.

Before leaving, pupils will use the toilet where appropriate, put on suitable clothing and footwear, and receive a safety briefing. Staff will check attendance, medication, first-aid provision and communication arrangements before the group enters the site.

Activities will be inclusive, appropriately challenging and adapted to pupils' needs. Adults will model safe practice, support purposeful exploration and encourage pupils to listen carefully, cooperate, solve problems and take increasing responsibility for themselves, others and the environment.

At the end of the session, pupils will clean or remove muddy footwear before entering the building and wash their hands thoroughly. Equipment will be checked, cleaned and stored appropriately, and any hazards, damage, accidents or near misses will be reported.

If a pupil needs the toilet during a session, staff will follow the agreed supervision arrangement while maintaining appropriate oversight of the rest of the group.

## 8. Clothing and Equipment

Pupils should wear clothing appropriate to the weather and planned activities.
Suggested items include:

- several comfortable layers;
- a warm, weatherproof coat that may become muddy;
- wellies or sturdy, closed-toe footwear;
- waterproof trousers and jacket, where available;
- a hat and gloves in cold weather;
- a sun hat and sunscreen applied at home in hot weather; and

- spare socks and, where appropriate, spare clothing.

### Resources

- pond-dipping and habitat-study equipment;
- soil-sampling and age-appropriate science equipment;
- natural and reclaimed materials for construction, art and design;
- age-appropriate gardening tools; and
- any personal protective equipment identified by the risk assessment.

## 9. Roles, Monitoring and Review

- The headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented and that suitable resources, training and risk-management arrangements are in place.
- The outdoor learning lead coordinates provision, supports staff, monitors the use and condition of the site, and reviews the policy and associated risk assessments.
- Teachers and session leaders plan purposeful activities, check the site, follow agreed procedures, maintain appropriate supervision and record relevant assessment information.
- All accompanying adults must understand their roles, emergency arrangements and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Pupils' learning outdoors is valued equally with learning indoors. Assessment is proportionate and may include observations, pupil voice, photographs where permitted, completed work and curriculum outcomes.
- Subject leaders and the outdoor learning lead monitor planning, pupil participation, curriculum impact and inclusion. Findings inform future provision and staff development.
- This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner following significant changes to legislation, guidance, staffing, facilities or practice, or after a significant incident.

**Policy document status**

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| **Date created** | September 2023 | **Policy owner** | Outdoor Learning Lead |
| **Last reviewed** | September 2026 | **Next review** | September 2027 |

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| **Reviewed by** | Jemma Jewell | **Approved by** | Governing body |
| **Date of governing body approval** | | | October 2026 |

# Appendix 1: Template Letter for Parents and Carers

Dear Parents and Carers,



At Ladygrove Primary School and Nursery, we believe that learning outdoors supports children's wellbeing, curiosity, confidence and enjoyment of learning. It also helps children work as a team, become resilient and resourceful, and develop a deeper understanding of the natural world.

This term, your child will have the exciting opportunity to use The Spinney as part of their learning. During the sessions, pupils will focus on **[insert learning aims]**. Their regular outdoor learning day will be **[insert day and date]**. Children should come to school in their usual uniform and will change into their outdoor clothing at school. Please provide the items listed below in a named bag. If you have any concerns about clothing, medical needs or access to the sessions, please speak to your child's teacher so that we can support full participation.

## Your child will need

- several comfortable layers;
- a warm, weatherproof coat that may become muddy;
- wellies or sturdy, closed-toe footwear;
- waterproof trousers and jacket, where available;
- a hat and gloves in cold weather;
- a sun hat and sunscreen applied at home in hot weather; and
- spare socks and, where appropriate, spare clothing.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

[Teacher’s name]