

John Scottus Primary School Old Conna

Outdoor Learning Policy

**This policy has been agreed and signed off by the members of the school community:
Parents, Staff, Board of Management and Trustees**

Statement of Intent

Our Outdoor Learning policy aims to foster children's love of learning. We believe that all children benefit from experiencing joy, freedom and nourishment of being outdoors with nature. In the John Scottus learning programme it is important to enable children to explore, create and connect by using the outside environment as a context for learning.

What do we mean by Outdoor Learning?

- Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play [learning through play], school grounds projects, environmental education, recreational and adventure activities, personal and social development. Outdoor Learning does not have a clearly defined boundary, but it does have a common core.
- Outdoor Learning can provide a contrast to the indoor classroom. There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It leads to a deeper understanding of concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone.
- Direct experience outdoors is powerful, motivating and has impact and credibility.
- Outdoor Learning can help to bring learning alive. For that reason, the outdoors can have an impact on areas of the curriculum as diverse as imaginative writing and personal and social development.
- Outdoor Learning supports our school ethos as nature provides an immediate and powerful connection to the present moment.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning:

- Outdoor Learning helps to ensure that children are successful learners enabling children to develop knowledge and skills.
- Being outside has been linked to improvements in children's well-being and have a positive impact upon children's behaviour.
- Outdoor Learning enables children to be confident individuals and impacts positively upon young children's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions.
- Outdoor Learning has a positive impact upon children's personal and social development. It can also bring about community cohesion and allow children to develop as responsible citizens.
- Outdoor Learning raises learners' attainment, promotes and strengthens communication skills, teamwork and sense of cohesion.

Aims and Objectives of this policy:

- To raise the profile of Outdoor Learning.
- To empower children to take ownership of their learning, allowing their minds and bodies to thrive.
- To encourage children to develop the skills to solve problems, developing resilient and reflective learners.
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning.
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage risks.
- To encourage close links with parents and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it.
- To encourage children to care for their environment and grow their knowledge of local flora and fauna.

Outdoor Learning at John Scottus Primary School

At John Scottus Primary School we are lucky enough to have extensive grounds including a grass area and some woodland. At John Scottus we like learning to take place outside when possible as this can be beneficial to the learning process. The outdoors can be seen as an

extension of the indoor classroom. Outdoor learning is often curriculum-based but also incorporates play.

Health and Safety

A risk assessment is applied prior to any outdoor activities that may require additional support. All outdoor activities are within the scope of activities normally undertaken outside the classroom in schools in Ireland in general. A risk assessment is in place for the school outdoor play area. Children are taught to how to see and take action on risks in regard to outdoor activities. All pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe, being aware and both seeing and acting on the needs they see. Children are reminded of the importance of keeping themselves and members of the school community safe. They are shown how to do this, and practise it as well.

Children and staff are shown how to manage adverse weather conditions. Successful outdoor learning and outdoor activities can normally proceed in most, but not all, weather conditions. Children are expected to have appropriate outdoor gear (raincoat, waterproofs & wellies).