

Taking learning outside in KS1 and KS2. – Practicalities and Progression.

Written for Learning through Landscapes by Felicity Robinson



Outside is a very good place to be to reduce the spread of viruses, as well as to support mental health and well-being. Being outside for play and learning, as an everyday practice, is likely to be part of your PSHE strategy on returning to school. A whole school approach to taking the learning outside, as a 'new normal' will be beneficial to adults and children alike, as everyone comes to terms with the situation.

Many of you will be very familiar with working outside with your class, but for others this may be more of a challenge, so do start with where you feel comfortable. There are several options, progressing from tasks similar to inside, working close to the building, to wider use of the grounds and natural materials as learning resources. Some practicalities are also discussed here to help answer some common concerns. Teachers are creative and resourceful in curriculum planning, and we hope these notes will help you to develop this 'new normal' and get it well embedded before the weather changes, so this practice can continue in all seasons.

Benefits and Risks Your school Risk Benefit Assessment will cover learning outside in the school grounds without any additional requirements for separate assessment but do check with SLT if you have any concerns. Your usual plans for PE, (access to toilets, epipens/ inhalers etc) will apply to learning outside too.

Time If outdoor clothing takes time to put on, then plan your tasks for when the children are dressed for outside anyway, such as before or after break, or registration could be taken outside (if it is on a mobile system.)

Toilets and handwashing. You may find that children 'need' the loo less when they are busy and engaged outside! There is a lot of advice out there, and your school will have its own policies. At the simplest, if you are working outside close enough to school children can go inside. Making your own DIY 'Tippy Taps' from recycled containers may be a solution to handwashing in some places.

What work can I take outside and where?

Almost everything can be done outside...! Take a new look at your grounds, and think in terms of place specific pedagogy. This might include working with your staff team to make a 'curriculum map' of the grounds, identify specific places which offer 'class bases', and plan how to use tarmac, grass, fences, walls, trees etc. (See separate advice sheet on "Using what you have got") Think creatively about what the spaces offer. Adaptation and flexibility is key. You may also need to timetable classes in each place, if


Children's Outdoor kit. Most important is collaborating with parents to ensure children arrive ready to learn outside, (suitable clothes and footwear) as an everyday expectation throughout the year. Now is a great time for parents to understand the value of learning outside, as part of their children's education, health and wellbeing.

Your children will already have their own indoor learning kit, so add a clip board (pencil attached), simple 'sit mat'. (small sheet of robust plastic/old tarp, or a small plastic bag with a folder newspaper inside, (taped together.) and a chunky chalk or two for some activities. A piece of rope that is cut to a 1m length, marked in 10cm increments is a very versatile piece of kit for a wide variety of mathematical and artistic tasks outside. If they can each bring a 'bag for life' to keep in school with this kit in, it will always be ready for use. You will add to this as your repertoire expands. At the end of each session the children will need to check that their kit is complete and hang it on the peg ready for the next day.

Teacher's outdoor kit Develop your own 'grab bag' of whatever you need to feel comfortable working outside; clothing/footwear, phone/ipad, communication cards, your own sit mat/camp stool, and resources such as an A2+ chalk/clip board, if required. (white boards do not work well in damp conditions)



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all classes are learning outside regularly. There may need to be some rigidity in the timetable, but within that you can be creative and flexible to meet learning outcomes. Some activities will require more planning than other tasks, but after a while it will become second nature to 'think outside' during your planning. It helps some schools to have an 'outdoors' prompt on their planning templates. You will develop ways to record outcomes and 'capture' the learning. If you establish a routine with your class, then they will also, in a short time, become used to focussing and remaining on task during outdoor learning sessions.

1) Quick/close to school – 'inside' work just outside the classroom.

For this you may only need the children themselves and a space to stand. (eg a paired talking task, or a circle time/plenary discussion.) For some individual tasks they may need only clip boards and a space to gather, either sitting or standing. Remember that if children have clip boards they can rest them on any surface, such as a wall.

2) Further afield - New tasks that support the key learning objectives, but require the children to explore further. This could be a task such as searching for twigs and sticks to make a fraction wall, or a variety of leaves to make a symmetrical pattern, or to gather data for charts and graphs. (NOTE - infection rates from natural materials are likely to be very low. *See LTL published research on this*)

3) Longer term plans for a progressive series of outdoor tasks. As you become more confident, and outdoor learning is embedded, you will spend more time outside on more complex tasks and may move further away from the building to use playing fields or woodlands, (if you are lucky enough to have these on-site.) Even in an urban site you will find creative ways to engage your learners and develop a new expectation for using the outdoor environment on a regular and progressive basis.

Managing children - a 'recall' system. If you are allowing the children to roam within agreed boundaries, then you will need to agree a recall system, that could be a horn, whistle, tambourine or a specific 'call', to which they will need to respond, within, say, a count to 10' This is for emergency use and to bring them together so they can hear your 'talking' voice. Choose gathering places away from traffic noise if possible.

Remember that some children who find it harder to focus inside, may surprise you outside. All children will learn to adapt, work together in different ways and develop new skills.

Do I need a 2 meter grid?. If you are working in 'bubbles' then your school may not require this during school time, but children may need to practice anyway, for outside school. Practice with PE spots/ cones to begin with until children get a clear picture of what 2m looks like and feels like.

There has been a seismic shift in how we all live in the world.

Children and adults alike have had to cope with unprecedented change. Evidence shows how beneficial the outdoors can be to building health, resilience and attainment.

Bring your creativity and experience to finding more ways to take your classes outside for their, and your health, and wellbeing. Use the space and opportunities that your grounds has to offer, as you welcome your children back in to school.

LtL accredited trainers are available to give you bespoke advice and work with you to develop a whole school approach.

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