

Imperial Avenue Infant School Outdoor Learning Policy

‘Children learn by moving and moving needs space. Only through ready access to the outdoors and stimulating outdoor provision can a child’s physical development, personal, social and emotional wellbeing and learning across the curriculum flourish.’ – Marjorie Ouvry 2001

Our rationale -

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 special nature of being outdoors. At Imperial Avenue, we have beautiful, extensive school grounds which are accessed by all children. We feel it is important to enable children to use the outside environment as a context for learning throughout the year. Research shows that when learning outside the classroom children will:

- Attain higher levels of knowledge and skills.
- 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 enhanced self-concept, self-esteem and mental health.
- Change their environmental behaviours and their values and attitudes.

Aims for outdoor learning -

- To raise the profile of outdoor learning across the school.
- To provide opportunities for all children to access a well-planned outdoor environment and to meet their needs and interests through a range of resources and experiences.
- To provide equipment which develop physical skills and skills across the whole curriculum.
- To make good use of outdoor space so that children are enabled to learn by working on a larger, more active scale than is possible indoors.
- To provide a safe and secure environment that they can take risks in.
- To encourage children to care for their environment by continuing to work with an Eco Council and spreading the message to all children at Imperial.
- To provide opportunities to work independently and collaboratively with enthusiasm and perseverance.
- To support learning in the outdoors by sharing in their experiences and interests.
- To provide appropriate adult intervention to help children make progress in their learning and to develop and enhance the children’s learning through play.
- For children, appropriately clad, to access the outdoor areas and activities in most types of weather.
- To provide the opportunity for children to develop their gross motor skills and their general health and fitness in the outdoor environment by teaching P.E. and other activities including ‘outdoor gym’ activities and ‘balancibility’ outside where appropriate.

Policy into Practice

At Imperial Avenue Infant School we have -

- Designated outdoor areas which can be used by different year groups for different purposes. These include; a SEND unit play area which contains an outdoor covered classroom and a climbing frame; a Reception quad which contains an outdoor covered classroom and a climbing frame; a Key Stage 1 quad containing an outdoor covered area; the field; a purpose built forest school area which includes a fire circle, hedging, screening, animal habitats, raised planters and accessible paths; a fenced tarmac area with an outside covered classroom adjoined to all F2 classes and our Designated Specialist Provision; a semi-walled tarmac area with retractable awnings outside year 1 classrooms, a large secure playground outside our Nursery (which includes a climbing frame), a climbing wall located on the Dining

Hall wall, a large tarmac playground with markings, a large grassed area edged by trees and a set of outdoor exercise equipment.

- An inner quad area that includes an artificial grass area and a canopy covered area.
- A painted playground including zoned areas and a marked pitch.
- Defined, fenced, boundaries in which the children can feel safe, secure and confident.
- Watchful adults who provide appropriate intervention and engage children in the learning process.
- A range of large and small equipment and cross curricular activities which help to promote interactive and independent learning and play in addition to sharing and physical skills.
- Space for growing and caring for plants to promote; a healthy diet, understanding of how fruit and vegetables are grown, care of the environment and knowledge of nature and the seasons.
- Opportunities for self-initiated activities under adult supervision where children can explore their own ideas, practice new learning, take risks and experiment.
- Access to the wider environment - There is a small park with a brook opposite the school and two large community parks and a spinney within walking distance.
- Implemented a 'Happy Lunchtimes' scheme where children are encouraged to use a variety of equipment in the outdoor environment to develop fine and gross motor skills as well as social skills including teamwork and collaboration. Most lunchtime supervisors have been trained in this and so can support the children appropriately.

Development

At Imperial Avenue Infant School our aim is constant improvement through reviewing our children's needs, resources and facilities. We have worked with various groups in order to achieve this goal i.e. the local authority, Parent and Friends Association, staff and governors, Creative Partners, City Parks department, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, Severn Trent, Happy Lunchtimes, and Forest School trainers. Although we enjoy our outdoor areas we feel there is even greater potential for their use as positive learning environments

- To provide equipment on a more permanent basis so that activities are more easily accessible at any time through Happy Lunchtimes.
- To improve the Key stage 1 quad so it is more accessible for all children.
- To develop the Reception quad so that it is open ended in its nature.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding

(See shared site – Outdoor Learning Risk Assessments for each area and individual pupil's health records). Please note: the more adventurous outdoor play equipment is checked every day by the Premises Officer.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All staff are responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of outdoor learning activities. Teaching staff will ensure that there is adequate adult supervision for groups of children working outside and that outdoor learning is well planned. No volunteers will be allowed to supervise pupils on the equipment alone. They must be accompanied by a member of the school staff at all times. It is the responsibility of all staff to be knowledgeable of planning, the risk assessment of the area they are working in, health and safety issues around particular pupils and to take the necessary precautions. Assessment of outdoor learning is often done through photographs of activities. Staff must be aware of which children cannot be included in school photographs. Staff must report to the Premises Officer any potential hazards or faulty equipment found outside. This information should also be written into the communication book kept in the office. The Eco school leader and teachers using the equipment will be responsible for the maintenance of any outdoor tools and equipment used.

This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated on an annual basis – Reviewed Autumn 2025.