

## Outdoor Curriculum Policy

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*For literature references please see end of document.*

### Policy Statement

The Outdoor Curriculum Policy supports the school's general Curriculum Policy by articulating specific details for one of the characteristics of the school's educational provisions, particular to this school.

### Introduction

South Devon Steiner School is based on 8 acres of land and we have worked hard to develop an integrated Outdoor Curriculum which plays an important part in our daily school life through the season.

It allows the children to understand and appreciate the natural cycles of the year, learn to respect and revere nature, work as part of a team, develop their tolerance of each other, learn traditional skills that have been carried out in this country for generations and of course to have some fun.

The curriculum has been tailored according to three main categories;

- Rudolf Steiner's child developmental stages
- age appropriate learning
- supporting core main lesson topics

Children participating in the outdoor classroom curriculum develop a range of skills as they move through the classes.

### Younger Classes

For the younger classes the main task is guiding the children's interests and sense of discovery in the right way in order for them to develop a sense of wonder for Mother Nature but also to give them the basis for sciences and later understanding of technical processes. Basic tools are introduced, and most lessons are group activities allowing the children to develop their ability to work well and communicate with their peers.

### Older Classes

For the older classes, a more individualistic approach to learning is applied, giving them a sense of ownership and personal achievement. The Class 7 allotments are a good example of this. By Class 8 the challenge is to engage students with a different way of thinking and to broaden their outlook of the school community and the world. This is done by the class carrying out environmental debates and taking on a school community building project.

### **Arithmetic and Numeracy**

With all the classes arithmetic's and numeracy are ever present, be it when counting seeds or apples, measuring the vegetables plots, determining how many plants are needed, spacing the plants evenly weighing charcoal, various building projects, weighing the vegetables ready for selling and of course selling the vegetables and working out prices.

### **Literacy**

Literacy is also woven into the curriculum through the use of new words and terminologies but also through word games and riddles that are carried out with all the classes. The use of poems and stories also enhances the children's literacy development. Many of the gardening lessons also provide the content for some of the main lessons carried out back in the classrooms. A good example of this is Class 3's forestry and building project lessons.

## **Curriculum Outline by Class**

### **Class 2**

Class 2 are the youngest class to come out to the outdoor classroom where they are guided in getting to know the garden and its creatures. It is also the year during which they learn the boundaries of the outdoor classroom both physically and behaviourally, which will lay the foundations for the years to come. The varied tasks and work carried out in the outdoor classroom in class 2 means that it is also an important place for the class to learn how to work cooperatively and look after each other.

In the autumn term the class carry out a whole range of activities including:

- Apple pressing
- Michaelmas games
- Leaf raking
- Looking after the sheep and chickens
- Cooking over the fire
- Harvesting vegetables and seeds
- Playing games
- Making conker ribbons and lots more
- Throughout many of these activities is a running theme of counting and basic numeracy

In the spring term the class is busy with

- making their own stick hazel animal and then
- their own cob bug houses, which are placed in the garden to provide a home for the various insects.

In the summer term the class

- get stuck into the sunflower growing competition,
- sowing the broad beans,

- making scarecrows,
- building the St Johns fire and
- looking after the animals of the garden, including the newly arrived lambs.

### **Class 3**

The Class 3 curriculum offers many possibilities to be explored by the Outdoor Classroom teacher.

The children in Class 3 start to develop a different relationship with the school garden and grounds. Moving away from the imagination of the fairy tales, the children are now stimulated by objects, practical activities and archetypal tasks.

Guiding the children's interests and sense of discovery in the right way is the main task, so hopefully the children in the gardening lessons will be developing the basis for sciences and later understanding of technical processes.

The autumn starts with the Class harvesting the sunflower seeds from the sunflowers that they grew last year. Other activities include, apple harvesting and pressing, the annual Michaelmas challenge, harvesting all of the squash, doing scavenger hunts, planting bulbs, leaf raking roasting chestnuts, and Christmas crafts. Towards the end of the autumn term class 3 come out to the garden for a three-week forestry main lesson. During this time the pupils learn to identify trees and their leaves, making fires, felling a tree, making a wooden mallet from a branch, hazel coppicing, processing firewood and it all culminates with firing up the charcoal kiln to make charcoal to sell to the school community.

During the spring term Class 3 bag up the charcoal they made ready for selling, make charcoal pencils, they start building their shelters in groups and do lots of seed processing as well as potato planting and sowing the oats.

The highlight of the spring term is the horse and plough day we have in March. Two gypsy cobs and an Amish style plough arrive in the morning and the class spends the day having a go at ploughing, leading the horses and finish off with a tug of war to see whether as a class they are stronger than two horses!

In the summer term class 3 have a three-week building main lesson in the garden which supports the classroom main lesson. Previous building projects have included, a tool shed, a wormery, a veg stall, a bug hotel, a compost toilet and a cob pizza oven.

This main lesson teaches them various basic building skills, safe tool handling, good teamwork and gives them a great sense of pride and satisfaction.

For the rest of the term they are continuing to build their shelters, looking after the sheep and helping to maintain the garden.

### **Class 4**

Class 4 is a great age for gardening. Most children will have developed the basic skills, abilities and have a lot of energy to spare. Gardening hopefully offers a channel for all that to be put to good use. In Class 4 part of my work is to imbue the children with a sense of responsibility towards the living garden and its creatures.

The autumn term is full of varied activities for Class 4, they start by harvesting and then processing the oats that they sowed in Class 3. They do lots of apple harvesting and pressing, enjoy the annual Michaelmas challenge, enjoy corn on the cob over the fire, plant bulbs for the spring, rake leaves for the compost, chop firewood for the winter and finish with Christmas crafts and some bread dampers over the fire.

The spring term focusses on the gardens wildlife, in particular birds, and it is Class 4's task to clean out and fix all of the bird houses in the garden so that they are ready for this year's birds to nest in. We also carry out wildlife surveys, set sand traps to see what footprints we can get, and play some great animal orientated games, including 'The Bird Olympics'.

They also have a two-week catapult project, which involves looking for the perfect piece of wood in the hedgerows, then whittling it, putting it together and then learning how to use it safely. Towards the end of the term the class helps to prepare the ground by muck spreading and digging over some beds to create the appropriate tilth for growing vegetables in.

In the summer term, Class 4 are very hands on with the gardening side of things, helping to cultivate the soil, sow seeds, transplant plants, weed the beds and look after the sheep and their lambs as well as the chickens. They also get to make a 'bullroarer', a Native American instrument that you swing above your head to make a whirring sound and carry out the 'Viking trail', which involves finding runes hidden in the garden and then decoding a series of messages.

### **Class 5**

In Class 5, we continue with the practical tasks that the garden requires, but to develop the children's knowledge further we start taking the time to observe more. This helps to support the botany main lesson and our gardening sessions consist of two parts: observation of trees / flowering plants and practical work. Hopefully the observation contributes to the children developing interest in sciences.

In the autumn term Class 5 enjoy eating corn on the cob over the fire, harvesting and pressing apples, taking on the Michaelmas challenge, leaf raking for the compost, whittling mushrooms, processing oats, harvesting seeds to process and save for next year, candle making and of course playing a major part in the general maintenance of the garden.

The spring term starts with the class choosing a tree within the garden that they then observe in the lessons to come to find out how it changes through the year. The children also learn different techniques for finding out the age and height of a tree and have a second chance at felling a tree, just like they did in Class 3 forestry main lesson. Class 5 then use their boundless energy to help dig over the vegetable beds, spread muck, and do lots of hedge maintenance ready for the next year's growth.

In the summer term, Class 5 learn how to make cord out of natural fibres, in particular looking at nettle and willow fibres. They play a key role in the upkeep of the garden and like Class 4 carry out lots of cultivating, sowing, transplanting and weeding tasks. They get to be led around the garden blindfolded in order to try and identify certain trees, make a French arrow, look after the animals and nibble away at the ever-increasing amount of leaves, roots and berries growing in the garden.

### **Class 6**

In Class 6 the students help to manage different aspects of the school garden. They plan the crops for the year, being given a budget for buying the seeds. Class 6 also run a weekly vegetable stall which involves selling the veg to the school community.

In the autumn term Class 6 are introduced to harvesting and selling the produce from the garden, there are usually two groups that go out and sell, while the other group helps to harvest and pack any required top ups. The class thinks about pricing, accounting and marketing, which is a great opportunity for the children and allows them to really comprehend how a small business might operate, the handling of money is also a great chance to demonstrate their responsibility. They also have a go at pressing their own apple juice, the Michaelmas challenge, making beeswax candles, Christmas crafts and cooking over the fire.

In the spring term the class is divided into 4 groups (flower, fruit, leaf and root), each of them have the task to design one block of the annual garden. They first need to measure the plot and work out how many seeds they will need for each bed, depending on the crop. Each group has a budget for seeds and have to prepare a detailed cropping plan, which is then used to plant up the vegetable field accordingly. They also help with cultivating the ground and spreading muck and maintaining the hedges. Once the first produce is ready they start harvesting and selling again.

The summer term is busy with harvesting and selling the produce from the garden, much like in the autumn term.

### **Class 7**

In the autumn term Class 7 carry out a variety of lessons including, cooking over the fire, harvesting and pressing apples, candle making, designing a fortnightly garden newsletter, making beeswax candles for the advent fair, making willow bird feeders and of course helping with the general upkeep of the garden.

In the spring and summer terms the pupils of Class 7 each get to look after and tend their own allotment for a full growing season, thus allowing them to demonstrate their gardening knowledge and use their skills that they have been acquiring since Class 2. Caring for their own allotments lends itself very well to this age group, as they are not as interested in tending the larger school garden but much more interested in something that belongs to them over which they have a sense of ownership. All of the veg that they succeed in growing is for them to take home and enjoy.

Another highlight in Class 7 is looking at the lime cycle and building a lime kiln out of cob. This is a three-week block which directly supports the chemistry main lesson being carried out in the classroom. It involves mixing large amounts of cob, building the kiln above a grate. The kiln is then filled with coal and pieces of limestone and then lit underneath for 12 hours. At the end of this quicklime is produced, it is then slaked and at the beginning of Class 8 it is used to render the cob tool shed. This process of transformation is a great way for the children to really understand the complexities of the various cycles found in nature.

### **Class 8**

In the autumn term Class 8 continue with the allotments that they started in Class 7, ensuring that they are well tended and prepared thoroughly for the next tenants by making them tidy, and perhaps laying down a straw mulch or sowing an overwintering green manure such as vetch. They also use the lime made at the

end of Class 7 and make a wreath with it to cover the cob tool shed. They also get to make an advent wreath to take home for Christmas.

In the first half of the spring term Class 8 go indoors and carry out a series of environmental debates. These include; consumerism and its social impacts, climate change, ocean pollution, overfishing, food miles and the importance of bees. These debates give the students an overview of how humanity is treating the planet but also allows them to articulate their opinions and concerns in a structured setting and hopefully imbues a sense of responsibility and care for the earth.

Once the debates are done Class 8 will be given a building project, for example a new play structure or tool shed, which will take them well into the summer term, last year's project involves building a large outdoor shelter/tool shed for Kindergarten.

Then, depending on how long the building projects takes the class will undertake a series of problem solving exercise such as 'protect the egg', and finish the year off learning how to scythe and then baking pizzas in the garden's cob oven.

## Compliance

- Independent School Standards  
[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/pdfs/uksi\\_20143283\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/pdfs/uksi_20143283_en.pdf)

## Useful Information

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- M. Robb, V. Mew & A. Richardson, Learning with nature, Green Books, 2015
- P. Harrison, Making Woodland Crafts, Hawthorn Press, 2014
- P. Houghton & Jane Worrol, Play the forest school way, Watkins, 2016
- B. Kaufmann, Gardening Classes in Waldorf Schools, Floris Books, 2015
- D. A. Kriesberg, A Sense of Place, 1999

## References

- South Devon Steiner School Curriculum Policy