

powerfulOutdoor Education

By the time they leave, pupils will:

We speak the language of learning...

We **communicate** 

We are **creative** 

We are **independent** 

We are **curious** 

We are **determined** 

We are **confident** 

We are **collaborative** 

 above all**COMPASSION**

EYFS links

Physical Development

Revise and refine the fundamental movement skills they have already acquired: rolling, crawling, walking, jumping, running, hopping, skipping, climbing.

Develop overall body-strength, balance, co-ordination and agility needed to engage successfully with outdoor learning.

Confidently and safely use a range of large and small apparatus indoors and outside, alone and in a group.

Understanding the World

Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of plants and animals.

Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments.

Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons.

Self-Regulation and Managing Self

Show resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge.

Manage their own needs and explain the reasons for rules; know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.

Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance.

Curriculum Intent – Outdoor Education at Mill View Primary School

At Mill View Primary School, we believe that learning is at its most powerful when it is challenged, tested, truly known, and when children can do something with it: change themselves, change their community, change the world.

Outdoor Education sits at the heart of this vision through its insistence on direct experience: what does it feel like to take a real risk, to feel cold, to build something from what the natural world provides, to sit with discomfort and push through it? Research is clear that today's children face a childhood unlike any before: independent outdoor play has declined by 90% over a generation (Richard Gill, *Playing Fields*, 2023); one in seven children in England never plays outside (National Children's Bureau, 2023); and what the American writer Richard Louv coined 'nature deficit disorder' is increasingly supported by studies linking reduced time outdoors to higher rates of anxiety, reduced attention, and lower physical resilience. Our Outdoor Education curriculum is a deliberate, evidence-informed response to that crisis: not an optional enrichment, but a core entitlement.

We are guided by the principle of Powerful Experiential Knowledge: the understanding that emerges when our Characteristics of Effective Learning, Confidence, Communication, Collaboration, Determination, Creativity, Independence, Curiosity, Compassion - are built through real, first-hand challenge in the natural world. This knowledge is emancipatory: it builds genuine self-reliance through assessed risk rather than risk removed, and it is fundamental in developing the compassion, resilience and connection to the living world that equip children to care for their communities and their planet. It allows children to trust themselves in places that do not have a right answer. It progresses communities.

Disciplinary Skills: the skills of an outdoor learner

How we build our seven Characteristics of Effective Learning through direct, outdoor, play-based experience: taking risk, observing the natural world, collaborating on real challenges, and reflecting on what we notice and feel. Building children's self reliance an ability to research the information they want to acquire (for example using the Information Station) in the forest to gain factual knowledge of the natural world.

At Mill View we use: Characteristics of Effective Learning progression (Confidence, Communication, Collaboration, Determination, Creativity, Independence, Curiosity, Compassion) · Key Questions · A play-based, child-led pedagogy · Outdoor sessions in all seasons and weathers · Knowledge Organisers

Substantive Knowledge: the knowledge of an outdoor learner

The factual and experiential knowledge of the natural world, risk and safety, seasonal change, and natural materials that pupils build through regular, direct outdoor experience.

At Mill View we use: Key Questions · Curriculum Objectives · Progressive planning of sessions across the year · Knowledge Organisers including key vocabulary for each characteristic

Powerful Experiential Knowledge, combining these two areas **combine**, they produce something greater than the sum of their parts.

This knowledge is **emancipatory**. It builds genuine self-reliance through real, assessed risk; it counters the narrowing of childhood that comes from excessive screen time and a loss of independent outdoor play; and it is fundamental in developing the compassion and connection to the natural world that children need to become responsible custodians of the community and planet they will inherit. Pupils begin to trust their own judgement in unfamiliar conditions and are able to assess risk for themselves, not simply avoid it. It is empowering. It progresses communities.

At Mill View we encourage curiosity, resilience and connection to the natural world. We do this through regular outdoor sessions in all seasons and weathers, and through genuinely child-led, play-based learning, allowing children the chance to take a risk, experience discomfort, and reflect on what they learned from both.

Our Five Curriculum Commitments

Oracy	Global Challenges	Career & Future Ready Learners	Inclusion	What Makes Our Curriculum Exceptional?
The outdoors is rich in language because it is rich in shared, first-hand experience that cannot be replicated on a screen. At Mill View, oracy in Outdoor Education means:	Our Outdoor Education curriculum connects pupils' immediate natural environment to the global conversation about our planet's future.	The seven Characteristics of Effective Learning built outdoors are identical to the ones employers, universities and communities consistently ask for. • We develop Confidence, Communication, Collaboration,	Inclusion at Mill View is a design principle, not a retrofit. • We recognise that access to gardens, green spaces and unstructured outdoor play is profoundly unequal: children from lower-income families	What makes Outdoor Education at Mill View exceptional is the integrity of our vision: children do not just learn about the natural world, they belong to it.

• Pupils narrate what they notice, feel and decide in real time, developing vocabulary that is grounded in direct sensory experience rather than the passive language of consumption. • Structured reflection at the end of every session gives every pupil a predictable, safe space to describe what they tried, what worked, and what they would do differently. • Pupils are taught to give and receive feedback within collaborative outdoor challenges, negotiating roles, sharing risk assessments and acknowledging the contributions of others. • Talk is used to process real experience and real risk: a conversation with genuine stakes, not a retelling of something watched on a screen.	• Sessions observing seasonal change, growing, and the life cycles of living things in our own grounds build the foundation for understanding global environmental and climate challenges studied across the wider curriculum. • We ask: what do we depend on the living world for, and what is our responsibility toward it? Who has access to green space and wild places, and who does not? • Pupils explore how play, nature and risk are experienced differently by children in other countries and contexts, and why equal access to the outdoors is a global justice issue. • Our curriculum meets the 2025 Curriculum Review's call for global perspectives to be woven through, not added on.	Determination, Creativity, Independence and Curiosity through genuine outdoor challenge, not simulated indoor tasks. • Career links are explicit: environmental scientists, conservation workers, outdoor educators, the emergency services, engineers, farmers, and any vocation requiring calm, creative problem-solving under real conditions. • Research consistently links regular outdoor, play-based experience to better executive function, emotional regulation and academic engagement (Mental Health Foundation, 2021; University of Exeter Play Research Group, 2022). • The habits of mind built here, persistence when something is hard, curiosity about what is not yet known, and confidence to try again after failure, are transferable to every other area of learning and life.	are significantly less likely to have safe outdoor space at home (Natural England, 2023), and our Outdoor Education provision is a direct, intentional response to that inequality. • The "I can..." structure gives every pupil a clear entry point, with challenge calibrated to where they are, not where we wish they were. • We welcome and work with children who find outdoor settings initially uncomfortable, because we know from research and practice that the children who most resist going outside are often the ones who benefit most. • Every pupil's pace of building confidence outdoors is respected, nurtured and celebrated.	A clear conceptual spine: The seven Characteristics of Effective Learning build year on year, from needing support to exercising independent judgement, always through first-hand, outdoor, play-based experience. All seasons, all weathers: Outdoor sessions happen throughout the year, because resilience, curiosity and connection to nature cannot be built in good conditions alone. Emancipatory knowledge: We ask children to assess and take real risks for themselves, building the self-reliance that overprotection, indoor confinement and passive screen time cannot. Compassion at the centre: Above all, we grow children who are kind to themselves, to each other, and to the living world they share. This is the entitlement of every child at Mill View.
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"Outdoor learning is at its most powerful when a risk is genuinely taken, a connection to the natural world is truly felt, and a confidence and compassion children can use to change themselves, their community, and their world."

Alignment with the Ofsted Inspection Framework, Research Evidence and the 2025 Curriculum Review

Ofsted / Curriculum Review focus	How Outdoor Education at Mill View responds
Curriculum coherence: knowledge builds cumulatively	Our seven Characteristics of Effective Learning are tracked and sequenced from EYFS to Year 6, so confidence, resilience, independence and curiosity build progressively through first-hand outdoor experience, not assumed to develop spontaneously.
Personal development, character and mental health	Outdoor Education at Mill View is a direct, evidence-informed response to well-documented modern pressures: declining independent outdoor play, rising screen time and increasing childhood anxiety. It supports the personal development and character-building, and contributes to the pupil wellbeing, that Ofsted's inspection framework expects schools to plan and provide deliberately.
Global perspectives and environmental responsibility	Direct seasonal experience of our own natural environment builds the foundation for understanding global ecological and climate challenges across the wider curriculum, meeting the 2025 Curriculum Review's call for global perspectives to be woven through, not added on.
Adaptive teaching: high expectations for all	Inclusion is a design principle. Challenge is calibrated to each child, recognising that access to outdoor play and green space is not equal among our pupils, and that our provision directly addresses that inequality.
Assessment that proves knowledge has stuck	Progression through the Characteristics of Effective Learning, observed directly in outdoor sessions across the year, tests whether Confidence, Communication, Collaboration, Determination, Creativity, Independence and Curiosity are genuinely growing, not just listed.
Research evidence and disciplinary rigour	Our progression framework reflects the research on child development, outdoor play and nature connection associated with writers including Richard Louv ("Last Child in the Woods", 2005) and Tim Gill ("No Fear", 2007), the risk-benefit play research of the Play Safety Forum, and the growing evidence base linking regular outdoor, play-based learning to improved mental health, executive function and academic engagement.

Career and future readiness

Assessed risk-taking, resilience, independent decision-making and curiosity about the living world are explicitly linked to careers in the environment, outdoors, emergency services and science, and to the self-reliance that enables pupils to thrive in any future they choose.

Progression in Outdoor Education

These attributes are integral and embedded throughout all the EYFS curriculum within Little Wrens and Reception Robins, particularly Personal, Social and Emotional Development and further in the Over-Arching Principles.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
	Confidence					
	I feel safe to join in and try new things. <i>With help, develop new ideas.</i>	I feel safe and secure to join in all activities in Outdoor Learning <i>Try new things when encouraged. Show enjoyment of new experiences.</i>	I am comfortable taking part in activities in Outdoor Learning and know I am safe. <i>Enjoy new experiences.</i>	I am comfortable exploring all learning opportunities and start to assess my own risks and safety. <i>Show enjoyment in trying out new ideas</i>	I embrace all learning opportunities and assess my own risks and safety. <i>Enjoy new things and take opportunities wherever possible. Clearly identify own strengths.</i>	I am happy to embrace all the learning opportunities in Outdoor Learning and take risks that I have assessed myself. <i>Find things to do that give energy. Identify areas for improvement.</i>
	Communication					
	I can share ideas, thoughts and feelings with my friends <i>Respond to the ideas of others'. Act on some ideas.</i>	I can share ideas and observations with the whole class. <i>Share with others thought and feelings about activities.</i>	I can respond to other peoples' contributions and make relevant observations.	I can listen to others and reflect their idea in my suggestions. <i>Describe the point of view of others.</i>	I can work on a challenge where everyone's views are respected and considered.	I can recall facts from previous sessions, express my views and ideas with confidence. I am happy to share and contribute in any given situation.

	Share with others likes and observations.		Concentrate on things of interest. Listen to others showing engagement.	Give positive feedback to others about ideas and activities.	Seek the opinion of others to help identify improvements. Listen to others who encourage and help, acknowledging their advice.	Encourage others by pointing out how their efforts gain results. Listen first to others before trying to be understood. Show effort and commitment in refining and adjusting work through communicating ideas.
	Collaboration					
	I can take turns, share and help my friends. Take encouragement from others in areas of interest. Listen to people who try to help.	I can work with a partner, or in a small group to complete a task. Take encouragement from others in areas of interest. Share ideas with others. Share likes about a group activity with others.	I am comfortable to work with anyone from my class on a task. Choose to work with others who share a common interest. With others, keep trying after a first attempt.	I am happy to work with any group of children I am asked to complete a task. Focus on activities. Reflect on how effort leads to success. Begin to encourage others to work hard. Reflect on how group efforts lead to success.	I am happy to work with any group of children taking instruction from others when needed. Choose to work with others who share a common interest to complete an activity, regardless of friendship groups. Seek the opinion of others to help. Show effort to improving a task by discussing what is working well and what needs improving.	I am happy to work in any group situation and share the roles within the group, leading if necessary. Change behaviours to suit different situations and group work demands. Seek the opinion of others to help identify improvements. Show commitment to refining and adjusting work, even if the activity is led by another person's idea. Show a willingness to be wrong.
	Determination					

	I can try and finish a simple task on my own, with guidance. <i>Try again, with help from others.</i> <i>Work hard at a task, with help from others.</i> <i>Begin to try things more than once.</i> <i>Choose one thing to improve (with support).</i>	I can complete a simple task on my own. <i>Try things more than once.</i> <i>Work hard on a task.</i> <i>Choose one thing to improve and make that improvement (with support).</i>	I can complete a task on my own without any help. <i>Keep trying after a first attempt.</i> <i>Show a willingness to overcome fears or difficulties.</i> <i>With encouragement, identify an improvement to a task and suggest how to complete it.</i>	I will complete tasks on my own. <i>Identify an improvement to a task and suggest how to complete it.</i> <i>Work hard for a sustained period.</i> <i>Try things more than once.</i> <i>Begin to tune out distractions.</i> <i>With encouragement, begin to try things which are uncomfortable – overcome fears.</i>	I will show perseverance to complete a task, having a number of attempts if needed. <i>Work hard for a sustained period.</i> <i>Practise tuning out distractions.</i> <i>Independently, repeat an activity to improve it.</i> <i>With encouragement, try things which are not so enjoyable.</i> <i>Reflect on failures and seek positive opportunities from them.</i>	I will persist until a challenge is completed to my satisfaction, giving me a sense of pride and achievement. <i>Understand the benefits of effort and commitment.</i> <i>Continue to practise even when accomplished.</i> <i>Show a determination to keep going and see possibilities and opportunities even after a setback.</i> <i>Stick to an activity even in challenging circumstances.</i>
	Creativity					
	I feel comfortable using natural materials in my play. <i>Concentrate on things of interest.</i> <i>Try out ideas of interest</i>	I can use natural materials to engage in imaginative play. <i>Concentrate on things of interest.</i> <i>Act on some ideas.</i>	I can sustain a creative challenge using what is available in the outdoor learning space. <i>Concentrate on things of interest.</i> <i>Begin to enjoy having new ideas and exploring them practically.</i>	I can explore an idea creatively, trying different possible outcomes. <i>Concentrate on things of interest for sustained periods.</i> <i>Enjoy having new ideas.</i>	I can extend the creative process in flow without worrying if it is right or wrong. <i>Develop ideas in a personal way</i>	I can initiate my own creative work, exploring ideas creatively and using natural materials and the environment. <i>Generate new ideas.</i>
	Independence					

	I can organise my clothing and get myself ready at the beginning and end of outdoor learning sessions. <i>Begin to show signs of concentration.</i> <i>Begin to seek help when needed.</i>	I feel safe to go off on my own during outdoor learning sessions and return when called. <i>Engage in an activity independently for an increasing period of time.</i> <i>Follow instructions for the beginning and end of activities to allow me independence during the activity.</i>	I am beginning to make decisions about activity choices and how to stay safe. <i>Chose an activity that will engage me for a sustained period of time.</i> <i>Make decisions about safety when working independently on an activity</i>	I feel capable of taking risks and keeping myself safe. <i>Begin to understand why some activities feel uncomfortable.</i> <i>Show a willingness to overcome fears.</i> <i>Begin to take encouragement and advice from others.</i>	I trust myself to carry out tasks and challenges safely. <i>Know which new ideas are useful and have value.</i> <i>Reflect and identify areas for improvement.</i>	I can assess risks and make decisions to ensure that I can carry out a task safely on my own. <i>Be able to identify areas of risk and make decisions based on assessing risks.</i>
	Curiosity					
	I feel secure to ask questions to find out more information about what interests me. <i>Act on some ideas.</i> <i>Keep things of interest going.</i>	I make observations about what I notice and want to find out more about. <i>Develop areas of interest.</i>	I feel safe to be able to investigate things that interest me in the natural environment. <i>Develop areas of interest to return to.</i>	I show an interest in the natural environment and select aspects I want to explore further. <i>Develop personal areas of interest and ask lots of questions.</i>	I have an appreciation of the natural environment and see opportunities for further exploration of particular interests. <i>Return to areas of interest. Build on previous experiences and learning independently.</i>	I enjoy unplanned learning opportunities that outdoor learning offers. I use my curiosity to develop respect and appreciate for the outdoor environment <i>Ask lots of questions and seek to find answers independently to specific areas of deep personal interest.</i>
	Compassion					

	Notice when others are upset and respond kindly. I notice when someone feels sad and I try to help them feel better.	Show kindness and care towards people and living things. I show kindness to my friends and to the plants and animals I look after outdoors.	Recognise how others might be feeling and offer support. I think about how someone else might be feeling and find a way to help them.	Show empathy towards others' experiences and act with kindness. I understand that everyone has different feelings and experiences, and I try to be kind and helpful.	Understand and respond sensitively to the needs of others, near and far. I care about people and living things beyond my own experience, and think of ways I can help them.	Show deep compassion and take independent action to support others and the environment. I use my compassion to make a positive difference to people, animals and the world around me, both now and in the future.
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