



DANES HILL SCHOOL
STRONG & SAGACIOUS

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BEVENDEAN OUTDOOR CURRICULUM POLICY

The safety of young children when they are outdoors is paramount and a culture of 'risk assessment to enable', that permeates every aspect of outdoor provision, is vital for all settings. Young children need to feel secure, nurtured and valued outdoors. This includes clear behavioural boundaries (using rules to enable freedom), nurturing places and times outside and respect for how individual children prefer to play and learn. Risk assessments will be reviewed and updated as the seasons change.

Core values for high quality outdoor experiences for young children

"If children's developing sense of self becomes disconnected from the natural world, then nature comes to be seen as something to be controlled or dominated rather than loved and preserved."

~ R White (2004)

'Young children's basic need for well-being and involvement, and their urge to explore and make sense of the world, is developed through high quality play in an outdoor environment' ~ (EYFS 2007)

1. Provision for learning outdoors is responsive to the needs of very active learners, those who need sensory or language stimulation and those who need space away from others – it makes provision more inclusive and is a vital learning environment.
2. All children need full access to provision outdoors and it is important to know and meet the needs and interests of each child as an individual. Young children react differently to the spaces and experiences available or created, so awareness and flexibility are key to the adult role. Children with specific individual needs should be supported in the outdoor environment to reach their full potential.
3. Observation and assessment (formative and summative), and intervention for particular support, must be carried out outside. While it is important to ensure the safety of all children, it is equally important to ensure all are sufficiently challenged.
4. Outdoor provision can, and should, offer young children an endlessly versatile, changeable and responsive environment for all types of play where they can manipulate, create, control and modify. This offers a huge sense of freedom, which is not readily available indoors. It also underpins the development of creativity and the dispositions for learning.

5. The outdoor space and curriculum must harness the special nature of the outdoors, to offer children what the indoors cannot. This should be the focus for outdoor provision, complementing and extending provision indoors.

6. The outdoors should be a dynamic, flexible and versatile place where children can choose, create, change and be in charge of their learning environment.

7. Children must have a rich outdoor environment, full of irresistible stimuli, contexts for role-play, exploration and talk, plenty of real experiences and contact with the natural world.

8. Children need challenge and risk within a framework of security and safety. The outdoor environment lends itself to offering challenge, helping children learn how to be safe and an awareness of safety of others.

9. Outdoor provision must support inclusion and meet the needs of the individuals, offering a diverse range of child-led activities and experiences. As far as possible, young children should participate in decisions and actions affecting their outdoor activities.

10. Young children need practitioners who value and enjoy the outdoors themselves and see the potential and consequences it has for young children's well-being and development.

11. Attitude, understanding, commitment and positive thinking are important, as well as the skills to make the best use of what the outdoors has to offer and to effectively support child-led learning.

12. Children are seriously disadvantaged if they do not learn how to approach and manage physical and emotional risk. They can become either timid or reckless, or be unable to cope with consequences. Young children need to be able to set and meet their own challenges, become aware of their limits and push their abilities (at their own pace), be prepared to make mistakes, and experience the pleasure of feeling capable and competent. Challenge and its associated risk are vital for this. Young children also need to learn how to recognise and manage risk as a life-skill, so as to become able to act safely, for themselves and others.

13. As the freedom of outdoors offers the opportunity to move on a large scale, to be active, noisy and messy and to use all their senses with their whole body, young children engage in the way they most need to explore, make sense of life and express their feelings and ideas. Many young children relate much more directly with the learning offered outdoors compared with indoors.

14. All areas of learning must be offered through a wide range of holistic experiences, both active and calm, which make the most of what the outdoors has to offer.