



Outdoor Learning Policy

Aims

This policy aims to support staff at **Ryelands Primary School** in their use of Outdoor Learning by providing clear guidance, information, and signposting to ensure a consistent, whole-school approach. It applies to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), teachers, support staff, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo), and all adults who deliver or support Outdoor Learning, including parent/carer helpers and volunteers. It also has implications for the wider school team, including the site manager, cleaning staff, and catering team.

This policy also aims to raise the profile of Outdoor Learning at Ryelands by keeping parents, carers, and the wider community informed about the school's approach.

It should be read alongside other relevant policies, including the **Safeguarding Policy**, **PSHE Policy**, **Behaviour Policy**, **Assessment Policy**, **Educational Visits Policy**, **Health and Safety Policy**, and **Inclusion Policy**.

Policy Created:		October 2025			
First Presented to Governors for approval:			November 2025 (Curriculum Committee)		
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Approved by (Headteacher)			Approved by (Governor)		
Date:			Date:		
Review History					
Date:		Date:		Date:	
Key Changes:		Key Changes:		Key Changes:	
Presented to Governors:		Presented to Governors:		Presented to Governors:	

1. Ryelands School – Statement of Principles

RYELANDS PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Ryelands is a welcoming community school where care and nurture, alongside high expectations and challenge, enable the pupils to progress and achieve academically, and empower the wider school community to develop and thrive.

We work with many partners to provide a well-resourced, stable and supportive hub extending into the community, creating positive relationships based on inclusivity, trust and mutual respect, as well as growth.

Ryelands offers an engaging and aspirational curriculum, based on the Primary National Curriculum and the Early Years Statutory Framework. Our curriculum is adapted to the unique place where we live and the skills and values we promote. Our curriculum, alongside exceptional teaching, inspires a love of school and learning.

At Ryelands, pupils are encouraged and challenged by staff to **imagine, believe, achieve.**

What is Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor Learning is an umbrella term for approaches that use activities and experiences in the outdoors to facilitate learning, improve health and wellbeing, and promote environmental awareness. It takes place across the curriculum as well as in sessions focused on social and emotional development. Outdoor Learning includes:

- Direct learning about nature and the outdoors in the outdoors;
- Learning in an outdoor space using natural materials as resources;
- Learning activities that make use of the greater space available outdoors;
- Learning activities that mirror indoor activities but are relocated outdoors;
- Specific programmes such as Forest School;
- Day and residential visits.

What are the Benefits of Outdoor Learning?

The benefits of Outdoor Learning in schools have been widely documented. According to the Department for Education, key benefits to pupils include improvements in:

- Engagement in learning
- Behaviour and attitude in the classroom
- School attendance
- Academic achievement
- Connection to nature
- Social skills
- Physical health
- Mental health and wellbeing

Key benefits to staff include improvements in:

- Job satisfaction
- Staff retention

- Quality of teaching and learning
- Professional development

(Source: Natural England – Children & Nature Programme, 2023)

Other research-based benefits include:

- Improved self-confidence
- Better risk management skills
- Greater sense of responsibility
- Stronger connection to the local community
- Increased care for the environment

Outdoor Learning at Ryelands

Pupils at Ryelands Primary School access Outdoor Learning in a variety of ways throughout their time here, according to their developmental and learning needs. Outdoor Learning may take place in:

- The playgrounds
- The EYFS outdoor areas
- The raised beds and growing areas
- The firepit and seating areas
- The wildlife areas
- The pond
- The orchard
- The fields
- The local area surrounding the school
- Our local park
- Further afield during day and residential visits

Teaching and Learning the National Curriculum Outdoors

Outdoor Learning is considered a fundamental part of delivering the National Curriculum at Ryelands. Teachers plan lessons with the outdoor environment in mind, selecting the most appropriate setting for each learning objective. While subjects such as Science and Geography naturally lend themselves to outdoor contexts, all curriculum areas can benefit from outdoor engagement. Reference to outdoor learning will be made on medium term planning formats and yearly overviews.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Outdoor Learning is integral to everyday practice in EYFS. Pupils have free access to the outdoor area for the majority of the day and take part in a range of free-flow and planned outdoor activities.

1:1 and Small Group Interventions

Pupils with additional needs, including Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, may access Outdoor Learning through 1:1 or small group interventions. These sessions are led by Learning Mentors, Pupil Support Mentors or Teaching Assistants in collaboration with the SENDCo and are designed to

support individual learning and development. They may occasionally be used as part of a modified timetable in order to help regulate certain pupils.

After-School Provision

Weekly after-school wildlife, gardening and eco clubs are offered to pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis each term. These clubs are free of charge and run from 3:30 – 4:30pm.

Our paid after school provision will regularly access any and all outdoor areas of the school for both play and structured outdoor activities. This will be mirrored by HAF club, which will also access these spaces to provide outdoor opportunities during school holiday times.

Opportunities are also provided during the school holidays for families to engage in activities such as bulb planting within the school grounds.

Community Engagement

At Ryelands, we value the opportunities and resources within our local community. We actively encourage contributions to our Outdoor Learning programme from parents, carers, and local volunteers, and we use our surrounding environment to enhance learning. Through this engagement, we aim to cultivate a sense of belonging and social responsibility in our pupils.

Our school also has a positive relationship with the 'Friends of Ryelands' Park' group, and regularly takes part in activities such as bulb, tree and hedge planting.

Consent for all activities within 1km of the school is covered by the Initial Consent Form. All community engagement is conducted in line with the **Safeguarding Policy**.

Day Visits and Residentials

Each class undertakes at least one educational visit per half term to extend and enrich classroom learning, in line with the **Educational Visits Policy**.

Residential visits are offered to Key Stage 2 pupils in Y5 and Y6. These experiences promote resilience, self-confidence, wellbeing, teamwork, and independence. While attendance is optional, participation is strongly encouraged, and financial support is available where needed.

Risk Management

Ryelands Primary School is committed to pupil safety in all aspects of school life. The **Health and Safety Policy** applies to all Outdoor Learning activities. Staff are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for all activities requiring additional planning, and for inspecting outdoor areas for new or emerging hazards before use.

Staff are trained to identify and respond to risks dynamically throughout activities. At the same time, pupils are encouraged to learn about managing risk themselves—a key life skill—through guided, practical experiences.

Our approach balances the need for safety with opportunities for pupils to develop confidence, resilience, and responsible risk-taking.

Weather

Weather conditions are not considered a barrier to Outdoor Learning. Pupils are expected to attend school prepared for outdoor activities, with appropriate clothing such as wellies, waterproofs, and sun protection. If children are not able to provide their own, then school will provide them with suitable clothing and footwear to take part in activities. In cases of extreme weather (e.g. storms, high winds), staff will implement pre-planned indoor alternatives.

First Aid and Medication

A qualified first aider is available at all times during Outdoor Learning. When leaving the school site, at least one qualified first aider will accompany the group, along with a first aid kit and any medication required under pupils' Care Plans. All accidents and near-misses are recorded and reviewed to update risk assessments where necessary.

Fire Alarm Procedures

If the fire alarm sounds while pupils are outside, the lead staff member will signal for pupils to line up and lead them to the designated Fire Evacuation point. This procedure is practised regularly and familiar to all pupils.

Safeguarding

All staff at Ryelands Primary School maintain a vigilant approach to safeguarding, including during Outdoor Learning. All adults involved in Outdoor Learning must follow the **Safeguarding Policy** and procedures. Only those with the appropriate DBS checks may work unsupervised with pupils.

Staff understand that outdoor sessions can provide opportunities for pupils to make disclosures. All adults are trained in how to respond appropriately and report concerns.

When leaving the school grounds, staff ensure appropriate adult-to-child ratios and risk assess additional safeguarding considerations. Individual risk assessments are completed where needed.

Further details can be found in the school's **Safeguarding Policy** and **Educational Visits Policy**.

Inclusion

Outdoor Learning benefits children of all backgrounds and abilities. In line with Ryelands' **Equality**, and **SEND Policies**, all pupils are included in Outdoor Learning, regardless of SEND, medical needs, ethnicity, gender, or religion.

To ensure access and inclusion:

- Activities are planned and differentiated to meet all learners' needs.
- Risk assessments support safe participation for pupils with SEND and/or medical needs.
- Staff are alert to and challenge stereotypes or bias during outdoor sessions.

Assessment

Outdoor Learning is currently used to supplement our curriculum offer here at Ryelands, enabling us to deliver a range of curriculum areas outdoors. Therefore, a formal assessment for outdoor learning is not required separately; the subject itself will be assessed following the school's **Assessment Policy**.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Outdoor Learning at Ryelands is monitored by the **Outdoor Learning Lead** in collaboration with year group leaders, subject leaders, and the SENDCo.

The Outdoor Learning Lead provides a termly report to the Governors Curriculum Committee, including an annual summary. The annual review identifies strengths, areas for development, and an action plan for the coming year to ensure high-quality and consistent practice across the school.