



# **LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM POLICY**

**POLICY AGREED: SPRING TERM 2022 BY FULL GOVERNING BOARD**

**POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: SPRING TERM 2024**

## **Rationale: Why is learning Outside the Classroom important to our pupils?**

Pupils at Dee Banks require a curriculum that is motivating, engaging and differentiated to meet individual complex needs in order to fulfil their potential. Our curriculum is focused on developing independent, practical and functional skills as well as becoming socially integrated into the school community and the wider world. These aims cannot be fully achieved within the classroom environment and we consider it essential that our pupils access a wide range of experiences both on and off site to practice and generalise skills. For our pupils, learning outside the classroom gives opportunities for the following outcomes:

- To have a greater range of experiences, some of which will be regular and planned for in a progressive way to provide stimulation and challenge.
- To develop confidence in coping in different environments and the skills required for this. It is essential that communication skills are practised and applied in a range of situations and realistic contexts.
- To learn new concepts with the support of a 'real-world' context.
- To be motivated to learn as practical and sensory experiences prove most engaging and effective for our pupils, thus driving progress.
- To achieve personal growth and celebrate their own achievements e.g. through school displays, celebration assemblies, awards and medals.

The Senior Leadership Team and Governing Board promote and value opportunities for learning outside the classroom and how it supports meeting the aims of the school in providing 'every pupil with a curriculum that is varied, balanced, challenging, engaging, personalised and motivating to them as individuals' ( school curriculum statement). Maximising opportunities to learn outside the classroom also supports objectives in the school improvement plan regarding development of a semi-formal curriculum approach.

## **How is learning outside the classroom embedded into our curriculum?**

Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are linked to curriculum aims which reflect the ages, stages of development and personal pathways of our pupils throughout the school. Visits and experiences are timetabled with a frequency that is suitable for each class group, in many cases this is weekly or more. These are planned for in a progressive way with a greater range of experiences and increased levels of confidence and independence being achieved over time. For example, early years and primary classes make frequent, repetitive visits including walks to local facilities, parks and woodlands. Upper primary and secondary classes are then able to travel further from school for longer visits and special experiences, maintaining local visits where appropriate. These visits are often used to support the thematic learning delivered in the classroom and to develop personal and social skills which are a significant part of our overall curriculum. When pupils enter the 14-19 department, they are then able to access visits to a range of local facilities including shops, cafes and leisure centres with increasing independence and in some cases visit college settings for taster sessions and undertake work experience placements off site. Learning from first-hand experiences and having opportunities to apply skills learnt in different places and situations supports our curriculum model and policy. All students, regardless of need, have the opportunity to participate in Forest School sessions led by our qualified Forest School teacher.

Residential experiences are currently offered to Post-16 students through the NCS award scheme which include adventurous activities and challenges. There are also opportunities for some secondary pupils to access an overseas residential through links with our partner school in Oldenburg, Germany.

For our pupils with PMLD, off site visits are difficult to facilitate due to transport limitations as only three pupils can travel on a school minibus at a time. Many of these pupils also have complex health and care needs which can make some visits more challenging to facilitate. When possible, these groups do access walks into the local area and opportunities are taken to provide special experiences within school wherever possible. These include visiting musicians and theatre groups, one of which (Oily Cart) is specific in meeting the needs of pupils with PMLD.

### **Procedures, roles and responsibilities**

At Dee Banks, we use the Evolve online system for off site visits. This ensures that details of the visit, plans and risk assessments are sent to the Educational Visits Co-ordinator in advance for scrutiny. If deemed appropriate, forms are submitted to the Headteacher for approval and once this has been obtained, a visit can be carried out. The 'Risk Benefit Assessment' form provided by Cheshire West and Chester (in Evolve documents) has been adopted as a generic risk assessment framework across the school. Parents and carers are asked at the start of each year to sign a consent form for regular visits in the local area. If a different sort of visit is planned or one that is a greater distance from school, parents and carers will be informed and further consent will be gained via Form C. For more information regarding approval procedures, responsibilities, consent and risk management for visits and residentials please see the school's Educational Visits and Overnight Stays Policy.

The following roles are currently in place to support learning outside the classroom:

Peter Bradbury - Lead teacher for learning outside the classroom  
Jo Williams - Deputy Headteacher with curriculum responsibility and EVC  
Janet O'Sullivan - PMLD Lead and EVC  
Teachers and Teaching Assistants - Contribute to planning and leading LOtC opportunities relevant to own class groups and which deliver curriculum aims. Visit leaders complete risk assessments and Evolve form and share with staff.

### **How does ongoing communication support our vision for LOtC and celebrate pupil's achievements?**

Photographs are used extensively to share pupils' experiences and achievements in learning outside the classroom and promote the message that this is central to helping all young people reach their potential. This takes place through:

- Assembly PowerPoint presentations
- School Twitter feed
- School website
- Displays around school and in classrooms
- Presentations during parent/ carer meetings
- Newsletters from school to home

Details of pupil's achievements are also often reported and celebrated through progress information shared with parents and carers. This may be via end of year reports, the annual review process, IEP evaluations or other processes e.g. for looked after children.

### **How is progress in LOfC reviewed, monitored and evaluated?**

Learning outside the classroom will be evaluated as part of our overall curriculum and assessment approach as pupil's understanding, independence and ability to generalise skills beyond the classroom will be observed and measured. This links to our developing curriculum model which includes curriculum pathways (pre formal, semi-formal and early formal) for stages of development and experiences and skills to be taught from Early Years through to 14 to 19.