

## Best Practice Guidance

# Guidance on Outdoor Learning

### Context

Learning outside the classroom is defined by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (2018) as ‘the use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning.’ ASE make use of this definition to describe outdoor learning as that which takes place beyond the four walls of the traditional classroom environment. This could be within school grounds, local green or urban environments or further afield. The important point for this guide is that the learning is taking place in the outdoors.

Science curricula across the UK all refer to use of the outdoors for learning. Indeed, the National Curriculum in England (2013) mentions “use of the local environment” ten times within the science programmes of study for KS1 and 2.

Children engaged in learning outside the classroom show raised attainment and achievement, improved behavior and engagement [1,2].

*“When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils’ personal, social and emotional development”* Ofsted 2008 Maintaining Curiosity

### The position of ASE

- The ASE is committed to promoting outdoor learning as an effective, engaging and inspirational way to teach science.
- Pupils learn to appreciate their place in the environment through engaging with the outdoors in a formal way. Science develops understanding of the environment and sustainability which is best experienced first hand
- Opportunities for teaching and learning outdoors should be highlighted in all science curricula, so that pupils gain a real world context and deeper understanding of science.
- Outdoor learning provision should be planned to be frequent, continuous and progressive and take place in school grounds and further afield. Opportunities for learning outdoors should be an integral part of residential visits, where scientific comparisons to the pupil’s local environment can be made

## Best practice should seek to include

- Regular, well planned and implemented outdoor learning experiences all year round that focus on developing knowledge and understanding of specific science concepts across all of the sciences.
- The opportunity to build on and develop scientific enquiry skills.
- Space for spontaneous responses to infrequent outdoor events e.g. snow and ice
- CPD for teachers and during ITE that has a focus on outdoor learning and equips teachers to use the outdoors as both a context and location for learning scientific content. This should be wider than biology and includes organising pupils to conduct scientific enquiries in the outdoors.
- The opportunity to use digital instruments and loggers to record instant data and also remotely over time
- Sufficient funding to provide equipment that encourages science learning in the outdoors
- Appropriate consideration for health and safety, but this should not be used to prohibit regular use of the outdoor learning environment. See chapter 6 and 9 of the ASE's publication 'Be Safe' and appropriate CLEAPSS guidance.

## Links

- Council for Learning Outside the Classroom [www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk) [1]
- Natural Connections Demonstration Project [Transforming Outdoor Learning in Schools](#) (Teacher Guidance 2016) [2]
- Chapter 13 [ASE guide to Secondary Science Education](#) (2018)
- 2 articles in ASE Journal [Primary Science Issue 153](#), June 2018 (Forest schools and Outdoor Pedagogy)
- ASE Journal [Primary Science Issue 132](#), March 2014. Special edition with the theme 'Out and About' focusing on Outdoor Learning.
- [School Science Review 359](#) research article The place of fieldwork in science qualifications David Lambert and Michael Reiss Dec 2015
- [Open Air Laboratories](#) (OPAL) Identification guides, national surveys, and big data
- Field Studies Council [Identification guides](#)
- ASE Best Practice Guidance [Environment and Sustainability](#)
- A selection of [Outdoor activities](#) (Bowling, kites and bubbles) from the British Science Association