

Managing outdoor learning, adventurous activities and social distancing on school grounds

Foreword

The return to school for increasing numbers of learners and teachers is an opportunity to demonstrate the possibilities that outdoor learning can provide. As part of a suite of resources made freely available by Norfolk County Council in response to the restrictions surrounding Covid-19, this document aims to support teachers in making the best and safest possible use of their outdoor spaces.

In order to manage the continued opening of schools for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils during lockdown, the DfE have issued a range of regularly-updated guidance which has now been extended to cover the gradual re-opening of schools and academies. This guidance can be found at the following link:

DfE Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>.

This guidance provides a framework of considerations to inform the planning of outdoor activities in schools. Each educational setting will be different, however the aim will be to try and balance the need for careful risk management with the need to reintroduce young people to learning and supporting their health and wellbeing.

Why Outdoors?

The value and benefit of exercising and being outdoors has been one of the characteristics of the Lockdown period. There have been numerous references not only to the benefits of physical health but mental health and wellbeing as well. Of course, this was well known and understood before the outbreak, however, during lockdown the benefits of such activity have not necessarily been shared equally across all in society. For some, often in urban areas, access to gardens and green spaces has been restricted due to the nature and location of their accommodation. A return to school enables us to redress some of these imbalances and allow all children and staff to access the outdoors.

There has also been increased support in the last few weeks of the benefits of being outdoors in terms of managing infection control.

Dr Chris Smith, clinical lecturer at the University of Cambridge has stated that the chances of coronavirus transmission outside were 'vanishingly small' because 'the amount of dilution from fresh air is so high' (<https://inews.co.uk/news/coronavirus-catch-outside-indoors-why-get-covid-19-explained-2848865>) Other academics and researchers have also highlighted that any viral particles are easily dispersed by the wind and recognise that being outside also makes it easier for people stay over 2m away from one another. We can therefore use the

benefits of being outdoors to help with infection control and as a location to encourage physical activity, support the development of health and well-being and bring learning alive.

Outdoors

Within the DfE guidance there have been numerous references for the need to use outdoor spaces. They suggest the use of *'outside space'*:

- *for exercise and breaks*
- *for outdoor education, where possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff'*

and in relation to refreshing the timetable, consider:

'which lessons can take place outdoors' and 'use the timetable and selection of classroom or other learning environment to reduce movement around school or building'

'working out arrangements for breaks or play times so that ideally only one group of maximum 15 children is in the same play area at any one time' and that 'children will remain in fixed groups throughout the school day, whether in class or outdoors, and with the same teaching staff'

Physical Education

In terms of *'planning what to teach and how'*:

Each school context will vary, and needs are likely to be greatest where children have not been able to access remote education consistently. Children who have had limited opportunities for exercise should be encouraged to exert themselves physically, making use of supervised non-touch running games within their group. The [Youth Sport Trust](#) are also offering some support to schools.

Physical education lessons may continue to take place providing they are strictly non-contact and do not involve more than any one temporary group.'

Risk management

Every setting must carry out a risk assessment before opening, which will be guided by the employer, their policies and guidance. The assessment must address risks associated with coronavirus (COVID-19), so that measures can be put in place to control those risks for children and staff. Reference to the employer risk assessment and guidance will be essential when developing procedures for operating and running activities outside.

NCC COVID-19 Educational Settings Risk Assessment – implementing the recovery plan <https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/Pupil-needs/Health/Coronavirus/index.htm>

Additional support can be found within the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel National Guidance:

OEAP National Guidance: <https://oeapng.info/4847-coronavirus-covid-19-new-guidance/>

The latest AfPE Guidance may also be useful:

Key considerations for schools, when undertaking outdoor learning and adventurous activities

Outlined below are some considerations that should be borne in mind when planning for outdoor learning, adventurous activities in the outdoors.

Location:

The best place for learning outdoors will be the school grounds. Spaces, distances and tasks can all be more easily managed. For many activities, spaces around the site need to be considered: how big are they? what is the task? how do I use it? bearing in mind group size and social distancing guidance.

Using outdoor areas may also release other spaces around the site for other groups.

Beware of the effects on other groups still inside; select locations to avoid distractions if possible.

Working Outside:

When teaching outside some additional techniques to consider:

- Distractions: try to orientate the group so they are not facing any distractions such as other group or building works etc. that can distract from your instructions & demonstrations.
- Sun & wind: better that you are faced sideways on to the sun than have the sun in either the eyes of the pupils or your eyes.
- Volume: Will the wind affect how well your voice will carry? Normally better that wind is onto the back of the pupils and not in their faces, but not if that means they cannot hear you!

Offsite activities

Travel in vehicles will be determined by the essential travel guidance in place at the time and even if possible, may be highly restrictive if social distancing is to be maintained. Challenges around supervision and social distancing if walking beyond the school site will make off-site activities difficult; even more so as it will increase the risk of mixing with other people. Check with your employer's guidance.

On-site

Health and Well-being:

Having spent a significant time in isolation with only 'family' members, a return to a location where there is greater contact with others should be managed sympathetically, as should undertaking activities in outdoor settings or off-site locations. It must also be recognised that

some pupils have had no regular access to a garden or green space during Lockdown and will really value opportunities to access such spaces.

The confidence of staff will also vary according to their experiences over the last few weeks and how comfortable they feel about undertaking and managing outdoor activities.

Staff and children may also value areas for reflection and 'peace and quiet'.

Social distancing

The guidance from government is that social distancing guidance should be followed, though it is recognised that this can be a challenge for young people. In relation to using outdoor space, 2 metre distancing should be maintained as much as possible. Careful selection of activities and location will help to achieve this. The examples highlighted in this document have been selected to assist staff in developing activities that offer good opportunities for physical activity and learning outside the classroom, whilst maintaining social distancing

In terms of managing the spread of COVID-19, briefings for young people will replicate those given for indoor work including: hand washing, touching of face, coughing and sneezing etc.

Moving outside and returning:

Identify 'collection areas' outside, to avoid pinch points at doors (could doors be fixed open, if not fire doors, to avoid contact with handles? Ideally this should be in place, but some external doors do not have a hold open function).

Where does the group head for as a rendezvous point? Is this with distanced spaces or marked areas to meet up in whilst still spread out? Chalk, tape, cones, hoops or rope could be used to identify 'waiting areas'.

Is there direct access to the outside?

Are coats picked up on route or already in class to aid moving outside? How would coat pick-up be managed safely?

Are there sinks in classrooms to manage handwashing prior to going out? If not, can this be arranged beforehand or could you plan routes, if working with any one-way system, to include a stop at sinks/toilets etc?

Participants

As with indoor work, reacting to signs of young people or staff displaying symptoms of coronavirus must be managed according to your current employer guidance.

Vulnerable pupils – this needs to be accounted for as part of any risk management process

The ability of pupils to comply with social distancing and instructions will need consideration.

Activities

Reduce the number of activities that take place where there is a higher likelihood of even minor injury to reduce the need for first-aid, close contact with pupils, or visits to hospital. Considerations may include: equipment used, surfaces activities are taking place on, ability of young people etc

Adapt activities to suit this new working environment.

Equipment

Try to minimise the use of equipment. All equipment with hard, wipeable surfaces to be cleaned/sanitised after use – any soft equipment to be removed.

Do not use outdoor equipment unless it can be cleaned appropriately between uses and before use by different groups.

For some equipment used as part of an activity, there may be a value in wiping down surfaces during an activity.

Take a bag to contain any tissues, wipes used during an activity and dispose of according to current guidance.

If possible, issue pupils with their own equipment for any activity and collect back in for appropriate cleaning at the end of the lesson, or use items that are disposable e.g. orienteering maps; if maps are laminated, they can be cleaned with appropriate cleaner.

Clothing

Changing may be an issue, for older age groups. Could pupils arrive in PE kit on the days this is planned? Non-uniform? Could they bring a change of clothing in case of bad weather?

First-Aid

First-aid kits to be carried and contain both gloves and face masks and if possible disposable apron and eye protection. For more information, see your employer guidance. Further government guidance is available [here](#). Consider pupil/staff medication needs, carrying inhalers/Epi-pens etc as appropriate and as highlighted in the risk assessment.

Sun screen & sun protection

Ask pupils to bring in sun hats and to wear sun screen as required.

Tents

Marquees, Event tents or even just tarps can provide shelter & shade from sun or the odd rain showers, but with open sides can allow air flow.

Hygiene

Recommend hand washing, as recommended indoors, after outdoor activities, especially if equipment is shared or jointly used. Use hand sanitizer for intermediate hand cleansing while on activities. Be prepared to wipe hard surfaces down during within an activity.

Possible suggestions for making handwashing available outdoors:



Source: Creative Star

How should schools manage educational visits?

The government advises against any overseas or domestic visits for children under 18 organised by educational settings and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises against all non-essential travel; the Department for Transport's advice to avoid public transport and unnecessary journeys, and Public Health England (PHE) social distancing measures remain in place. Schools affected by these restrictions should work with their tour operator and/or insurance company. The DfE will continue to review this position based on FCO and PHE advice.

For more information, read <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-advice-for-educational-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools> includes in Section 11:

“In year 6 it is unlikely that many of the end of term traditions will be able to take place, for example, whole year or class assemblies with parents, school journeys and trips. Schools should provide opportunities for children to discuss this as it may be a source of anxiety or sadness. Though visits to secondary schools for induction will not take place this year, some secondary schools may have capacity to undertake remote induction briefings or other types of sessions for pupils, for example to meet form tutors, heads of year, or other key staff, or have a tour of the school virtually.”

Development of activities

This creates both a challenge and opportunity for taking your learning outdoors; in the past this approach to learning encouraged team working and a range of associated skills. With the introduction of social distancing, in the short- to medium-term this presents a challenge. On

the flip side, working and being outdoors and close to nature has a very positive impact on mental health and well-being. The ideas outlined below would be subject to your local risk management considerations based on equipment, hygiene, space, pupils etc.

Consider joining the **Council for Learning Outside the Classroom:**

<https://www.lotc.org.uk/resources/education-resources/>

There are many free resources but membership, at £95, will open the door to many high-quality resource packs and includes help and support.

www.lotc.org.uk/membership

Most examples and resources are for KS2 as Early Years are well used to arranging Outdoor Learning on a more regular basis.

Adapting Outdoor Learning and PE Activities – some suggestions:

All could be managed in groups of 3-15 1 teacher or TA working under a teacher.

It may be useful to undertake some briefing on how the activities will be managed before going outside.

Physical wellbeing and PE

Don't forget that Outdoor and Adventurous Activities are part of the KS2 PE curriculum, so there is no better time to be outside and developing some OAA.

For ideas see the Outdoor Learning section below.

YST Home Learning : <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/free-home-learning-resources-primary> .

YST Activity Cards: <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/active-learning>

These contain activity cards for 60-second challenges that could be turned into a circuit of activities. Cards pitted off and left at activity stations around the circuit. These could be used as personal challenges and as opportunities for record keeping and data management.

'Bean game' is also good – Pupils to stand 2m apart, in their 'zone', and must run on the spot. The name of a 'bean' is called out and they must act out the name of the bean: French bean, broad bean, runner bean, baked bean, jelly bean etc.

Balloon – 'keepy-uppies': A balloon is kept in the air by using breath. Then the 'leader' calls out a body part which is then used to keep the balloon in the air, then someone else can call out another body part etc.

The social distancing hike! With 2m lengths of rope or string do a 'Follow the leader' activity – take it in turns to lead. This could work in small groups up to six and encourages team work. Stop every now and then and do 10 star jumps on the spot, run on the spot, press ups etc. Go around, under obstacles (for example the 'Electric Fence challenge, below).

Athletics: there are many throwing, jumping and running activities that could be undertaken. Most require management of pupils around any 'waiting' areas.

Relay games – waiting and finishing/exchange areas would need to be clearly marked, to ensure no contact or exchanging of items.

Use of hard surface/plastic balls for throwing for distance or at a target, for example. Ask pupils to recover any items after throwing before the next pupil or group of pupils throw.

Break the group down into smaller units' of 2/3 pupils. They can perform various jumps (start with standing long jumps) hops, steps, bounds for a specified distance before returning to their group. Again, keeping 2m apart while waiting will be important.

Dance: Lots of opportunities for dance, while keeping 2m apart.

Wellbeing: There may be opportunities to explore Yoga and stretching and link to mindfulness. Tae-chi would be a good activity.

Football: Opportunities for non-contact skill development, passing, shooting, dribbling and relays if organised around social distancing.

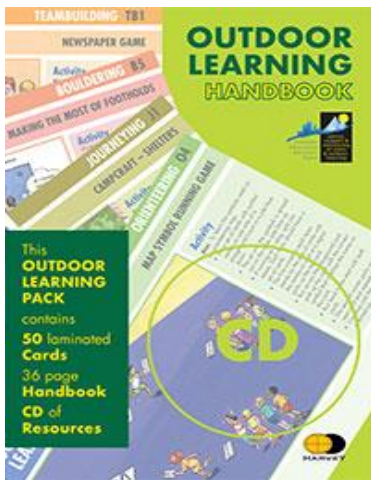
Net games: Badminton and short tennis are possible, but cleaning of equipment in between different users will be a consideration. Foot volleyball?

Field games: Quick Cricket and Rounders/Softball may be possible. However, the cleaning of the bat in between participants would need to be considered, so more than one bat being available would be important. Runs would have to be adapted around the pitches, with a 2m distance between runners and those opposition players at bases (Use a cone level but 2m from the base for runners to reach). Would any ball need cleaning/wiping in between being used?

Orienteering

Considerations – within the overall course, set individual courses say of 3-6 check points that only one pupil will use. For a group of 12 this would mean at least 36 checkpoints. Once completed they come back to a checkpoint and check results/answers, then move to another location to collect another map. This process will need supervising, may be useful to mark out waiting zones and would probably need to look at supervision levels according to ability, numbers etc. Organise to reduce pupils going to the same checkpoint, have a 2m zone or waiting area (hula hoop?) at each point, and waiting around one teacher before moving on to the next mini course of checkpoints. (OL Cards – OEAP Outdoor Learning cards see below)

OEAP – Outdoor Learning cards. From Harvey's Maps
<https://www.harveymaps.co.uk/acatalog/Outdoor-Learning-Cards-MOLC.html>



Copies of the Outdoor Learning Cards, can be purchased at:

<https://www.harveymaps.co.uk/acatalog/Outdoor-Learning-Cards-MOLC.html>

A selection of some of the activity cards can be found attached to this guidance.

There are four groups of activities:

Orienteering: Cards O 1-17

Team building Cards T 1-17

Map Symbol Running game (Card O4 OL) could be organised if run in small teams of 3/4. Mark waiting lines while one person collects a symbol and comes back. This activity is great to adapt and support the wider curriculum by asking pupils to match up 'pairs' e.g. capital cities and countries, maths questions and answers, English grammar and explanations etc

Memory Map (Card O14 OL) could be run in a similar fashion to the Map Symbol Running game. Any image could be cut up and reconnected such as famous paintings, maps of various scales, landmarks or even a reconstructed story!

Netball Numbers (Card O6) could be arranged on a larger scale such as on a football pitch or fewer pupils take part. Issue laminated maps, which can be cleaned after use, or single-use paper maps, one set per pupil. Send pupils out to one checkpoint at a time to start with, build up to multiple points. Consider a waiting area. Pupils start and finish in their own 'zones', where they can also wait. There could also be hula hoop, or similar, waiting zones near check points. Resources attached for football field activity as well as netball court

Cardinal Cones (Card O7) This is one adaptation. It may be useful to review the cardinal compass points first (4/8/16) Space the pupils out and identify the location of North, marking this on the playground or with a symbol. In the daytime, how could you find the position of north without a compass? A clue might be that it is easier when it is not cloudy! Ask all pupils to face north to begin with, then ask them to point to a specific compass direction. After a few rounds, repeat but ask them to close their eyes and point. Can be replicated for degrees and angles.

Using **British Orienteering Federation School Games Resources** as well, found here [link](#) . They cover some of these activities for both Primary and Secondary pupils along with resources to undertake the activities.

Team working

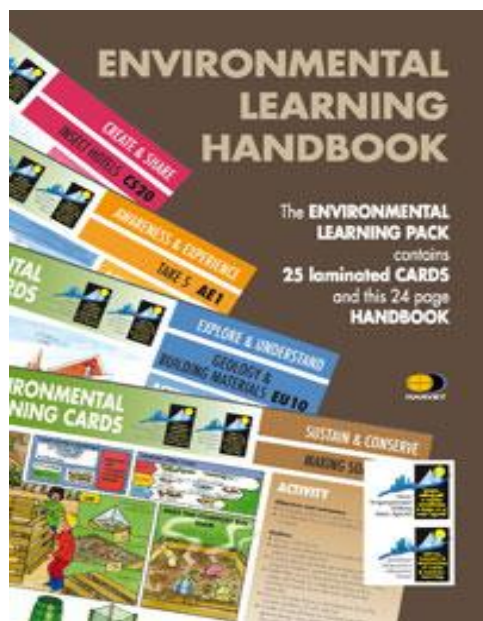
Amazing Maze – TB9. As pupils cross the maze one at a time, the activity will need physically managing at the start and finish of the Maze. Working with 3 mazes per temporary group would help. Directions could be given by co-ordinates or in a foreign language!

More Maze activities can be found via:

National Centre of Excellence Teaching of Maths – Outdoor Learning Resources and CPD <https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/9548>

Electric Fence – TB14 – participants have to go over/under/over rope fences. Group members joined by 2m rope lengths. Nothing must touch the rope fence. This provides lots of communication and support.

Environmental Education



Lots of ideas to be found in the OEAP Environmental Learning Cards.

Available from Harvey Maps:

<https://www.harveymaps.co.uk/acatalog/Environmental-Learning-Cards-MENV.html#SID=67>

Cost £55

A selection of some of the activity cards can be found attached to this guidance. There are four groups of activities:

Awareness and Experience: Cards AE 1-6

Explore and Understand: Cards EU 7-12

Sustain and Conserve: Cards SC 13-18

Create and Share: Cards CS 19-25

Scavenger Hunts - Pupils could work on their own looking for items, being aware of their need to abide by social distancing as they move around. All sorts of lists could be compiled.

Plant discovery activity (Card AE3) See attached Card

Mini beast hunt (Card EU8) See attached Card

Mini-beast models (Card CS19) See attached Card

All of these activities can be undertaken individually.

There are also some additional resource ideas from **Learning through Landscapes** and **Wildlife Watch** attached.

For further ideas , please see:

Learning Through Landscapes: <https://www.ltl.org.uk/free-resources/>

LtL CPD webinars: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTM3JlLh0u4&feature=youtu.be>

Wildlife Trusts – Go Wild for 30 days A great campaign and free resources for the month of June <https://action.wildlifetrusts.org/page/57739/petition/1>

Wildlife WATCH (This is a branch of the Wildlife Trust). Some great free resources and ideas <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/Downloads>

Problem solving and Maths:

Individual activities – shape hunts, patterns observed around the school site. Use sticks to make a range of shapes; measure the height of a tree (EU7 Environmental Learning Cards) or building on site; design playground mazes for other pupils to try.

Fizz – Buzz: Maths and team game played in a circle. One pupil starts, by saying ‘one’ and deciding which way round the circle the counting goes. The next says ‘two’ and on it goes, however, you could ask that any number with 3 in it or divisible by three they shout out ‘fizz’. Once they get the hang of this add another challenge by asking them to ‘buzz’ for any number that includes 5 or is divisible by 5. Of course, a number that is divisible by 3 and 5 is fizz-buzz!

Cambridgeshire Outdoor Maths Cards – Alfresco Maths.

Creative:

Natural art installations – Andy Goldsworthy, Nils-Udo, Richard Shilling and Agnes Denes could be used as inspiration, there are a number of art themed activities in the **Learning through Landscapes** free resources (see link below).

Make a musical instrument using natural resources and create a natural orchestra.

Musical statues. One group to make ‘music’ and the rest are spread out and do various activities on the spot – dictated by a ‘leader’ and they have to stop when the music stops!

Other Resource links:

<https://creativestarning.co.uk/>

<https://creativestarning.co.uk/resources/the-thinking-child-free-outdoor-numeracy-and-literacy-resources/> which includes:

1. [Outdoor Literacy Pack: Over 100 Ideas for KS1 & 2](#)
2. [Outdoor Phonics: Over 25 Ideas to Teach Phonics in Active Ways](#)
3. [Outdoor Numeracy: Over 100 Ideas for KS1 & 2](#)
4. [Outdoor Starters for Thinking – Introductory Notes](#)
5. [Outdoor Starters for Thinking Cards](#) – A set of 50 ideas

Learning Through Landscapes: <https://www.ltl.org.uk/free-resources/>

LtL CPD webinars: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTM3JILh0u4&feature=youtu.be>

Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0iPpIn0rUxqgQgHSwJPElw>

School outdoor Learning:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRPBBfwgNCaD3UIYzgogc3Q>

Cambridgeshire Outdoor Maths Trails (could be set up for your school grounds and local areas?)

<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/english-and-maths/maths-trails>

<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/home-learning/challenges>

National Centre of Excellence Teaching of Maths
Outdoor Learning Resources.& CPD

<https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/9548>

<https://www.experienceoutdoors.org.uk/resources/outdoor-learning-at-home>

<https://outdoorclassroomday.org.uk/resources/>

Wildlife Trusts – Go Wild for 30 days A great campaign and free resources for the month of June <https://action.wildlifetrusts.org/page/57739/petition/1>

Wildlife WATCH (This is a branch of the Wildlife Trust). Some great free resources and ideas <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/Downloads>

Somerset Outdoor help for TA working Outdoors:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg691fbt1GA&feature=youtu.be>

Outdoor Curriculum ideas:

http://www.watseducation.com/uploads/4/2/2/4/42244665/a_month_of_outdoor_ideas_-_june_2020.pdf

Norfolk CPD and support on how to best use Outdoor & or Environmental Learning card or Arrows archery

Support and possible loan of OLC & EL cards and Arrows equipment CPD can be provided on school site as twilights etc. or remotely via an Adviser for Outdoor Learning, via Mike Roper, Head of Centres at Holt Hall & Whitlingham Adventure.

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