

Policy: Outdoor Learning

Reviewed: October 2025

Next review: October 2026

Mid-year updates:

Policy Monitoring

Libra Policies are reviewed when the need arises in line with legislation updates, guidance, and useful information we receive to improve and enhance our provision. Additionally, Policies are updated annually by relevant members of staff and the Senior Leadership Team.

Equality Statement

We believe that this policy is in line with the Equality Act as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any child or member of staff, and it helps to promote equality at this school.

We all have a responsibility to ensure equality permeates into all aspects of school life and that everyone is treated equally irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We want everyone connected with this school to feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth. We acknowledge the findings of the Race Disparity Audit that clearly shows how people of different ethnicities are treated across the public services of health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.

We wish to work closely with the School Council and to hear their views and opinions as we acknowledge and support Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should be encouraged to form and to express their views.

Introduction

As a school we feel it is important to enable all children to use the outside environment as a context for learning as much as possible. Children will have the opportunity to learn in, about and through the full range of environments that our school and local area have to offer. All staff have a shared responsibility to provide regular, authentic outdoor learning contexts and to ensure that the environment is used in a stimulating and meaningful way. This includes time usually spent in class, breaks and lunchtimes. Outdoor spaces are used effectively to promote positive relationships and well-being. Staff take account of research linking benefits of outdoor learning and green space with well-being. Outdoor learning takes place both as part of discrete subject development and interdisciplinary learning where the outdoors and the wider community provide rich learning environments. Children learn and play in real settings and apply skills and make connections across subject areas in relevant contexts.

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes for us: using the outdoor to deliver the curriculum that is often delivered indoors, outdoor play, school grounds projects, environmental education, life learning, our farm and forest schools, recreational and adventure activities, and personal and social development. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary, but it does have a common core. It can provide a dramatic contrast to the indoor classroom and enriches and extends the curriculum. 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. Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility. 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. Through skilled teaching, outdoor experiences readily become a stimulating source of fascination, personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning. Active learning readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning – to name only some of the benefits. Outdoor Learning can help to bring learning alive. For that reason, the outdoors can have a very positive impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and personal and social development. Outdoor learning also provides experiential opportunities allowing children to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change.

Aims and objectives.

- To promote innovative and creative teaching that inspires and motivates children by approaching learning in different non-conventional ways, providing greater breadth and depth to the formal curriculum increasing opportunities to embed learning on a secure foundation
- 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 children to care for their environment, promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability.
- To ensure compliance with all relevant legislation connected to this policy.

Outdoor Learning:

- Helps to ensure that children are successful learners enabling children to develop knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday learning experiences.
- Enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon children's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
- Has a positive impact upon children's behavior allowing them to move and engage in a therapeutic environment.
- Contributes towards the promotion and children's understanding of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle.
- Impacts positively 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.
- Raises children's attainment; promotes and strengthens communication skills, teamwork and sense of cohesion.
- Motivates children to be more active in their learning.
- Supports children to develop a healthy awareness of risk and manage their own safety.

Outdoor learning resources

Outdoor Learning is actively timetabled for every child through our forest and farms schools. These curriculums have built up gradually over several years and offer a wide range of opportunity for all the children across all key stages. Both offer opportunities to learn in a therapeutic environment, where we can cover a huge part of science national curriculum in an innovative and engaging way. Children, however, also learn about the world around them and the importance of looking after our countryside for the future.

Libra values the importance of the natural world and so our farm and forest schools are an oasis for children to appreciate nature and the world around them. A real bond is developed over time with these unique spaces, and they are a great alternative learning space outside of the classroom to help children who have found mainstream education very difficult to engage with.

The farm is a fully working National Trust farm where they breed, raise, and care for hens, pigs, cattle, sheep, goats, alpacas and ponies. The farm also has poly tunnels, greenhouses, and vegetable plots where together with the children they grow their own produce. The activities on the farm help the children foster an attitude of care and respect towards the animals on the farm, together with forest school these environments support children to develop team working and respect for each other whilst in a working environment. At all times personal skills are being developed e.g. speaking and listening, meeting sensory need, helping to develop self-awareness and positive behaviours and social interaction.

We promote the therapeutic benefits of working and being with animals, in the other horticultural activities the farm provides and in enjoying time in the woods. Libra places great emphasis on raising children's awareness of the environment around us, how food is produced and how to live healthily. We use the farm and forest school provisions to help develop engagement, confidence, self-esteem, and personal awareness to have a positive impact on right choices and behaviour which in turn supports accelerated learning.

At our forest school children are not taught but are encouraged to find things out for themselves mainly through child led play, for example games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play children develop their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns resilience and resourcefulness (perseverance and determination), how to give and ask for help and support from peers (emotional intelligence and teamwork), and how to appropriately self-manage risk in an increasingly risky world. Outdoor learning activities might include den building, cutting firewood and fire building, campfire cooking, basic woodland management, caring for the countryside and biodiversities, crafts such as dream catchers or whistles, games, rope swings, flora, and fauna identification, as well as stories and sharing. The obvious benefits of improved co-ordination and physical health from doing activities outside are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative; problem solving and perseverance. Children are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help, and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks -all crucial emotional skills to help them with their learning and to take with them into the adult world.

The school grounds offer opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. Our schemes of work in the core subjects of English and maths have been reviewed to include links to outdoor learning activities that can support the topic being taught in an innovative way. Outdoor learning is an approach to learning which can be incorporated into every area of the curriculum. Being outdoors allows children to engage directly with the environment through a direct, hands-on approach, allowing them to make connections on their learning journey. Rather than being infrequent and informal, taking classes outdoors should be seen as an integral part of classroom activities and used to meet both the curricular and non-curricular needs of children.

School buildings can also provide a useful resource for learning about energy use and waste for example – tying in well with our Eco School Council agenda. The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within a relatively accessible distance. Learners can develop their skills to explore their local environment, for example, geography or history fieldwork, surveys and collection of data etc. Further afield we actively encourage teachers to plan opportunities for children to engage in learning beyond the school. Throughout the curriculum we plan educational visits which complement and extend learning and take the children beyond their familiar environment, stimulate their curiosity and imagination, and motivate them in a powerful way. A particular benefit for those children and young people with learning difficulties or SEND can be the therapeutic, visual, and sensory stimulation they experience when learning in an outdoor environment. This can be liberating for those who struggle in a structured school atmosphere and is a contributor to improvements in children's social skills and behaviour.

Assessment and recording

Outdoor learning is assessed in the same way as indoor learning and is covered in our assessment and attainment policy.

Staff training and supervision

We strive to incorporate outdoor learning across our curriculum. This can only be achieved by using the qualifications, experience, enthusiasm and specialism of individual teachers supported by learning support staff who provide interesting, relevant, purposeful, and differentiated lessons.

We ensure senior leaders and teachers:

- understand the needs of the children they teach within their EHCPs.
- have good knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach.
- have effective support and resources to deliver outdoor learning effectively.
- consider a wide range of suitable cross curricular national curriculum targets across all year groups when planning their outdoor curriculum to maximise opportunities to record children's progress.
- undertake careful planning of all areas of the curriculum but will be encouraged to take time to react and to develop those unexpected moments which will further develop children's experiences.
- be encouraged to broaden the curriculum by using any cultures and resources that we have within the school and the wider community.
- plan differentiated lessons which are interactive, engaging, of a good pace and have a three-part structure.
- use a range of teaching and learning styles to address the needs of all children.
- have high expectations for all children and will provide work that will extend them.

- check children's understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback and in doing so, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary, without unnecessarily elaborate or differentiated approaches.
- design their teaching to help children to remember in the long term the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts.
- assess, record and report on the development, progress, and attainment of children.
- use assessment well to help children embed and use knowledge fluently or to check understanding and inform teaching.
- create a well-managed environment that allows children to focus on learning.
- maximize learning opportunities by encouraging and developing parental involvement.
- measure the impact of the outdoor learning curriculum by evaluating:
 - the effectiveness of the way in which it is designed.
 - the effectiveness of the way in which it is taught.
 - the pace of children's progress, child outcomes, and children's preparedness for their next steps.

Monitoring and evidence

To evidence that our outdoor curriculum is delivered effectively in terms of teaching, assessment, feedback, and children's progress, we have in place:

- Staff qualifications and training records.
- Individual activity risk assessments.
- Offsite activity and trip risk assessments.
- Transport policy.
- Health and safety policy.
- Farm and forest school curriculum overviews.
- Schemes of work identifying opportunities for outdoor learning in all subjects.
- Subject termly planners planning and evaluating opportunities for outdoor learning.
- Children's attainment documents.
- School newsletter.
- Annual school yearbook.

Responsibilities

The senior management team will:

- work in conjunction with the Directors to ensure all school staff, children and parents are aware of and comply with this policy.
- provide an environment that is safe, fun, stimulating and challenging to all children.
- promote an awareness of and respect for a diversity of cultures, values, beliefs, and abilities.
- encourage parents to take an active role in policy development where appropriate.
- ensure all relevant risk assessments are in place to ensure a safe school environment.
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality.
- provide guidance, support, and training to all staff.
- consider providing remote learning to children in circumstances when in-person attendance is either not possible or contrary to government guidance in accordance with school risk assessments and safeguarding guidance. This might include occasions when:
 - We decide that it is not possible for the school to open safely, or that opening would contradict guidance from local or central government.
 - Individual children, for a short period, are unable to physically attend school but can continue learning.
- monitor and evidence the effectiveness of this policy.

Teaching and learning support staff will:

- comply with all aspects of this policy.
- implement the school's equalities policy and schemes.
- report and deal with all incidents of discrimination.
- attend appropriate training sessions.
- report any concerns they have about any aspect of the school community.
- receive relevant training, periodically and ongoing as required, according to their role.
- have equal chances of training, career development and promotion.

- receive equal opportunities training on induction to improve their understanding of the Equality Act 2010 and its implications.

Children will:

- be aware of and contribute to all appropriate policies through the school council.
- work with and support the school council on all agenda items.
- strive to take pride in their work and work to the highest standard that they are capable of.
- listen carefully to all instructions given by the teacher, ask for further help if they do not understand and participate fully in all lessons.
- participate in discussions concerning progress and attainment.
- treat others, their work and equipment with respect.
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure the smooth running of the school.
- talk to others without shouting and or using physical aggression and will use language which is neither abusive nor offensive.
- wear correct uniform.

Parents and Carers will be encouraged to:

- be aware of and comply with all school policies including this one.
- be encouraged to become involved in policy development by taking part in parent engagement opportunities and by maximizing learning opportunities between home and school.
- Keep informed via termly newsletters of the children's curriculum.
- be encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school by attending parent-teacher consultations / Parent Open Days / fundraising and social events.
- ensure regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- notify school on the first day of child absence.
- have holidays out of term time and authorised by school.
- encourage effort and achievement.
- encourage completion of homework and return it to school on time.
- provide the right conditions for homework to take place.
- ensure the correct school uniform is worn.
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school.
- speak with children and staff respectfully and expect the same in return.

Linked Policies and documents:

Curriculum / Health and Safety / Teaching and Learning / Offsite trips and activities handbook / Risk Assessment

Policy Location

This policy can be found:

- on SharePoint within the staff and master's folder
- on the school website www.libraschool.co.uk
- available upon request from the office: admin@libraschool.co.uk / 01598 740044

