

Local Education Recovery Planning

The Outdoors as part of a Blended Learning approach and beyond...

OVERVIEW

Outdoor learning, within Learning for Sustainability is already embedded in CfE and in our GTCS standards and school inspections. Learning in the outdoors can make significant contributions to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

In order to enhance the outdoor aspect of the curriculum and comply with government guidelines there are a number of ways Outdoor Learning can support a blended learning approach and build a richer curriculum beyond COVID-19 within the revised CfE.

The Outdoor Learning Service (OLS) in East Lothian is staffed by teachers with many years experience of teaching in and out of the classroom environment; advising, supporting & delivering outdoor learning across all East Lothian schools. Since lockdown, OL staff have worked in all 6 EL hubs and have very quickly built up, and shared, a wealth of knowledge regarding what works in the current situation.

Why include the outdoors as part of a blended approach?

Safety - The outdoor environment naturally facilitates room for physical distancing of both staff and pupils. A move from 'classroom' to 'learning environment' models of CfE delivery, enables physical distancing alongside high quality learning and teaching both in school grounds, local spaces, and home environments.

School Estates - On average over 50% of a school estate is outdoors, in many cases these environments are not being maximised to their proven potential. **Outdoor learning space** naturally lends itself to becoming a high-quality teaching space that can be utilised or transformed relatively quickly and at reasonably low cost.

Engagement in Learning - The **outdoor environment** has proven benefit for learning by giving relevance and depth to the curriculum in ways that are difficult to achieve indoors, including opportunities for study in the local, natural and built environments. We know that children and young people are more likely to be engaged in learning outdoors, not only will this raise attainment, it will help them make connections experientially, therefore facilitating their development into confident and responsible citizens.

Health & Wellbeing - The benefits of active and outdoor learning in terms of education, physical and mental wellbeing, are well documented and will have a long-term positive impact on pupils, families, staff and the wider school community. We can capitalise on learners' potential to develop as they experience new challenges.

Life-long Skills & Attitudes - The **outdoor** environment encourages skills such as problem solving and negotiating risk. Learning outdoors contributes to our National objective of 'creating a more successful country' in that it facilitates children and young people becoming:

- healthier - learning outdoors can lead to lifelong recreation;
- safer & stronger - outdoor activities can span social divisions and provide opportunities to assess and manage risk;
- greener - the outdoor environment is the ideal setting to promote understanding of global sustainability issues;
- wealthier & fairer - the outdoor environment offers opportunities for leadership, and allows

children and young people to showcase a wide range of skills and abilities which are not always visible in the classroom, in turn increasing engagement and raising attainment.

Interdisciplinary Learning - With an innovative, responsive and flexible approach to learning and teaching, a significant part of the curriculum can be taught outdoors. New technologies will add further value by allowing learners to review and share their outdoor learning experiences.

How can ELC Outdoor Learning Service support a strategic approach to using the outdoor environment across all ELC schools?

School Improvement Planning - advice on how to develop an outdoor progressive programme, through CfE delivery, specifically focusing on Numeracy, Literacy and Health & Wellbeing.

School Ground / Local Area advice - advice on how to maximise the use of school grounds, community and local greenspaces to facilitate learning whilst physical distancing restrictions remain in place. Advice on accessing greenspace within walking distance of all schools across East Lothian - including the safest routes to access these.

CLPL/ Staff Training - Online and physically-distanced 'on the ground' training will enhance staff competence, build confidence and encourage creativity. New and adapted modular courses are currently in production both locally and nationally.

Resources - signposting and provision of quality teaching resources to minimise the 'prep' time for school staff. Signposting/ providing physical resources to enrich lessons and outdoor space for outdoor teaching, learning and play.

Delivery to classes - advice on what activities would be appropriate for a given learning intention to teach in the outdoors complementing classroom work, and the logistics of delivering high quality teaching safely and confidently. OLS teacher placement in a school for a period of approx 4 weeks at a time, to offer support through team-teaching, how to evidence, professional dialogue, sharing of good practice.

Additional Support Needs - help with planning and adaptation of learning activities to ensure access for ALL, inclusion and equity whilst maintaining a whole class approach.

Care-experienced / Vulnerable/ Disengaged / Challenging Young People - outdoor learning is an approach often used with these young people to re-engage them with education and or develop skills for work. East Lothian has a pool of associate outdoor instructors and supply teaching staff ready to take on projects of this kind.

Safety - continue to provide advice about safe practice of all aspects of outdoor learning. Currently for school grounds, local area & home learning and eventually back to UK & world wide travel. All advice will be based on the SG 'Going Out There' framework, NGB guidelines and ELC guidance, including advice on risk assessments and ratios with adaptation to comply with current Covid guidelines.

Network - there is already a wide network of outdoor professionals throughout Local Authorities & Independent schools who form SAPOE (Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education), whose role is to advise, support & deliver Outdoor Learning. East Lothian is also part of the National Network of Outdoor Learning (NNOL), made up of organisations (including representatives from Government, Councils, professional bodies), schools and the third sector, who support and deliver Outdoor Learning across Scotland.

The Old School House at Innerwick - could be used as a supplementary learning space for indoor & outdoor learning;

Outdoor learning enhances classroom learning and is a powerful means of helping address the Scottish Government's education key priorities and current COVID-19 guidance.