



Outdoor Learning Policy 2025

Rationale

At Backworth Park Primary School, we believe that outdoor learning not only enhances academic achievement but also nurtures the core values of **Respect, Resilience, and Responsibility**. Through engaging outdoor experiences, children develop an appreciation for the environment, learn to overcome challenges with determination, and grow as responsible individuals who contribute positively to their communities. These values support the development of independent learners with high self-esteem and self-sufficiency, while also promoting positive behaviours for learning, creating a strong foundation for both their personal and academic growth.

By incorporating **Respect, Resilience, and Responsibility** into the outdoor learning framework, the school strengthens its holistic approach to education and provides students with the skills needed to thrive both in school and beyond.

Aims of Outdoor Learning at Backworth Park Primary School

Outdoor learning is an invaluable tool for enhancing a child's personal, social, and emotional wellbeing. Through engaging with real-world environments, children from Nursery to Year Six are provided with authentic, hands-on experiences that support both academic growth and character development. Research highlights the importance of experiential learning; learning that is grounded in direct experiences in the world around us.

I. Academic Achievement & Cognitive Growth:

- **Improve Academic Achievement**

Engaging with real-world contexts in outdoor settings can make subjects come to life, strengthening students' connection to their learning. Practical experiences often promote higher engagement, deeper understanding, and stronger retention of information across all subjects.

Respect: By understanding the world around them, students learn to appreciate the relevance of academic subjects in real life.

- **Provide a Bridge to Higher-Order Learning**

Outdoor learning helps students transition from basic understanding to critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving, laying the groundwork for higher-order cognitive skills.



Resilience: Overcoming challenges outside the classroom encourages adaptive thinking and problem-solving.

2. Personal, Social, and Emotional Development

- **Develop Skills and Independence in a Widening Range of Environments**

Exposure to various outdoor settings allows children to become more adaptable and independent, developing self-sufficiency and confidence in their ability to navigate diverse environments.

Responsibility: By taking ownership of tasks like managing personal equipment or caring for the environment, students learn to be responsible for themselves and their surroundings.

- **Make Learning More Engaging and Relevant**

Outdoor learning places students in real-world contexts, making the educational experience more engaging and relevant to their everyday lives.

Respect: As students interact with the environment, they come to respect the world around them and understand its value in their lives.

3. Social Responsibility & Environmental Stewardship

- **Develop Active Citizens and Stewards of the Environment**

Outdoor learning provides ample opportunities for students to understand their role as global citizens and caretakers of the environment.

Responsibility: Students practice taking care of the environment, from litter picking to planting, understanding their role in preserving the world for future generations.

- **Provide Opportunities for Informal Learning Through Play**

Play-based learning in outdoor environments fosters social, emotional, and cognitive development. Outdoor spaces encourage children to explore, take risks, and collaborate in informal learning contexts.

Resilience: Outdoor play often involves taking risks and coping with setbacks, teaching children resilience and adaptability.



4. Personal Growth and Wellbeing

- **Nurture Creativity**

Outdoor learning environments, rich with natural stimuli, offer ideal settings for creative expression.

Whether through drawing, storytelling, building, or problem-solving, outdoor learning stimulates imagination and innovative thinking.

Respect: Creativity fosters a deeper connection to the environment, as students learn to appreciate the beauty and complexity of nature.

- **Provide Challenge and the Opportunity to Take Acceptable Levels of Risk**

Outdoor learning exposes students to real-world risks, helping them understand how to assess danger and make informed decisions.

Resilience: Experiencing safe, controlled risks builds confidence and teaches students how to handle uncertainty and adversity.

- **Develop the Ability to Deal with Uncertainty**

In outdoor environments, students often face situations with unpredictable elements, such as weather or new activities. These experiences help them build flexibility and the capacity to deal with uncertainty.

Resilience: Facing the unknown in outdoor settings builds emotional resilience and self-confidence.

Where Does Outdoor Learning Take Place at Backworth Park Primary School?

On the School Grounds: Backworth Park Primary School is fortunate to have expansive outdoor spaces for learning, providing children with ample opportunities to engage in a wide variety of activities throughout the year. These areas include:

- **Forest School Area:** A designated outdoor space where children engage in nature-based learning activities, enhancing their connection with the environment.
- **Nursery and Reception Outdoor Area:** The youngest learners have full-time access to a dedicated outdoor area, offering them an environment rich in exploration and play-based learning.
- **Hard-Core Playground Areas:** Ideal for structured outdoor games, physical education, and break times, providing a safe and durable surface for a range of activities.
- **MUGA Grassed Area:** A versatile area used for team sports, physical education, and other group activities.



- **Field:** An open space often used for outdoor lessons, team-building exercises, sports activities, and seasonal outdoor projects.

In the Local Area: Backworth Park Primary School places significant importance on engaging students with their local community and the natural environment. Local learning opportunities include:

- **Wagonways:** An excellent resource for studying local history, geography, and the community's industrial heritage. The wagonways offer a historical context for projects, allowing students to experience the physical remnants of the past.
- **Rising Sun Country Park:** A local park that serves as a rich learning environment for exploring ecosystems, biodiversity, and the interplay between humans and nature.
- **Holywell Dene:** A natural area for students to examine local environmental features, engage in outdoor research, and study the effects of conservation and land use on the surrounding landscape.

Local projects:

- **Road Safety Projects:** Including walking trips in the local community and nearby nature parks to teach students about safe pedestrian and cycling practices.
- **Bikeability:** As part of the school's commitment to safety and independence, students practice cycling on local roads, learning the skills necessary for safe travel in their community.

Further Afield: Students are regularly given the chance to extend their outdoor learning experiences to destinations that offer new environments and learning opportunities, including:

- **Whitley Bay Beach:** This coastal area offers a perfect setting for geography, environmental science, and recreational outdoor learning activities, as well as historical and ecological exploration.
- **Fish Quay:** A visit to the Fish Quay helps students understand local industry, geography, and maritime life.
- **Newcastle City Centre:** The city's landmarks, history, and cultural heritage come alive during educational trips, helping students engage with urban geography and history in a practical, hands-on way.
- **Newcastle Ouseburn Farm:** An educational farm offering outdoor experiences where children can learn about animals, agriculture, and sustainability.

Residential Locations:

Children in Year 5 and 6, can engage in a residential at **High Borrans**. This residential experience allows students to take part in a wide variety of outdoor adventure activities, fostering development in physical, social, and emotional areas, such as:



- **Obstacle Courses:** Designed to challenge physical fitness, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.
- **Climbing and Abseiling:** Helping students overcome fears, build resilience, and develop physical coordination and courage.
- **Orienteering:** An outdoor activity that teaches navigation, planning, and decision-making, all while developing a deep connection with nature.

Health and Safety in Outdoor Learning at Backworth Park Primary School

Outdoor learning is an important and enriching part of the curriculum at Backworth Park Primary School, providing students with the opportunity to engage with the world around them in meaningful and dynamic ways. While these experiences are designed to be challenging and inspiring, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students is our top priority. The school follows stringent health and safety guidelines to allow children to take safe risks in a controlled and supervised environment.

Supporting Risk-Taking in a Safe and Secure Environment

- **Encouraging Safe Risk-Taking:** Outdoor learning provides children with opportunities to engage in physical and mental challenges. While these experiences can involve manageable risks, the aim is to help students develop confidence and learn how to assess and manage these risks. This encourages **resilience** and personal growth, while still ensuring that safety is paramount.
- **Challenging Environments:** Whether it's navigating the school field, exploring local parks, or participating in adventure-based activities, outdoor environments are designed to offer challenges that stimulate students' learning and development. Teachers actively support children in managing these challenges, fostering a sense of **responsibility** in relation to their own safety and the safety of others.

Conforming to the School's Health and Safety Policy

- **Teacher Responsibility:** Teachers are trained and responsible for ensuring that outdoor learning activities are conducted safely. They are also proactive in identifying potential hazards and taking steps to address them before, during, and after each activity.

Safety Measures for Off-Site Visits and Outdoor Activities

- **Robust Safety Procedures for Trips:** The school has comprehensive procedures for managing off-site visits and trips, ensuring that safety is consistently prioritized. These measures include thorough risk



assessments, the supervision of students, and clear communication with both children and their families about expectations and safety guidelines.

- **Staff-to-Student Ratios:** A sufficient number of adults are always present to supervise children during outdoor activities. The staff-to-student ratio is determined based on the specific nature of the activity and the number of students involved to ensure that all children are safely monitored.
- **Emergency Protocols:** Staff are trained in first aid and familiar with emergency procedures, ensuring they are prepared to respond swiftly and appropriately if any incidents or accidents occur during outdoor learning activities.

Risk Assessments for All Activities

- **Risk Assessments:** Before embarking on any activity that involves physical challenges or off-site visits, the school conducts risk assessment to identify and mitigate potential hazards. These assessments are updated regularly and are tailored to the specific activity or location, considering factors such as weather, terrain, and the age and abilities of the students.
- **Regular Reviews:** Risk assessments are not only completed before each activity but are also regularly reviewed and updated, ensuring the ongoing safety of students during outdoor learning experiences.
- **Student Involvement in Risk Management:** As part of the learning process, students are encouraged to assess risks themselves, supported by teachers who guide them through discussions about safety. This approach helps to foster a sense of **responsibility** and ownership of their actions.

Managing Specific Risks in Outdoor Environments

- **Weather Considerations:** Outdoor learning is planned with the weather conditions in mind, and weather checks are made prior to outdoor activities. For example, extreme weather conditions (e.g., heavy rain, snow, or high winds) may lead to changes or cancellations of certain outdoor learning sessions. Teachers ensure that children are dressed appropriately for the weather to prevent discomfort or health risks.
- **Environmental Hazards:** Specific hazards related to the environment—such as uneven ground, water bodies, or plant/animal safety—are identified and addressed. Teachers provide students with clear guidelines for how to navigate these challenges safely.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** For certain activities, such as biking, appropriate PPE (helmets) is provided to ensure that children are fully protected during high-risk activities.

Communication and Partnership with Families

- **Informing Parents and Carers:** Prior to any outdoor learning activity, especially off-site trips, the school provides parents and carers with information about the planned activity, safety measures,



and any specific requirements (e.g., clothing, equipment). Written consent is obtained for off-site activities, ensuring that families are fully informed and involved in the process.

- **Sharing Safety Practices:** The school maintains an open line of communication with families regarding health and safety practices, encouraging them to contribute any relevant information that may support a safe and successful outdoor learning experience for their child.

Managing Allergies in Outdoor Learning at Backworth Park Primary School

At Backworth Park Primary School, we recognize the importance of safeguarding children with allergies during outdoor learning activities. We are committed to ensuring that every child has a safe and enjoyable learning experience, free from the risk of allergic reactions. All staff members are fully informed and vigilant in supporting students with allergies, both on the school grounds and during off-site excursions.

Resources for Outdoor Learning at Backworth Park Primary School

Backworth Park Primary School is equipped with a wide range of resources that support outdoor learning, enabling students to engage in practical, hands-on activities that enhance their educational experience. These resources are carefully selected to align with the aims of fostering creativity, problem-solving, independence, and a **respect** for the environment.

Trim Trail

- **Description:** The trim trail is an exciting physical resource located within the school grounds, designed to challenge students' coordination, strength, and teamwork. It consists of a series of outdoor obstacles that encourage physical activity and resilience.
- **Learning Benefits:**
 - **Physical Development:** Encourages gross motor skills, agility, and balance.
 - **Teamwork & Problem Solving:** Students collaborate in pairs or groups to navigate the obstacles, helping to develop social skills and communication.
 - **Resilience:** Provides opportunities for students to challenge themselves, build confidence, and overcome physical challenges.
- **Safety Measures:** Supervised use of the trim trail ensures children can safely engage in physical activities, with staff monitoring for safe usage and ensuring children wear appropriate footwear.

Science Equipment

- **Description:** The school provides a variety of science equipment for conducting outdoor experiments and investigations. These resources include magnifying glasses, measuring tools, and scientific observation kits that can be used during nature walks, gardening projects, or environmental studies.
- **Learning Benefits:**



- **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Students can explore scientific concepts such as plant growth, weather patterns, ecosystems, and animal behaviour through hands-on exploration.
- **Critical Thinking:** Encourages students to make observations, record findings, and test hypotheses, promoting scientific thinking.
- **Interdisciplinary Connections:** Outdoor science learning can connect with other curriculum areas such as geography (studying landforms, ecosystems), art (drawing scientific observations), and mathematics (measuring, graphing data).
- **Safety Measures:** All equipment is checked regularly for functionality and safety, and teachers guide students on proper handling of materials, particularly when working with potentially fragile equipment like magnifying glasses or thermometers.

Gardening Tools

- **Description:** The school is equipped with a range of gardening tools for students to use in planting, cultivating, and maintaining the school's outdoor gardens. This includes trowels, spades, watering cans, gloves, and hand tools.
- **Learning Benefits:**
 - **Environmental Education:** Students engage with nature and biodiversity, learning how plants grow and the importance of caring for the environment.
 - **Life Skills:** Gardening provides opportunities for students to learn patience, responsibility, and the rewards of nurturing living things.
 - **Cross-Curricular Links:** Gardening activities can be linked to science (understanding plant growth, ecosystems), math (measuring, calculating space, tracking growth), and art (creating garden designs or plant-based art).
- **Safety Measures:** Tools are age-appropriate, and children are given clear guidelines on their proper and safe use. Gardening activities are closely supervised to ensure that students handle tools carefully and take precautions against any potential injuries.

SEND/Inclusion in Outdoor Learning at Backworth Park Primary School

At Backworth Park Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that all children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), have equal access to outdoor learning experiences. Our approach is rooted in providing tailored support through Individual Support Plans (ISPs), which outline the specific needs and strategies for supporting SEND students in the outdoor environment. All outdoor learning opportunities are designed to be inclusive, ensuring that every child, regardless of ability, is able to engage meaningfully and benefit from the experiences.



Monitoring and Assessment of Outdoor Learning at Backworth Park Primary School

At Backworth Park Primary School, we place equal value on assessing children's learning, whether it takes place indoors or outdoors. We recognize that outdoor learning offers unique opportunities to enrich the curriculum, develop a range of skills, and enhance students' engagement. To ensure that outdoor learning is integrated meaningfully into all areas of the curriculum, we use a structured approach to monitoring and assessment that involves teachers, subject leaders, and the wider school community.

Strategies for Assessment in Outdoor Learning

- **Formative Assessment:** Teachers use formative assessment techniques during outdoor learning to gauge students' progress in real-time. This can include:
 - **Observations:** Teachers observe how children interact with outdoor learning resources, participate in group activities, and solve problems. This provides insight into their practical skills, creativity, and teamwork.
 - **Discussions:** Informal conversations with students during or after outdoor activities help assess their understanding of concepts and reflect on the learning experience.
 - **Peer Feedback:** Peer-to-peer assessments encourage students to share feedback with one another, fostering a collaborative learning environment where they can learn from each other's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Summative Assessment:** For more structured outdoor activities, such as trips, science investigations, or art projects summative assessments are used to evaluate the final outcomes of the learning process. This can include:
 - **Project-Based Assessments:** Students complete outdoor projects that involve investigation, design, or creative expression. The final project or product is assessed against established criteria, including creativity, knowledge application, and effort.
 - **Portfolio Assessments:** Students may create portfolios of their outdoor learning experiences, documenting their progress with photographs, drawings, written reflections, or other creative outputs.

At Backworth Park Primary School, outdoor learning is a vital part of our educational approach, enhancing academic achievement, personal growth, and social-emotional wellbeing. By integrating outdoor experiences across the curriculum, we foster creativity, resilience, teamwork, and responsibility, while connecting students to the natural world. Our Outdoor Learning Policy ensures that these experiences are inclusive, safe, and aligned with our values of **respect**, **resilience**, and **responsibility**. Through careful monitoring and assessment, we adapt outdoor learning to meet the diverse needs of our students, including those with SEND, and provide opportunities for them to thrive both academically and personally. By embracing the outdoors as a classroom,



we prepare students to be confident, responsible citizens who can positively contribute to their community and the wider world.