

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School



EYFS Outdoor Learning Policy

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| Policy Reviewed on: | April 2020 |
| Policy approved by Governing Body on: | |
| Policy to be reviewed on: | April 2022 |



Our
FOUNDATION
STAGE
Philosophy



Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Outdoor Learning

Aspect Policy

EYFS Outdoor Learning at St Thomas

Introduction

“The younger the child the more the child learns through sensory and physical activities; thus the more varied and rich the natural outdoor setting, the greater its contribution to physical, cognitive and emotional development.” (Rifkin, 1997)

As children increasingly spend leisure time indoors, it is important that schools are able to promote and support children’s activity and health, as well as providing outdoor learning, with opportunities for creativity and child initiated activities (Ahrens and others, 2006).

At St Thomas, we are intent on providing an EYFS outdoor learning setting that acknowledges and supports each individual child’s needs and abilities. Our environment enables children in both Nursery and Reception access to safe outdoor areas throughout the school day. Our outdoor learning vision is an extension of the overwhelming evidence that young children need a broad-based curriculum that provides a quality of education to encourage foundational learning and development across all domains. We place particular emphasis on physical, social and emotional, and language and communication development.

Even at the turn of the last century, educationalists such as Froebel and McMillan viewed outdoor play as being intrinsic to children’s learning and development. Being outdoors offers opportunities to be creative and achieve in different ways and on different scales than when inside the classroom. It offers the children chances to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

We aspire in providing outdoor provision and planned activities to enable children of all abilities to engage in a wide variety of opportunities. Our end point for outdoor learning is to have enabled all children to fully explore and further develop their skills across the curriculum, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

Aims and Objectives



**Statutory framework
for the early years
foundation stage**
Setting the standards for learning,
development and care for children from
birth to five

Published: 3 March 2017
Effective: 3 April 2017

“Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult led and child initiated activity.” (DFE 2014, p.9)

Our aim at St Thomas is to implement an EYFS outdoor learning environment to stimulate all children to safely and holistically learn and develop away from the classroom. We believe the outdoor environment is a rich, dynamic and natural space for learning and development for all children. Its value as an essential learning resource has been recognised by many pieces of research, particularly within the EYFS principle of ‘Enabling Environments’.

The aims of outdoor learning at St Thomas are to:

- Use the outdoor environment for learning through our curriculum
- Raise the profile of outdoor learning for growth, development and rich learning
- Empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive
- Provide a safe and secure environment that they can take risks in
- Encourage children to care for their environment

The implementation of this begins with both Nursery and Reception outdoor areas reflecting the scale of which outdoor learning can be undertaken.

The Outdoor Learning Environments:

Nursery classroom is situated next door to Reception and has a closed, outdoor provision which is accessed every day. There is also a door leading to the outside provision. Reception children have access to the outdoors throughout the day during child initiated time. Both outdoor areas enable significant opportunities for fine and gross motor skill development, key at this stage of a very young child’s physical development. A large trim trail in Nursery and climbing frame in Reception offer children the opportunity to develop PSED, CAL and PD prime areas. The Reception area also benefits from a large grass area, incorporating an advanced landscape feature of man-made hills to promote increased PD and a woodland area for cross-curricular activities, such as the world (small bug hotel) and writing and being imaginative (story-telling and singing).

There are then areas of continuous provision (CP) focus, to stimulate interest in and development of the DM specific areas of learning and COEL objectives. The range of core areas are:

- Construction
- Water
- Sand
- Maths
- Mark making

- Mud play
- Role play
- Gross motor skills

Reading is promoted and encouraged across all areas by providing fiction and non-fiction books applicable to CP areas.

Each area has a focused long-term plan to specify*:

- DM milestones
- Intended learning outcomes
- Enabling learning environment (what adults provide)
- Positive relationships (what adults do)
- COEL

Planning:



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3.54. Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (including fire safety and hygiene requirements).

3.58. Providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions). Providers must follow their legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (for example, the provisions on reasonable adjustments).

Planning recognises that the outdoor classroom is an extension of the indoor area but also an area to provide different opportunities on a larger scale. Our experienced staff team understands how children learn before planning what children learn and adapt the planning where necessary to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Planning is structured as follows:

- Half-termly meetings determine which CP areas will be accessible and resourced, in line with the long-term plans, the Topic theme and curriculum objectives
- Weekly planning determines the activities, challenges and learning questions for specific CP areas
- Effective, daily planning is informed by observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests and experiences

Resourcing:

Our outdoor learning is enhanced by environments richly resourced with play materials that can be adapted and used in different ways and for differing weather patterns. Our varied resources aim to cover all areas of the curriculum. To maintain a high standard and expectations, these resources are continually monitored and reviewed to ensure high quality, purposeful learning is available at all times.

Different approaches of safe outdoor learning is encouraged in all weathers; clothing and protection in strong sun, wet weather and cold conditions enable the children to discover weather patterns, time, the seasons and the natural world.

Behaviour and Attitudes:

Our children's personal development continues outdoors, where staff ensure they are kept both mentally and physically healthy by teaching them to adhere to the St Thomas Top 10 Rules during outdoor play and learning. Through use of the principles of British Values, staff encourage children to promote equality and diversity.

Inclusion:

The outdoor curriculum of shared and physical activities is an important part of a child's overall development. At St Thomas, we are committed to providing the opportunity for each child to access all areas of the curriculum, whatever their need. We adapt the facilities and learning opportunities whenever and are aiming for our outdoor spaces to be accessible for wheelchair and walker users.

Guidance

Health and safety:

All St Thomas staff drive children to take risks within a safe and secure environment and ensure that the outdoor learning inspires challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. Daily risk assessments are undertaken, particularly during poor weather conditions and the impact this may have on gross motor equipment. At all times, the school's Health and Safety Policy is adhered to.

Monitoring and Review

Impact of the quality of outdoor education and progress of skills progression and subject knowledge are tracked and measured through rigorous monitoring and assessment, valued just as equally as indoors and forms part of the same process. EYFS staff, subject leaders, the Senior Leadership Team and Governors are responsible for monitoring and continually improving outdoor learning through:

- Daily observations (Tapestry)
- Weekly planning meetings
- Teacher appraisals to assess the quality of education
- Learning walks
- Discussions with the children
- Updating of the EYFS Outdoor Learning Aspect Leadership Plan (O:\PLANNING CENTRE\SUBJECT AND ASPECT LEADERSHIP\EYFS OUTDOOR LEARNING\Leadership Plan)

Children's work and progress is regularly celebrated and displayed within class and with parents through Tapestry.