Sheriffhales Primary school and Preschool Outdoor learning Policy

Sheriffhales 6 Outdoor learning

'Growing Heart and Minds'

Written February 2026

Review date February 2027

OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY

Our Outdoor Learning Policy aims to foster children's love of learning. At Sheriffhales Primary School and Preschool, 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.

The DfE and Natural England research project in May 2023 found that the effects of spending time in nature for children are "profound, with a wealth of evidence showing those who spend time outside connecting with nature see improvements in school attendance, behaviours, academic achievement, and social skills like teamwork."

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play, school grounds projects, gardening, environmental education, recreational, and adventure activities, Forest school and personal and social development. At Sheriffhales we follow our own bespoke outdoor learning curriculum- Sheriffhales 6. This aims to teach children 6 key outdoor learning skills: fires for cooking, knots, geographical skills and navigation, gardening, shelter building and tool use.

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.

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 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:

• 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 young children's attitudes beliefs and self-perceptions.

- Enhances the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development here at Sheriffhales, enabling children to use their imagination, be creative, reflective and be physically active.

• Contributes towards creating independent learners with high self-esteem and self sufficiency.

• Can have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.

• 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 learner's attainment; promotes and strengthens communication skills, team work and sense of cohesion.

• Motivates boys to be more active in their learning

- Teaches unique outdoor learning skills and attitudes.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy Practice described in this Policy aims to:

• Raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.

• Empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.

• Encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.

• Develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.

• Provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.

• Encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.

• Encourage children to care for their environment

Health and Safety

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Pupils will be taught to manage risks. Staff ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. In the first instance teachers will refer to and apply the schools policies relating to Health and Safety, and Risk Assessment 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. A Forest school leader will lead all fire and tool use activities across the school.

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

• Outdoor Learning is an important part of our learning journey.

• We must uphold our school expectation to be safe at all times when we participate in outdoor learning. We must always listen carefully to our adults.

Managing the Delivery of Outdoor Learning

Through the monitoring of teaching and learning, we closely monitor the use of outdoor learning as a key element of the learning experience at Sheriffhales Primary School. We 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.

Our Forest school leader enables CPD for staff through half termly Forest school sessions with their class in which they are able to observe and learn from skilled outdoor learning teaching.

EYFS Provision

There are no boundaries to outdoor learning within the EYFS. Outdoor learning is integral part of our day – the range of activities can be endless. Children have free access throughout the sessions, with range of free flow and planned activities. Children wear appropriate protective clothing. The children have weekly Forest school and outdoor learning where they are taught the Sheriffhales outdoor learning skills and learning attitudes.

KS1

Provision in KS1 we try to utilise the outdoor space as much as possible. Children have a weekly timetabled outdoor learning session where the children are taught the Sheriffhales outdoor learning skills and learning attitudes. They also have half a term of Forest school with a Forest school leader once a year.

Opportunities to take learning outside are seized and taken full advantage of.

KS2

In KS2 teachers endeavour to take lessons outside whenever possible. For example, science lessons involve studying the weather, and geography lessons may involve work in the locality, river studies, orienteering, and following maps. Children have a weekly timetabled outdoor learning session where the children are taught the Sheriffhales outdoor learning skills and learning attitudes. They also have half a term of Forest school with a Forest school leader once a year.

Sheriffhales Six Key Outdoor learning skills:

- **Shelter building**
- **Cooking on a fire**
- **Knots**
- **Gardening**
- **Geographical skills and navigation**
- **Using tools**

Sheriffhales Outdoor learning attitudes:

- **I enjoy participating and reflecting in outdoor activities and have a positive attitude to challenge and adventure.**
- **I show resilience through taking on challenges and achieving success.**
- **I am developing and skills of communication, problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, leadership and co-operation**
- **I am developing self-awareness and social skills by appreciating the contributions of others and their achievements.**
- **I understand the importance of conservation and sustainable development.**
- **I am learning to appreciate the benefits of physical activity and reflection.**

Outdoor Learning Attitudes and Skills are based upon the Ten Key Outcomes of Outdoor Learning from: "High Quality Outdoor Learning from the English Outdoor Council."

Our Commitment to Outdoor Learning

We have recently invested in the development of the outdoor learning area. The school allotment has had a large investment to create raised beds, Forest school area and planters around the school grounds. There is also an adventure playground for all ages as well as a climbing wall. Additionally, an outdoor classroom has recently been installed which will be used by the whole school for a range of activities.

The Local Environment

The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within 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. Each year group has a planned programme of educational visits which complement and extend learning. For example, children learning about the World War 2 visit Cosford Air museum thus enhancing their learning and understanding of the topic. These are planned into all aspects of the curriculum and, by taking

learners beyond their familiar environment, stimulate their curiosity and imagination and motivate children in a powerful way. Residential Visits, staying away from home is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self- esteem, communication and team working, for example.

Children have the opportunity to widen their range of experiences and find new skills and interests in which they may excel. Lime class take part in residential visits on a rolling program. Residential visits offer so many benefits including the opportunity to participate in first-hand learning.

Children with Additional Needs Moving beyond the classroom have been found to have a range of advantages for children of all abilities and backgrounds. A particular benefit for those children and young people with learning difficulties or SEND can be the new, and sometimes 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 often demonstrated through improvements in children's social skills and behaviour. Able Children Outdoor learning offers opportunities to deepen and enrich subject learning, for example through conducting research and developing enquiry and thinking skills, and a personal understanding of their place in the natural world. The above issues allow opportunities to access discussion on a moral code, ethics, humanity, sustainability, science in its widest sense, problems pertaining to globalisation and philosophical enquiry, for example. Outdoor Learning acts as a bridge to higher order learning and opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.