

ENVIRONMENTAL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION POLICY

Reviewed January 2014

POLICY STATEMENT

Mount Pleasant Primary School is committed to giving pupils an environmental education, as it is fundamental to the future well being of the planet and of its inhabitants, present and future. It has a central role to play in the process of fostering the awareness, active commitment and practical capability that are essential to the future well-being of the Earth and all its inhabitants. Mount Pleasant sits on a small site. We encourage pupils to be outside and offsite whenever possible, to enrich all aspects of the curriculum we deliver.

OBJECTIVES

At Mount Pleasant, environmental and outdoor education will:

- Create opportunities to learn in a wide range of environments.
- Stimulate pupils' interest in their surroundings and community,
- Help pupils to develop an informed concern about the quality of the environment and its future;
- Enhance pupils' sense of responsibility for the care of environments;
- Encourage active participation in the environment, especially through Forest Schools.
- Make links with other curriculum areas, especially science.
- Be part of developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Environmental and outdoor education:

- Provides pupils with knowledge and insight into active citizenship and sustainable development;
- Encourages pupils to take responsibility and participate fully in the school community with consequent spin-off into the local community and raised awareness of impact on more distant places;
- Promotes health, safety and general well-being of pupils;
- Strengthens partnerships with parents and the community, engaged in a common understanding of environmental issues;
- Leads to improved efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are used and made available in school;
- Is interrelated and implicit in the delivery of core and foundation subjects.
- Is an essential part of every pupil's curriculum and enables us to achieve our vision.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

Due to limited space in school, environmental and outdoor education is a whole school concern. There needs to be a common recognition, awareness, and an appreciation of the environment. Outdoor Education enhances all subject areas but with strong links especially to geography, and science, where the benefits of outdoor learning is more explicit in National Curriculum documentation. Each year group will also be required to link their reading curriculum to their outdoor education.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Outdoor Education involves all pupils equally irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, religion and disability. It draws on cultural diversity wherever possible. Therefore the management of teaching and learning should:

- Ensure fair sharing of available resources between children.
- Encourage all children to value their own role and ability in practical work and when recording and communicating their own ideas.
- Involve all children equally in all aspects of Outdoor education.
- Encourage co-operation whereby children learn to value each other's contributions.
- Accommodate children:
 - with special educational needs;
 - whose first language is not English;
 - with medical conditions;
 - with mobility problems;
 - having difficulties with fine motor skills.

(Risk assessments are carried out for off-site activities and, where necessary, some pupils have individual risk assessments approved by PIMIS- see off-site policy).

EXPECTATIONS

Planning for outdoor and environmental education should include pupils acquiring knowledge and understanding of:

- The impact of people and their activities on the environment.
- Environmental and sustainable issues.
- People's lives and livelihoods, where they are dependent on the environment.
- Conservation and management of environments at local, regional, national and international levels
- Conflicts that can arise with reference to environmental issues.
- The importance of effective action to protect and manage the environment.
- A better understanding of life inside and outside the local area.
- A broader understanding of the topic or subject area being taught.
- An understanding of the range of habitats in their local area.
- An understanding of the dangers presented in their environment e.g. roads, canals.

SKILLS

Mount Pleasant pupils are given the opportunity to use the environment as a stimulus for enquiry, investigation and fieldwork across the curriculum. Through this, they should develop awareness and curiosity about the outdoors, which will in turn instil concern and care for different environments.

SCHOOL BASELINE

To date Mount Pleasant Primary School has recognised much environmental activity:

- In the curriculum at both key stages and in Early Years in English, Maths, Science, ICT, Humanities, Dance, Religious Education, Design and Technology, Art and Design, Music, PSHE, Circle Time, SMSC.
- Environmental improvement in the school grounds (Eg: zones, benches, shade, greening the grounds, encouraging wildlife, Gazebo area, outdoor artwork, vegetable growing, developing Early Years outdoor area.)
- Environmental improvement to the school buildings (Display, introducing plants in classrooms, conserve energy posters).
- Early Years, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 6 visit Saltwells Nature Reserve regularly to take part in Forest School activities.
- In-school Focus activities (for example Litterpick, RSPB Birdwatch, Walk To School Week, Cycle Proficiency, National School Grounds Week, Recycling etc).
- In the pursuit of local/national recognition (Eg: National Health Promoting Schools Award, Dudley Schools' Debates, Arts Exhibition).
- School visits (Eg: Ash End House Farm, Wales Residential, Saltwells Nature Reserve, PGL residential, Debates at Dudley Council Chambers, School Council visit to Houses of Commons, Black Country Museum, visits to local businesses, swimming, fitness club etc). Extra offsite visits are organised by each year group to link with specific topics.
- Entering competitions
- Visitors into school (Eg: Community Liaison Police Officer, Angie's animal antics, PDSA, Reverend from the local church for assemblies, School nurse, Drama groups, PureSport etc.)
- Recycling activities (Eg: Printer cartridges, mobile phones, Christmas cards, Yellow Pages, Green milk bottle tops, paper and card)
- Green purchasing (Office stationery)

Forest School

Forest school is a type of outdoor education in which children visit Saltwells Nature Reserve, learning personal, social and technical skills. It gives regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in a "woodland environment".

Forest school uses Saltwells Nature Reserve as a means to build independence and self-esteem in children. Topics are cross-curriculum (broad in subject) including the natural environment, for example the role of trees in society, the complex ecosystem supported by a wilderness, and recognition of specific plants and animals. However, the personal skills gained are highly valuable, such as teamwork and problem solving. We also make links to other curriculum areas such as mathematics and communication.

Annual risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety of all pupils is correctly managed. Individual risk assessments are also completed, where necessary which are approved by PIMIS.