



Let's Focus on...

Outdoor Learning



**‘We are not saying ‘good bye’ to our
classrooms; we are opening them up.’**

Simon Beames, Outdoor Education Lecturer, Edinburgh University

What is Outdoor Learning?

Learning does not need to take place only in classrooms. We are very lucky to have a rich urban and rural environment on our doorstep at Mosshead and these outdoor areas have a huge potential for learning. Our children's learning experiences can be massively enhanced by maximising the potential of this outdoor space. Learning outdoors can be enjoyable, creative, challenging and adventurous. It can help children to grow as confident and responsible citizens who value and appreciate the spectacular landscapes, natural heritage and culture of Scotland. Children can make connections with the real world outside the classroom through hands on experience, helping to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a meaningful context

The Scottish Government is keen to see all our children and young people having positive learning experiences in a variety of settings. Outdoor learning isn't specific to any curricular area - all subjects can engage in some form of outside learning. For example, we can engage in creativity outside for story writing, teach maths in fun ways outside by measuring lengths and angles in nature, use examples of plants and animals that the children learn about to enhance our science lessons and so much more!



Benefits of Outdoor Learning

There is a huge amount of national and international evidence of the benefits of learning outdoors on children's health and wellbeing, wider achievements, attainment and personal development. Children are able to learn about nature and the environment they live in, working in teams in different situations, helping children to reflect and learn about themselves. Other benefits include:

- Exposure to experiences they wouldn't otherwise get being inside.
- Enthusiasm for real-world learning.
- A boost to children's self-esteem, confidence and social and emotional growth.
- Better behaviour and standards when back inside the classroom.
- Improvement of interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Activities such as collecting data, playing outdoors and observing natural objects can help boost children's learning abilities.
- Outdoor environments and surroundings provide a rich stimulus for creative thinking and learning, giving opportunities for challenge, enquiry, critical thinking and reflection.
- Children and young people find that not everything outside matches the models or the textbooks in the classroom. This does not mean that what they have found is 'wrong' but

instead develops awareness of how complex the real world can be. This can help to develop critical thinking skills.

- Children have the opportunity to fully understand the relevance of a subject taught in school to everyday life.
- Children can sometimes behave differently outdoors. Quiet pupils may speak more and others can become calmer and more focused when outside, especially in a natural space.
- The multi-sensory experience outdoors helps children to retain knowledge more effectively. There are opportunities for pupils to learn with their whole bodies on a large scale.
- Being outdoors can be a more relaxing learning experience for many learners.
- Boys in particular, are more active in their learning in an outdoor environment.
- Active learning develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and co-operative learning.

Outdoor Learning at Mosshead

At Mosshead Primary School we are lucky enough to have extensive grounds and we endeavour to link learning to the outside wherever possible. We aim to provide the highest quality of learning for all children and outdoor learning is an integral part of our school week, with the range of activities being endless. Outdoor learning helps bring learning alive and is having a huge impact on all areas of the curriculum from imaginative writing to health lessons. We try to utilise the outdoor space as much as possible with opportunities to take learning outside being seized and taken full advantage of wherever available and appropriate. As well as class lessons, there are further opportunities provided for outdoor learning through:

- **Gardening opportunities** – the Eco Committee and Primary 6 classes (as part of their work towards the Junior Duke award) prepare soil, plant and tend to the vegetables in our large planters. Vegetables are then harvested and given out for families to cook at home.
- **Local environment walks** – led by Sustrans and linked to class topics about our local area.
- **P7 Residential trip**
- **Annual class trips**
- **Outdoor Classroom Day** – We participate in this global movement to take learning outdoors and, on these days, every class does as much learning outside as possible.



What the Children Think

Children across the stages were asked their opinions on outdoor learning and their feedback was very positive:

I like it because there is a bigger space so you can play more. I liked learning fractions with bar models and I learned it better outside than inside. (P3A pupil, 2024)

I like going in groups because you get to hear other people's opinions. I liked doing fraction walls because we get to draw on the ground. (P3A pupil, 2024)

"I like being in a different environment from the classroom, it makes learning more fun." (P7B pupil, 2024)

"It is easier to learn because you can physically move things outside rather than writing from a textbook. It means I remember how to do things better." (P7B pupil, 2024)

"Sometimes if something is tricky and I get worked up the breeze calms me down. I just like being outside so when I'm learning outside I really like it." (P3B pupil, 2024)

"Usually when you go outside you can use chalk and you can write things so you can see them really clear. I really like the fresh air. It helps me learn." (P3B pupil, 2024)

How can you help?

You are probably already doing lots of outdoor learning with your child/children. Creating opportunities for exploration outdoors and fostering a lasting appreciation for nature at home will help to build on the work being done in school. Please ensure that your children are dressed appropriately for learning outdoors in all weathers by providing layers, waterproof jackets and appropriate footwear.

Useful Websites

Learning Through Landscapes – A leading UK charity dedicated to outdoor learning and play for children across the world .<https://ltl.org.uk/>

Outdoor Classroom Day - <https://outdoorclassroomday.com/>

The Sensory Trust - A collection of creative activities designed to engage the senses and connect with nature. <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/index.htm>