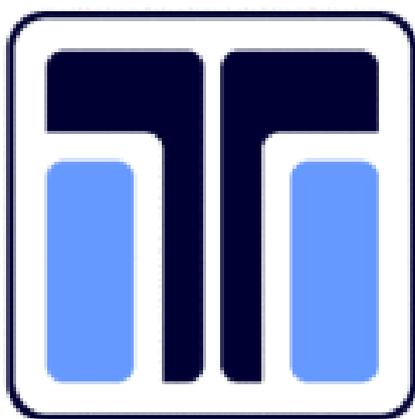


# St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School



## Outdoor Learning Policy

<b>Policy Reviewed on:</b>	<b>April 2020</b>
<b>Policy approved by Governing Body on:</b>	
<b>Policy to be reviewed on:</b>	<b>April 2022</b>

# Aspect or Area

Aspect Policy



**ST THOMAS**  
CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Outdoor Learning at St Thomas

### Introduction

Our vision for St Thomas is that our children are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. This is one of the national outcomes that lies at the heart of 'Curriculum for Excellence'. Learning need not take place solely within educational buildings. The outdoor environment has massive potential for learning. Learning outdoors can be enjoyable, creative, challenging and adventurous and helps children learn by experience and grow as healthy, confident and responsible citizens who value and appreciate the spectacular landscapes, natural heritage and cultures they are part of. We are committed to providing frequent and progressive outdoor learning opportunities which are embedded within our curriculum. These are delivered through a combination of school-based outdoor learning and residential programmes.

There is evidence that when learning outside the classroom children:

- attain higher levels of skill and knowledge and skill
- 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 self-esteem and confidence
- 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.

It is important to enable children to use the outdoor environment as a context for learning throughout the year, in all weathers.

### Aims and Objectives

Providing a progressive range of outdoor learning experiences as the children progress through school including, repeating visits at different levels, will add depth to the totality of experiences. Each visit will offer a different perspective, enriching the curriculum and providing greater coherence.

*The aims of outdoor learning in our school are to:*

- to use the outdoor environment for learning through our curriculum
- to raise the profile of outdoor learning for growth, development and rich learning
- to empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
- to provide a safe and secure environment that they can take risks in
- to encourage children to care for their environment

Outdoor Learning will take place throughout the year and through different subjects, using it as a context and natural resource for learning.

Opportunities will be considered for learning off-site as well as within the school grounds.

Outdoor learning in early years is largely led by the child's interest.

In Key stage 1 opportunities will be provided for the outdoors to be used in teaching and learning.

In Years 2-6 activities using the outdoors are planned for around subjects to engage and enhance learning.

We will:

- ensure the outdoor space harnesses the special nature of the outdoors, to offer the children what the indoors cannot, complementing and extending the provision indoors.
- ensure that our outdoor area and resources within it are flexible and versatile, where children can choose create, change and be in charge of their environment.

- Support inclusion and meet the needs of individuals to develop socially and emotionally as well as academically through outdoor learning and play.
- to access the outdoor area as much as possible in all seasons
- observe assess and record outdoor learning, ensuring there is adequate provision for children to extend their learning
- enable children to work both individually and cooperatively
- develop a set of rules with children to enable them to use resources safely and to use the space and freedom responsibly
- help children to care for the outdoor environment
- encourage children to respect their environment and care for living things

The school grounds are often the first step in taking pupils outdoors and for staff considering progression to learning contexts further afield. As the children move through the school at St Thomas they will learn outdoors in a variety of settings from the school grounds to visiting Dyson woods, to a day long experience including the 3 peaks challenge and to residential experiences, all at appropriate levels for their age and the curriculum. Residential experiences to Cliffe House and Ghyll Head, offer a unique form of intensive experience which encourages children to engage with staff and peers at a deeper level and build relationships. Spending time away from the home gives children opportunities to develop: confidence, resilience, a sense of adventure, explore new places and new environments, an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity and a chance to reflect on experiences and learning.

Outdoor learning experiences are often remembered for a lifetime and St Thomas is keen to see our children having positive learning experiences in a variety of settings.

## **Guidance**

We will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment

It is important that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. Risks assessments will be carried out where appropriate.

## **Monitoring and Review**

Outdoor learning provides fresh settings for children and young people to demonstrate what they know and can do and therefore for assessing their knowledge and skills. Assessment of learning in different outdoor contexts will provide opportunities to vary levels of challenge appropriate to individuals' needs and abilities across a broad range of personal, interpersonal and practical skills. Diverse practical contexts and high-quality interactions, immediate and constructive feedback and time for reflection contribute to the breadth and depth of assessment processes. Within the curriculum, assessment is integral to effective learning and teaching.

Assessment of the children's learning will be valued equally indoors and outdoors. As the outdoors can enrich all areas of the curriculum, subject leaders will be responsible for monitoring their subject to see how the outdoors is being used to support the teaching of their subject.

The quality of teaching and learning is monitored as part of the appraisal process through lesson observations and through the progress and attainment documents. The subject action plan identifies actions intended to raise standards.

Continuity and progression in Outdoor learning, through the curriculum, is monitored termly by the outdoor learning leaders.