



# **Lime Tree Outdoor Learning**

## **“Not just Child’s play”**



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# Introduction

Here at Lime Tree we have been travelling a journey to give time and space for children to learn outside of the classroom. Making these changes has not happened over night, and will continue year on year as we invest resources, time and energy into enabling this to be an integral part of a child's learning. We believe that outdoor learning is an important and indeed an entitlement for children to experience here at Lime Tree as part of their education. Going outside is not a treat and not simply play for children.

There is a vast bank of scientific evidence, which has proven the benefits that outdoor learning provides for children (and indeed adults too). This handbook explores some of this evidence and links this to the expected outcomes for Lime Tree pupils.



Our journey started with a dream to have a farm where children would learn to grow produce as well as use the produce for cooking and selling to the community. The vision started with a small allotment plot which was positioned next to the original school building. We started the forest school journey in September 2013 and began to develop the growing areas within the school grounds. The new build of the main school has been instrumental in enabling a more focussed and deliberate use of the surrounding school grounds for outdoor learning. The introduction of employing outdoor staff to lead this work has been essential, so as to provide a passionate and skilled team to work alongside teaching staff within the school.

Our journey has by no means finished, it is very much on-going and an organic process which will continue to develop year on year....

## What is Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor learning will conjure different ideas and understandings dependent on your own experiences and learning. It can take many forms but there are some important principles and points to be understood if we are going to ensure that children gain the best outcomes from it.

Outdoor learning as a title can cover a multitude of activities including “outdoor play in the early years, school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development programs, expeditions, team building, leadership training, management development, education for sustainability, adventure therapy ... and more. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary but it does have a common core...” (<http://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/outdoor-learning/what-is-outdoor-learning>).

Here at Lime Tree, outdoor learning can include: Forest School, work on the kitchen garden and farm, science lessons, outdoor pursuits e.g. canoeing, climbing, hill walking, orienteering, team building challenges, fieldtrips, camping. The English Outdoor Council explain that Outdoor learning:

- “involves being outdoors as a central part of the experience
- is open to all
- seeks to use the outdoor environment as a vehicle for transforming the experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours
- Frequently has a challenging, adventurous element
- Will often involve a residential component
- Often involves some physical activity
- Always respects the environment
- Is often cited as being both memorable and fun”

P5 English Outdoor Council 2015

We do not view Outdoor learning as a reward, it is an integral part of the child’s learning experience at Lime Tree. We provide a progressive program of outdoor learning through the child’s journey through the school as “the best outcomes are achieved when outdoor learning is designed as a frequent and progressive activity relating to broader learning links to everyday experiences in a classroom and to real-life experiences”(p5 English Outdoor Council 2015).

## Why do we do outdoor Learning?

There is a growing body of evidence, which reveals the benefits of outdoor learning for both children and adults too. The evidence points to emotional, social, physical and mental benefits for learning outside. Louv wrote that “the evidence indicates that the experiences in the natural world may reduce the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, serve as a buffer to depression and anxiety, help prevent or reduce obesity and myopia, boost the immune system, and offer many other psychological and physical health benefits. Time spent in nature may also improve social bonding and reduce social violence, stimulate learning and creativity, strengthen the conservation ethic, and even help raise standardized test scores” pxiv Louv R 2016

Outdoor learning is not something to completely replace that of learning inside the classroom, but aids to compliment the ability of children to learn inside and out of the classroom. “There is no doubt that when effectively integrated into a well-planned learning programme outdoor learning experience can have a positive impact on attainment. Indeed Ofsted recognised that: ‘when planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils’ personal, social and emotional development” p3 English Outdoor Council 2015.



Today we very much live in risk averse culture, but “Our children and wild places should be protected from the growing culture of fear. They should be saved from being wrapped up in cotton wool, health and safety, fence to fence tarmac and rubber surfacing .....” (p18 Holland C ). Many outdoor activities offer opportunities to learn through risk taking. Whether it is climbing a tree, lighting a fire or climbing a wall, all enable a child to take stock of how to make sound judgements and take risks safely; something that will develop them and provide skills for life ahead of them. Risk taking also builds self –confidence in the child, and through both play and learning opportunities, children can be given space to develop their own skills at their own pace, and according to their own interests.

“Unlike television, nature does not steal time; it amplifies it. Nature offers healing for a child living in a destructive family or neighbourhood...Nature inspires creativity in a child by demanding visualisation and the full use of the senses. Given a chance, a child will bring the confusion of the world to the woods, wash it in the creek, turn it over to see what lives on the unseen side of that confusion. Nature can frighten a child, too, and this fright serves a purpose. In nature, a child finds freedom, fantasy and privacy: a place distant from the adult world, a separate peace.” Richard Louv 2005 p7

Taking the curriculum outside also helps to embed learning, creating memories that children will not forget, and providing creative strands bringing enjoyment to learning. This may be through building houses and recreating the fire of London by burning them down, or making bows and arrows and dens so the children role play being part of Swallows and Amazons. The children take this learning experience back into the classroom, living it and breathing it and able to communicate this on a deeper level through their work.



**What are the benefits?**

Being outside in itself has such rich benefits for our lives, children and adults. “Children need nature for the healthy development of their senses, and, therefore, for learning and creativity” p54 Louv R 2005. Being able to give children space to learn in and through the natural world, provides a rich and challenging learning environment. Opportunities for outdoor play are life giving for children. “During free and imaginative play children create their own chances to do so many things; from manipulating small objects to increasing their agility, from estimating sizes to creating special places, from working through stress to simply nodding off, feeling safe” p19 Holland C 2012.

Outdoor learning should be progressive, starting within the early years, and then moving into adolescence. Benefits are thus lifelong for the learner. We use the ten outcomes of Outdoor Learning as published by the English Outdoor Council 2015, as our focus and goal when continuing to develop outdoor learning opportunities for the children at Lime Tree. Our drive is to giving the best opportunities and benefits through high quality Outdoor Learning.

Here is an overview of the 10 outcomes of outdoor learning as devised by the original Outdoor Education Advisors panel, working group and published by the English Outdoor Council.

**“Outcome 1 – Enjoyment - Young people enjoy participating in outdoor activities and adopt a positive attitude to challenge, learning and adventure” (1)**

Children benefit by having fun, which is so obviously evidenced by the smiles on their faces and enthusiasm to get outdoors. They are eager to be outside, and often want to repeat outdoor experiences both in organised sessions as well as independently.

**“Outcome 2 – Confidence and character – Young people are developing personal confidence and character through taking on challenges and achieving success” (2)**

Children will develop confidence and be proud of their achievements through their outdoor learning. They learn to not give up, build resilience and want to succeed having adopted a “can do” approach. They learn to manage and modify behaviour to overcome challenge in their lives.

**“Outcome 3 – Health and Well-being – Young people are learning to appreciate the benefits of physical fitness and the lifelong value of participation in healthy active leisure activities” (3)**

The children will learn to have a positive self-image, understanding the benefits of keeping themselves fit and actually making this part of their lifestyle. They will become aware of the link between both physical and emotional well-being.

**“Outcome 4 – Social and emotional awareness – young people are developing their self-awareness and social skills, and their appreciation of the contributions of themselves and others” (4)**

Children will develop self-awareness of themselves, have positive social skills, showing qualities of trust, tolerance, respect, behaviour and responsibility.

**“Outcome 5 – Environmental Awareness – Young people are becoming alive to the natural environment and understand the importance of conservation and sustainable development” (5)**

The children are given regular access to outdoor learning opportunities, which thus enables them to grasp the importance of conservation and sustainable development. This is done by developing an awe and wonder for the natural world.

**“Outcome 6 – Activity skills – young people are acquiring and developing a range of psychomotor skills in support of their participation in outdoor pursuits, recreation and exploration” (6)**

They will develop and attain knowledge of skills, both physical and mental, understand how to keep themselves comfortable in the outdoors and know of the value of competition and sports opportunities available outdoors.

**“Outcome 7 – Personal Qualities – Young people are demonstrating increased initiative, self reliance, responsibility, perseverance, tenacity and commitment” (7)**

Children become involved in the planning of activities, arrive ready and prepared, and are able to set their own realistic targets. They show perseverance, and often take on positions of responsibility

**“Outcome 8 - Skills for life – Young people are developing and extending their key skills of communication, problem solving, leadership and teamwork” (8)**

Children learn to listen to instructions as well as other peoples opinions, in a way that shows understanding and respect. They work co-operatively and work well in a team.

**“Outcome 9 – Increased motivation and appetite for learning – young people are displaying an increased motivation and appetite for learning that is contributing to raised level of attainment and progress in other areas of their development” (9)**

The children simply love to learn and always want to achieve their best. They show good or improving behaviour, showing raised levels of attainment in curriculum work and beyond.

**“Outcome 10 – Broadened Horizons – Young people are broadening their horizons and becoming open to a wider range of employment opportunities and life chances, life choices and lifestyles” (10)**

The children become aware of other cultures, life-work balance, wider career opportunities and recognise the value of volunteering and much more.



Footer... (1) English Outdoor council 2015 p14 (2) English Outdoor council 2015 p15 (3) English Outdoor council 2015 p16 (4) English Outdoor council 2015 p17 (5) English Outdoor council 2015 p18 (6) English Outdoor council 2015 p19 (7) English Outdoor council 2015 p20 (8) English Outdoor council 2015 p21 (9) English Outdoor council 2015 p22 (10) English Outdoor council 2015 p23

## **Outdoor Learning at Lime Tree**

We have a vast array of Outdoor Learning experiences for our children here at Lime Tree. Here is a sample of what we are currently providing, but this will continue to expand each year as we push the boundaries. These are not written in an order of preference, they very much benefit each other, rely on each other and provide an experience as each child journeys through their school life from

early year to year 6. We know that children are entitled to Outdoor learning opportunities on an on-going and increasing measure as they grow.

## **Forest School**

Forest school is an outdoor learning experience, which gives children, young people and adults the opportunity to develop skills, confidence and independence using a woodland setting. The Forest school sessions enable the learner to develop in personal skills, increase in self-confidence and self-awareness, build resilience, improve communication, understand risk-taking and problem solve. The Forest School ethos is unique, and has a learner centred approach. Activities are broad and may cover many curriculum subjects from foundation stage right up to Key Stage 4 or may simply be lead by the interests and exploration of the learner. The Forest School sessions are developed according to individual needs of the participants, enabling everyone to succeed. We provide forest school for children for Reception and year one. Nursery children have taster sessions throughout their schooling whilst Reception and year one have access to full on Forest school. Lead by level 3 practitioners on the outdoor team, using methods of self-directed play and activities, the learners<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> are given the space to explore, experience and grow as both individuals and as a group. Some activities are planned, others emerge or evolve from the children's imagination and play, but unlike traditional outdoor learning, forest school takes place over a long-term period at regular intervals. We adhere to the 6 Principles of Forest School as laid out by the Forest School Association (FSA- see appendix).



## **Earth Adventures**

Our year two to six children take part in a six week outdoor program each school year. During these six sessions, they learn about the natural environment, their responsibility for looking after the natural world as well as taking time to play and adventure outside. They visit a local parks or natural areas for one or two of the six sessions, enabling knowledge and experience to be embedded. They continue to develop the skills they learned in the woods during their forest school sessions experienced in Early years and key stage 1. Activities include fire

building and cooking, den building, flora and fauna ID, and much more. We use elements of Earth Education UK resources for these sessions.



### **Farm and kitchen garden including animal care**

The children have the opportunity to learn to sow, grow, reap and cook healthy produce here at Lime Tree. This takes place through the Year one to six enrichment sessions, as well as during forest school and small group enrichment groups. We are continually developing this area of work, using the poly tunnel and by increasing the growing space on the farm. The opportunities spent on the farm, teach children where food comes from, and also links this to the cooking enrichment sessions based inside the school food tech room. We also have chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs which the children learn to care for and nurture, with the aim of enabling them to become nurturing towards others as well as animals.



### **Residential experiences**

We value the effect that residential experiences have for children. They offer opportunities to build self-confidence, learn life skills including cooking and looking after your own belongings. We use a combination of our own staff (Outdoor team and teaching staff), as well as qualified specialists for outdoor pursuit activities.

During year five the children have the opportunity to camp within the school grounds for one night. This gives them the opportunity to stay away from home

and have a taster in a known environment of camping, campfires and adventure with their peers and teachers.

During year six, this experience is extended as the children attend a two-night camp in the Peak District run by both Lime Tree staff and qualified outdoor education staff. Whilst on this residential, the children learn to develop their camping skills, do forest school, go for walks, climb, abseil and visit a local place e.g. Blue John Cavern or the Chestnut Centre. All the while growing in confidence, learning to work together, take part in risk taking activities and learning new skills.



### **Trips and excursions**

Visiting both local and regional outdoor places of interest, the children have opportunities to attend part and full day excursions with their peers. These are organised by both teaching staff and the outdoor team. Such places include:

Local: Walkden Gardens, Sale Water Park, Moor Nook Park, Priory Woods, Baguley Brook, Wythenshawe Woods, Local shops and amenities

Regional: Formby Beach, Tatton Park and gardens, Dunham Massey, Styal Mill, Lymm Park.

**Outdoor play** – Opportunities for learning through play outside are wide and varied at Lime Tree. This takes place through many of the aforementioned areas, but also throughout EYFS, from the age of two years old. Children become so engaged in their environment outdoors and do not know that they are learning. This engagement assists with our aim of all children being forensic and lifelong learners.

Moreover, due to the known benefits of outdoor learning, Lime Tree ensures that many of our after school clubs take place outside e.g. skateboarding club, nature club and holiday club.

### **Curriculum subject learning**

Our teachers bring national Curriculum subjects to life by using the outdoor spaces at Lime Tree, to deliver some of their lessons. Taking learning outside of the classroom helps to embed a child's learning. The outdoors is another area which enables the child's interest to be captured and thus increases the likelihood of remembering what has been learned. Teachers are encouraged to use the outdoor environment to enhance the children's learning by using the natural spaces. Examples of this might include taking an English lesson outside, changing the woodland into a scene in Narnia – the shed has become a wardrobe! Or taking a science lesson outside to look at how plants grow, their root structure, and how they live; so much better to look at real plants rather than watch a screen or be based inside.

**Small group enrichment (intervention groups)** – Children learn in many different ways and this is focussed upon here at Lime Tree. This has led to the outdoors being used for many small focus groups and 1:1 interventions. There are a number of Intervention groups that take place outside. These include gross motor groups, sensory integration work, groups focussing on communication, team work, friendship development and delivery of a highly differentiated curriculum. These groups immerse children using a predominantly hands-on learning approach throughout the grounds. The positive effect of being outdoors for many of the children that access these groups, is not to be underestimated. Many become more confident, more ready to learn in the classroom, calmer, more engaging and have so much enjoyment from the sessions.

#### **Area of development:**

**Outdoor pursuits/sports** e.g. Canoeing, Climbing, Orienteering, walking and running. This is an area of work which we are in the process of developing. Using local and regional spaces, we are planning to offer these activities to key stage 2 children initially, but the timescales and funding to develop these areas is yet to be decided.

Currently, year five and six access a canoeing day on the canal and also by attending the year six residential.

On Friday morning, Lime Tree offer a morning run before school which children can choose to attend. Some of these children have gone on to compete in the local cross country for schools race.

# Themes and Outcomes of Outdoor Learning at Lime Tree

We have measure the positive impact of our Lime Tree outdoor activities against the 10 outcomes of Outdoor learning as published by the English Outdoor Council.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Year group and regularity</b>	<b>Outcomes achieved (no. 1-10)</b>	<b>Description of how this is delivered</b>
<b>Forest School</b>	Reception 12 week block in the year  KS1 12 weeks (6 week enrichment plus 6 weeks)  Nursery tasters	All 6 principles of Forest School And 1 - 9 of outdoor learning	Combination of level 3 FS trained team, TA's and volunteers
<b>Earth Adventure</b>	KS2 enrichment 6 week block of sessions per year group	Principles 2-6 of Forest School and 1-9 of outdoor learning	Combination of level 3 FS trained team, TA's and volunteers
<b>Farm &amp; Kitchen Garden</b>	Occasionally through forest school  KS2 enrichment (Spring/summer)  SEN intervention groups  Year 5 / 6 – feeding and animal care duties - teams  Ad-hoc class sessions or small groups	1,2,3,4,5,8,9	Combination of level 3 FS trained team, Professional gardener, TA's and volunteers
<b>Residential experience</b>	Year 5 overnight camp in school  Year 6 overnight camp away from school	All outcomes	Combination of level 3 FS trained team, TA's and bought in outdoor staff

<b>Trips and excursions</b>	Termly through KS1 forest school  2 of 6 sessions with KS2 enrichment  1 regional trip per year group (min)  approx. 2 local trips per year group (being developed)	1 - 9	FS level 3 staff, TA's and volunteers  FS level 3 staff, TA's and volunteers  Full staff teaching team
<b>Outdoor play</b>	EYFS After school club Class time outside	1 - 9	Lime tree staff
<b>Curriculum subject learning</b>	Lead by class teachers approx. 2 outdoor learning opportunities per half term (under developemnt)	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9 (dependent on subject)	Teaching staff
<b>Small group enrichment (interventions for developing gross motor skills, communication, team work, friendship development)</b>	various groups over each half term	1 - 9	FS level 3 staff and SEN staff
<b>Outdoor pursuits/sports/Physical fitness - daily jog, canoeing climbing, running, cycling</b>	Canoe day - yr 5  Friday morning running club Y1-6  Cycling proficiency - Y6	1 - 9	Teaching staff/outdoor team/Local groups

## Appendix 1

These principles were first articulated by the Forest School Community in 2002. They were reviewed in 2011 and sent out for a 5-month consultation to Forest School networks and practitioners in all UK nations. They were published on the Institute for Outdoor Learning Forest School SIG page in Feb 2012, and in the minutes of the GB trainers' network.

FS is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.

FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.

FS aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

See <http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/> for full criteria.

# References

English Outdoor Council 2015 **High Quality Outdoor learning**

Holland C 2012 I love my world Wholeland Press, Otterton

Louv R 2016 **Vitamin N** Algonquin Books, North Carolina

Louv R 2005 **Last child in the woods** Algonquin books, North Carolina

<http://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/outdoor-learning/what-is-outdoor-learning> 2017

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