

# Early Years Outdoor Learning

## A Toolkit for Developing Early Years Outdoor Provision



[www.norfolk.gov.uk/outdoorlearning](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/outdoorlearning)

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## SECTION 1: Introduction

The outdoor environment is a rich, dynamic and natural space for learning and development in children of all ages. Its value as an essential learning resource has been recognised by many pieces of research and more recently within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), particularly within the principle of 'Enabling Environments'.

The EYFS states:

- 'Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development.
- Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.
- It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world.
- Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant.'



Within the EYFS document 'Effective Practice: Outdoor Learning' the key messages are:

1. The outdoor environment has unique characteristics and features.
2. Outdoor learning has equal value to indoor learning.
3. Outdoor learning has a positive impact on children's well-being and development.
4. Children need the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning.
5. Outdoor learning is enhanced by an environment that is richly resourced with play materials that can be adapted and used in different ways.
6. An approach to outdoor learning that considers experiences rather than equipment places children at the centre of the provision being made.

'Children can learn to make decisions, solve problems and grow in confidence in their own abilities outdoors and they need plenty of time to investigate their outdoor environment purposefully. They will make predictions about what may happen based on their previous play experiences and test out these ideas and theories.'  
(EYFS Outdoors 2007)

This document is designed as a toolkit to support practitioners, settings and supporting partners to link their provision to these key messages. The document does not explicitly discuss the benefits of outdoor learning, as much literature is readily available on this topic; please also see 'SECTION 6: Further Sources of Support'.

## SECTION 2: Exploring the Key Messages

### 1. The outdoor environment has unique characteristics and features.

The outdoor environment is where children can come into contact with the ever changing systems of nature and the four elements. It is the dynamic world of living and non-living things that endlessly interact through time and space. The seasonal changes and differing weather conditions provide children with a sense of time and place and offer endless investigation possibilities. Research suggests that if children do not have significant contact with the natural world in their early years then they can become afraid of it, disconnected from it or 'biophobic'.

The outdoor environment usually offers more freedom and space to move, and inspires different movement from that indoors. This is vital for young children to develop their coordination, build muscle mass and experiment with moving their bodies.

'Outdoors, children can hear and respond to a different range of sounds, beginning to recognise and distinguish between noises in the outdoor environment. They can use actions and movement alongside words and sounds to convey their ideas and meanings. The outdoors is a place where stories, songs and poems can be shared and enacted.' (EYFS resources 2007)



‘Mark-making opportunities outdoors can be every bit as valuable as those that are planned indoors; babies and toddlers will enjoy making handprints in damp sand, while older children can set a trail of sticks round the outdoor area leading to their den. The outdoors offers children exciting opportunities for developing upper body and limb strength through physical activity and movement. These experiences will have a positive impact on the development of control and co-ordination of small muscles needed later for successful handwriting.’ (EYFS resources 2007)

Outside also has a higher concentration of oxygen in the air (25% more than indoors even with all windows and doors open). Oxygen is vital for all cells to respire in the body, but particularly for brain function to aid the process of learning. Encouraging children to be active outdoors is vital for their health and wellbeing.



## **2. Outdoor learning has equal value to indoor learning.**

Every child has a right to daily outdoor learning and as much value should be placed on the outdoor environment as inside. The same amount of resources, planning, time, and money should go into providing the outdoor space as the indoor one. It is not an optional extra.

‘The outdoor environment can provide more freedom for a greater range of play and learning and it is every child’s entitlement.’ (The Sky Is The Limit – outdoor learning in the early years; Learning through Landscapes 2009)

Outdoor learning is most significant and effective when complementary to the indoor space. Ideally both environments are available simultaneously to the children through a seamless transition space and the children should be able to choose between spaces in freeflow provision.

‘Outdoor learning complements indoor learning and is equally important. Play and learning that flow seamlessly between indoors and outdoors enable children to make the most of the resources and materials available to them and develop their ideas without unnecessary interruption.’ (EYFS Effective Practice: Outdoor Learning 2007)

### **3. Outdoor learning has a positive impact on children’s well-being and development.**

Much research is available that indicates that being and playing outside is vital for children’s physical health and development, emotional wellbeing and promotes cognitive development and achievement.

‘The knowledge base shows that exposure to natural spaces – everything from parks and open countryside to gardens and other greenspace – is good for health.’  
(Sustainable Development Commission 2008)

When outdoors, children have the freedom to explore and develop their physical boundaries, to take risks and to discover the real world with all their senses. This can have huge positive effects on a child’s self esteem and confidence. Outside can be liberating; children have room to be active, noisy, messy and work on a large scale. Outside is dynamic; you cannot predict what might happen, and as such it provides opportunities to experience and develop emotions, what they feel like and how to deal with them.



‘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.’ (Learning Outdoors in the Early Years – a resource book; Learning through Landscapes 2005)

The outdoors is a unique space; it is not the same as indoors. Therefore, the child will not be the same outdoors as when they are indoors – the outdoors is a deeply engaging, special place for young children, where they are able to experience freedom as well as challenge themselves.

‘Provide children with access to environments that stimulate their need to explore and which safely challenge them... The aim is to develop their risk awareness and an understanding of their own abilities as necessary life skills.’ (Promoting physical activity, active play and sport for pre-school and school-age children and young people in family, pre-school, school and community settings, NHS, 2008)

#### **4. Children need the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning.**

Young children need all of the adults around them to value and enjoy the outdoors themselves in order to feel safe and secure outside. Attitude, understanding and positive thinking are important, as well as skills to use the outdoor space to make the most of what the space has to offer. Adults are role models for children and need to display qualities that we would like young children to develop; enquiry, motivation, willingness to try and a positive attitude.

The role of the adult outside should be much the same as the role of the adult inside; to scaffold learning, observe and record. Children should be encouraged to make their own choices and lead their own learning with appropriate support from an understanding adult.

Through observation, adults should have a deep understanding of how individual children learn best, their interests and personal motivations and are therefore able to offer appropriate individualised support to them.



**5. Outdoor learning is enhanced by an environment that is richly resourced with play materials that can be adapted and used in different ways.**

Open-ended play resources that are non prescriptive can be used in an imaginative way, with the children using them to fit the play that they are working through at the time, rather than the play materials dictating the play. Materials that can be adapted to meet the children's needs will be most effective. Many resources can be found in the natural world and others fairly cheaply. Some ideas for open-ended resources are:

- Different sized and shaped logs, poles, sticks, wood shapes
- Blocks, crates, tyres
- Natural items – sand, water, leaves, stones, bark chip, earth, mud , clay, rock, shells, seeds
- Ropes and string of different sizes and lengths
- Different coloured, textured and sizes fabric, cloth, tarpaulins
- Mallets, pegs, clothes pegs
- Pulleys
- Baskets, bags, buckets, watering cans, containers
- Pipes of different shapes and lengths
- Chalks, charcoal, crayons, pens, pencils, brushes with water, paints, large paper or fabric, rollers
- Tools for digging, planting and caring for plants
- Tools and benches for woodwork and making
- Nets, bug pots & brushes, magnifiers, binoculars, trays, tanks



**6. An approach to outdoor learning that considers experiences rather than equipment places children at the centre of the provision being made.**

The process of learning taking place in individual children should be the focus of any provision, not the products made or equipment available. All children are unique and have different interests and skills. As such, it may not be appropriate for all children to be asked to make a particular item or do a certain activity, as it may not be developmentally appropriate to that particular individual or may not fit in with their current schemata of the world.

Good outdoor provision does not rely on expensive equipment. Good provision comes from making the most of the space and resources you have combined with a positive, enthusiastic and engaged attitude from adults. Together these facilitate meaningful learning experiences for the young children in your care that will vitally support their holistic development.



## SECTION 3: Developing Outdoor Spaces

'In a survey of schools who had improved their grounds, 65% reported an improved attitude to learning, 73% an improvement in behaviour and 64% a reduction in bullying. 84% of schools noticed improvements in social interaction while 85% reported an increase in healthy active play.' (Learning Through Landscapes information leaflet – Professional Grounds Advice 2008)

Every outdoor space will be different, and will have limitations that need to be worked within. Settings need to consider the spaces available to them and how to make the most of them with the resources available.

When considering grounds development it is important to consult with all stakeholders to discover their views on the outdoor area. Stakeholders include:

- The children
- All staff
- Parents
- Governors and managers
- The wider community

The process of change occurs in 4 stages:

1. Self evaluation – Where are we now?
2. Vision planning – Where do we want to be?
3. Action planning – How can we get there?
4. Implementation – Making the changes

Carefully considering each stage with all the stakeholders involved will ensure that appropriate decisions and changes are made. When making changes ensure that a on-going plan for maintenance and care is in place, particularly for natural or growing spaces.

Even though every space is unique there are some key features that are applicable to all spaces. This section explores some of these features; please note that all of these features overlap and connect rather than operate in isolation. Please see the following cards for further details:

1. Access and Security
2. Shelter and Shade
3. Appropriate Clothing
4. Appropriate Storage
5. Variety of Surfaces
6. The Four Elements
7. Natural Spaces
8. Growing Spaces
9. Active Spaces
10. Reflective Spaces
11. Creative Spaces
12. Social Spaces

# 1. Access and Security

*"We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety."*

~ Managing Risk in Play Provision: A Position Statement, HSE, 2004

As the outdoor environment has equal importance with the indoor environment it needs to be **easily accessible**. The most effective use of the outdoors occurs when children can **move freely** between the indoor and outdoor environments, consolidating learning in different contexts.

When planning outdoor areas it is important to consider inclusion of all learners, ensuring it meets their needs. Also that it considers practicalities of using the spaces such as storage, lighting in winter months, shelter, water and electricity supply.



Secure entrances, exits and boundaries are vital to allow children the opportunity to explore freely in the outdoors. Risk management processes should be shared with the children where possible, to enable them to make appropriate choice and manage risk themselves.

## 2. Shelter and Shade

All children and adults need to be protected from extremes of weather and temperature. In hot sunny weather this means providing shady areas; in cold and wet weather a shelter is needed from the wind or rain. There are a variety of options available – some permanent structures and others temporary:

- Natural features – trees, hedging, willow structures
- Structures – amphitheatres, gazebos, bird hides, walls
- Canvas sun shades
- Tarpaulin shelters & dens
- Tents, tunnels & Parachutes



*"We plant upon the sunny lea,  
A shadow for the noontide hour,  
A shelter from the Summer shower,  
When we plant the Apple-tree."*

~ William Cullen Bryant



### **Cash-Saving Solutions!**

Quick and simple shelters can be constructed using tarpaulins and ropes, although some children will spend hours creating and developing different shelter designs.

- Tie rope between 2 posts/trees/fence lines to create a 'washing line'
- Throw the tarpaulin over it
- Secure tarpaulin using guy ropes tied to surrounding items or using pegs (simple pegs can be whittled from sticks, or metal tent pegs).
- If there is nothing to tie the rope to, it is possible to use certain lashings and knots to construct a frame using wooden poles, so the shelter is freestanding.

### 3. Appropriate Clothing

To ensure all children have access to the outdoors and want to spend time outside it is vital to have the appropriate clothing. This involves full waterproofs and wellington boots in rain and snow; warm layers, hats and gloves in the cold, and wide brimmed hats and protection in the sun. It may also be appropriate to have overalls for generally getting messy.

Buying sets of clothing can be an expense for a setting, but without them it can limit the opportunities the children can access. Settings approach this in different ways:

- Ask parents to provide outdoor clothing.
- Add appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear to the uniform list.
- Supply outdoor clothing for all children to borrow.

It is also vital for settings to provide good quality outdoor clothing for staff to wear if they are expected to work outside on a daily basis in all weathers.

*"There's no such thing as the wrong sort of weather,  
Only the wrong sort of clothing!"*  
~ Scandinavian saying



- Suppliers of Outdoor Clothing:**
- Muddy Puddles - [www.muddypuddles.com](http://www.muddypuddles.com)
  - Waterproof World – [www.waterproofworld.co.uk](http://www.waterproofworld.co.uk)
  - Muddy Faces - [www.muddyfaces.co.uk](http://www.muddyfaces.co.uk)

## 4. Appropriate Storage

*"Appropriate storage and good organisation is necessary to keep equipment in good condition and maximise the use of resources."*

~ Learning through Landscapes

Resources and clothing should be stored appropriately to aid children's free choice and independence. Outdoor clothing and footwear needs to be stored near the access point to the outdoors for ease, and enough space should be allowed for young children to change into items. Areas and facilities for drying wet clothing and footwear should be considered. Some key points:

- Storage features (pegs/shelves/boxes/baskets etc) should be accessible by the children by being at their height, and clearly labelled to encourage independence.
- Storage of clothing should be as close to the outdoor access as possible with adequate space for changing.
- The interface area between indoor and outdoor spaces is likely to get dirty with muddy clothing so easy clean surfaces are practical.
- Space and facilities for drying clothing is useful – heated drying cupboards, washing lines or frames (inside or under cover).
- Washing facilities are a necessity – who is responsible for this and how will the outdoor clothing & kit get washed and maintained?



## 5. Variety of Surfaces

A variety of hard and soft surfaces with a range of gradients increases play and exploration, develops gross motor skills and can provide opportunities for discovery and investigation.

The different surfaces can provide very different atmospheres and therefore encourage different emotions and activities in children. Surfaces could include:

- Hard top
- Short and long grass
- Bare earth & mud
- Rocks and stones
- Leaf litter
- Undulating ground
- Slopes & hills
- Puddles

*"(Research shows)... in hard top play areas the dominant children are those who are the physically strongest, whereas in more natural play areas the dominant are those children who are more creative and better at socialising with peers..."*

~ National Geographic Magazine Article



### Cash Saving Solutions!

Only got hard surface play areas?  
Use old tractor tyres or paddling pools and fill with:

- Earth
- Compost
- Sand
- Turf
- Autumn leaves
- Bark chippings
- Gravel



## 6. The Four Elements

*"The most effective kind of education is that a child should play amongst lovely things."*

~ Plato

The outdoor environment is the only place children can experience the primal, elemental processes that govern our world. Contact with the natural elements and how they interact and change is important for learning and development. Possible ideas include:

### **Earth**

Contact with soil, sand, stones, mud, and clay with opportunities to dig, mix, build and sculpt. Large rocks and stones to feel and climb. Grow and care for plants.

### **Water**

Access to an outdoor water supply is vital for learning opportunities and practicalities (like watering plants!). Explore puddles, make streams, use pumps, waterwheels, pipes and containers. Make boats, rafts and dams.

### **Air**

Listen and watch the wind using chimes, feathers, leaves, ribbons, bubbles. Use wind turbines and wind mills, fly kites and wind socks. Watch and investigate birds and insects flying.

### **Fire**

Consider shadows on sunny days, have a sun dial, use mirrors to reflect light and look through coloured filters. If your staff have appropriate training to manage fire with children you could set up a camp fire area with fire surround or container and seating.



# 7. Natural Spaces

*"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 are naturally drawn to living things and the natural world. Research has proven that being in a natural space increases wellbeing, builds self-worth and reduces stress. It has also been speculated that ADHD could be linked to a 'nature deficit' after researchers noticed that symptoms of ADHD are less obvious when children are playing in natural areas and are able to focus more easily. Playing in the natural world also can increase knowledge & understanding of life processes and sustainability issues.

The natural world is constantly changing through the natural cycles of the seasons and weather. This dynamic environment stimulates children's natural curiosity and questioning.

**Trees & woodlands** – to climb, build dens and tree-houses, collect leaves, make bark rubbings.

**Grassland** – long and short grass to walk through, lay & sit in, pick flowers, collect seeds, make 'nests', have picnics.

**Wetlands** – ponds or boggy areas to hunt for minibeasts, paddle in, float boats/rafts, watch frogs & dragonflies, fish in.

**Hedgerows** – to sit under, build dens, collect wild foods, put up bird boxes & feeders.



## Cash Saving Solutions!

Only got hard surface play areas?

- Plant small trees in containers
- Use old tractor tyres or logs to make raised beds for grassland meadows.
- Sink an old washing up bowl into the ground to create a small pond
- Use containers and trellis to set climbing plants (like honeysuckle and ivy) up fences and walls.
- Bring in natural items like logs and poles to use as seating and in construction.
- The Woodland Trust give schools free trees for copses and hedges: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)



## 8. Growing Spaces

*"The idea that gardens can be therapeutic and restorative is, in fact, an ancient one. Over two thousand years ago, Chinese Taoists created gardens and greenhouses they believed to be beneficial to health."*

~ Richard Louv

The outdoor environment provides opportunities for firsthand experience of life processes. Growing plants, caring for them and eating fruit and vegetables that have been grown from seeds is a satisfying experience that develops understanding of the world we live in. Even the smallest of outdoor areas can be used to grow plants in containers. When growing with children, it's a good idea to have a separate digging area available for children to practice with tools and techniques (for example, digging and raking), to avoid the vegetable beds getting damaged. Sensory plants will encourage children to explore with all their senses.

- Raised beds – use logs, planks, bricks or woven fencing to create areas to fill with soil as raised beds. Ensure the dimensions of the beds are appropriate to the children using them.
- Containers – some plants can be grown in containers. Containers can be plant pots, old barrels (with holes in bottom), old baths, sinks and wheelbarrows.
- Grow-bags – some plants will grow straight out of the compost bags, just cut open the plastic on top and ensure good drainage.
- Hanging baskets & window boxes – if ground space is limited, herbs and small plants could be planted in containers attached to the building.
- Compost – recycle natural waste using a compost heap or wormery, this will supply you with fertiliser for your next crop!



### **Cash Saving Solutions!**

- Reuse old plastic pots and containers (with holes in the bottom) for plant pots.
- Ask parents and the local community to donate plants, cuttings and seeds.
- Collect seeds from the surrounding area and germinate.
- Make a compost bin by fixing wooden pallets together or weaving willow or hazel into a cylinder.
- School Waste Action Club (SWAC) can help with composting and wormeries – see section 6.

## 9. Active Spaces

The outdoor environment is vital to support children to develop healthy and active lifestyles. The outdoors allows for active play and whole body movement which is less practical within the indoor environment. The outdoors provides opportunities to:

- Run, skip, hop and jump, changing direction and speed
- Climb, swing and balance on trim trails, low rope courses, trees, rope swings, traversing walls
- Crawl, roll and slide over different ground surfaces, through tunnels, under nets and over hills.
- Construct dens to hide in or courses to negotiate using logs, poles, planks, milk crates, large blocks, boxes
- Use equipment such as gardening tools to dig, sow and water plants. Woodworking tools to build and construct. Minibeasting kit to pond dip or collect bugs. Pipes, tubes and containers to manipulate the flow of water. Pulleys and ropes to move, lift and drag materials.
- Play games using bats, balls, beanbags, hoops, parachutes
- Ride, balance and steer wheeled toys, stilts, buggies

*“Active play is... one of the best ways for children to burn calories outside of PE lessons and one of the most important ways of helping to prevent obesity.” ~ Fair Play DCMS and DCSF 2008*



# 10. Reflective Spaces

The outdoors can provide opportunities for quiet contemplation and reflection either in solitude or with friends. Calm spaces that encourage children to be relaxed and thoughtful are important for wellbeing and for developing a sense of awe and wonder about the world. Reflective spaces could be:

- Natural areas – a woodland glade, a den inside some bushes
- Formal gardens – sensory garden, spiritual gardens
- Labyrinths – made from logs, stones, hedging, willow, mown grass, planted flowers, laid out rope
- Focal points – fountains, sculptures, mandalas, campfire
- Enclosed areas – dens, Wendy houses, tunnels, boxes
- Comfortable seating – rugs, beanbags, benches, logs, cushions



*"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."*

~ Rachel Carson



# 11. Creative Spaces

*"Imagination is more important than knowledge."*

~ Albert Einstein

The multisensory outdoor environment provides opportunities to experiment with and manipulate sounds and materials in both 2D and 3D. The outdoor space can be used to support imaginative role play, sing songs in and tell stories just as the indoors can. Ideas include:

- Performance space - stage or amphitheatre to encourage role play, dance and music
- Mark making opportunities – chalk on hard surfaces, sticks in mud, brushes in water on a dry day, large scale paper and paints, charcoal on wood
- Music and sound – make wind chimes and xylophones from wood or metal pots and pans; make shakers from different containers and seeds. Use outdoor areas to sing songs & rhymes.
- Weaving – use netting, chicken wire, fencing to weave fabric, plastic, ribbons, or wool. Plant willow sculptures and weave them to shape.
- Open ended resources – objects that can be manipulated, connected and formed into new things, for example; slices of wood, sticks, poles, leaves, stones, string, rope



## Cash Saving Solutions!

Natural resources are often free. Ask a local landowner to donate some different sized logs, poles, sticks, slices of wood. These materials can be offered to children as open ended play resources.

## 12. Social Spaces

*"Social relationships can be developed in a space that offers scope for communication through action, movement and language."*

~ EYFS, Effective Practice: Outdoor Learning

The outdoor environment gives a real context for purposeful communication. Children can discuss problems, negotiate turns, explain ideas, ask questions, learn specific vocabulary and share thoughts and feelings with adults and peers. Providing communal spaces can facilitate communication if it is laid out carefully and comfortably.

- Fixed seating – amphitheatres, outdoor classrooms, benches, bird hides, tree houses, camp fire areas. Fixed seating should be in 'U' shapes or circles rather than straight lines to encourage discussion.
- Flexible seating – rugs, tarpaulins, logs that can be rolled, bean bags, cushions, Wendy house, dens
- Natural areas – trees to sit under or in, willow domes
- Open resources that require cooperation to use effectively – heavy logs that need many people to roll or drag, long poles or pipes that need many people to drag or carry, ropes and pulleys that need people to help hold and tie.



## SECTION 4: Considering Maintenance

When developing outdoor spaces it is important to consider what on-going maintenance is required for the areas and equipment. Natural and growing areas will need management and care. Fixed play equipment will need regular inspections, and surfaces and kit will need cleaning and checking. Creating a basic management plan will help get these jobs done. As a setting ask:

- What needs to be done?
- What time of year do we need to do it and how frequently?
- Who is going to do it?
- Do we need any additional resources to do it?

### **What needs to be done?**

The job list will depend on the areas and items you have in your outdoor space. Please see below for a basic maintenance calendar for natural features.

### **What time of year do we need to do it and how frequently?**

Certain tasks may need only doing once; others will need repeating on a daily, weekly or monthly cycle. For example, tree planting and cutting should be done in winter, whilst daily watering of the vegetable patch may be necessary throughout the hotter summer months.

### **Who is going to do it?**

This will depend on what the task is and the skills and knowledge of the adults and children at your setting. It may also depend on what time, money and resources you have available to you. Maintaining an area is likely to involve:

- Contractors
- Staff
- Children
- Parents
- Local community

### **Do we need any additional resources to do it?**

Will the jobs require purchasing any special equipment or items necessary to undertake the task? Will you need someone with a certain qualification or level of understanding to undertake the work? Will you need any special safety equipment or personal protective equipment to carry out the job? Will you need lots of people to be involved to carry out the task safely and effectively?

Once your setting has thought through these questions it is useful to document the answers somehow and display it where people will see it (in a staff room for example). Using the format of a calendar can be helpful for seasonal jobs, or having a dedicated whiteboard where jobs for the week or month can be written up and wiped off when completed.

## Natural Features Maintenance Calendar

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Grassland/ meadow							Cut and clear annual meadows						
	Do not cut areas planted with bulbs								Plant spring flowering bulbs				
									Sow new meadows				
Trees/ Shrubs		Complete tree and shrub planting							Collect seeds and plant in pots -grow for year before planting				
			Remove grass growth from around base of young trees							Begin tree and shrub planting			
						Water young trees and shrubs as required							
									Prune/coppice/pollard trees/shrubs according to good practice				
Hedges	Complete hedge planting									Begin hedge planting			
						Water young hedgerows as required							
			Cut back to boundary any overgrowth (eg brambles)							Trim hedges according to good practice			
Ponds/ Wetlands	Create and/or maintain pond												
			Plant native pond and wetland plants										
				Keep pond clear of excess algae and topped up with rainwater									
		Make holes in any ice formed							Keep pond free of leaves				
									Remove excess pond plants				
Willow Structures	Complete planting									Begin willow planting or replacing dead stems			
						Water if dry months							
			Remove grass growth from around base of willow							Weave in seasons growth and prune			
Birds	Feed birds consistently with good quality feed and fresh water for drinking and bathing												
				Do not cut hedges/ prune trees as birds are nesting						Put up/clean nest boxes			
									Plant berry bearing trees/shrubs as a food source				
								Leave windfall fruit for food					
Insects							Make and put up bug hibernation homes						
		Provide nectar rich flowers for butterflies and bees to feed on							Make log piles with materials pruned in a shady location				
									Make a leaf pile in a shady spot				
				Leave patches of nettles as a food source for caterpillars									



### Early Years Kitchen Garden Planner



Autumn Term		Spring Term		Summer Term	
Sow/Plant	Harvest	Sow/Plant	Harvest	Sow/Plant	Harvest
<b>Broad Beans</b> <b>Peas</b> <b>Strawberries</b> <b>Raspberries</b> <i>Lettuce</i> Japanese onion sets Garlic Wheat Apples Pears Blueberries Blackberries (thornless)	<b>Raspberries</b> <i>Pumpkins</i> <i>Courgettes</i> <i>Runner beans</i> <i>Sweetcorn</i> Tomatoes Carrots Parsnips Leeks Maincrop potatoes Spinach Spring onion Apples Pears Blackberries (thornless) Wheat	<b>Peas</b> <b>Broad Beans</b> <b>Potatoes</b> <i>Radish</i> <i>Lettuce</i> Parsnips Leeks Spring onion Herbs Spinach Wheat Carrots	<b>Lettuce</b> Leeks Parsnips	<b>French Beans</b> <i>Pumpkins</i> <i>Radish</i> <i>Lettuce</i> <i>Runner beans*</i> <i>Courgettes*</i> <i>Cucumber*</i> <i>Sweetcorn*</i> Tomatoes* Carrots Spring onion Maincrop potatoes	<b>Broad beans</b> <b>Peas</b> <b>Potatoes</b> <b>French beans</b> <b>Strawberries</b> <b>Blueberries</b> <i>Sweetcorn *</i> <i>Runner bean*</i> <i>Cucumber*</i> <i>Courgette*</i> <i>Lettuce</i> <i>Radish</i> Garlic Onions Carrots Spinach Spring onion
Other Jobs		Other Jobs		Other Jobs	
Clear beds Dig Soil Mulch bare soil Plan garden Plant fruit Order seeds		Fork in compost Rake to suitable tilth Warm soil for early sowings Protect early sowings from frost Sow hardy crops		Sow tender crops inside in April Plant out tender crops in May Protect crops from pests Weed Water Mulch around plants	

Please note crops in **red and bold** are ideal for early years, those in *blue italics* are also more suitable than most. All others are still recommended. Those marked \* will be ready to harvest mainly in August, though choice of varieties and sowing dates can alter this, but will also produce crops into the autumn.

## SECTION 5: Using Offsite Locations

Making visits to local parks, woodland, beaches, farms, estates and common land is important for children to gain a sense of space and community. Sometimes if a setting has a restricted outdoor area, the more frequent use of a local area may be a solution to providing higher quality outdoor provision.

When making offsite trips there are a number of important health and safety factors to consider. These include:

- Permissions – from landowner of the site you are using and from parents. Some visits require Local Authority approval
- Insurance – check that your policy covers you for these activities offsite and whether the landowner has public liability insurance for the site
- Policies and procedures – ensure you are adhering to your settings health and safety policies and offsite visits procedures
- Preparations – ensuring all staff, adult helpers and children are well briefed and know the expectations of them, also that they know what to do in an emergency
- Adult to child ratios – need to be adhered to for offsite visits and are usually higher than onsite ratios
- First aid provision – a paediatric first aider and appropriate first aid provision must be available, and any medication children require must be available to them
- Emergency procedures – must be in place and known by all adults, and emergency medical and contact information of all children and adults must be carried
- Risk assessment – the site and activities planned need to be risk assessed before making a visit
- Communication – are you carrying radios or mobile phones, do you get reception?
- Road safety – what are your procedures for walking and crossing roads?
- Establishing boundaries – have you made clear the physical and behavioural boundaries to the group?
- Welfare requirements – how will children go to the toilet or wash hands whilst out?

Norfolk County Council schools and settings must adhere to the 'Educational Visits and Journeys' document and will have an appointed Educational Visits Coordinator.

This document can be viewed online at:

<http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/index.cfm?s=1&m=1376&p=1046,index>

Non- NCC settings still may find this document useful as guidance for making offsite visits.

## SECTION 6: Further Sources of Support

There are many organisations and resources available to schools and settings to support outdoor learning and development of outdoor spaces. The list below is a starting point but is by no means definitive.

### **Learning Through Landscapes**

[www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)

A UK wide organisation that specialises in supporting schools and settings develop and use their grounds. They offer a specific Early Years Outdoors membership package, through which settings can get unlimited advice and support, regular mailing and discounts on a huge variety of resources.

### **Norfolk County Council – Environmental and Outdoor Learning Team**

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/outdoorlearning](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/outdoorlearning)

Offers training, advice and support in all areas of outdoor learning and sustainability for all ages, as well as day visits to beaches, woodland and rivers that are led by qualified teachers.

### **Norfolk County Council – Landscape architects**

Can help design outdoor areas and also provide grants to buy young native trees and local fruit trees.

01603 222771

### **Norfolk County Council – School Waste Action Club**

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/swac](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/swac)

Offer sessions and support in reducing waste, recycling, composting and wormeries.

### **The Woodland Trust**

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

Supports woodland improvement, creation and education about the natural world. Their family of websites offers hundreds of resources. You can also receive free trees from them.

### **Norfolk Wildlife Trust**

[www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

Owns and manages many nature reserves across the county, several of which are visited by school groups. They also offer training, advice and support in school grounds development for wildlife.

### **Play England**

[www.playengland.org.uk](http://www.playengland.org.uk)

Provides advice and support at a strategic level for childrens' play. It also produces many play publications and research.

### **Artists for Learning**

[www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/go/artspartnerships](http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/go/artspartnerships)

Promotes arts opportunities for children through partnerships with settings, communities and artists. Can provide a list of local artists who have been approved for working in educational settings.

### **Campaign for School Gardening**

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/default.aspx>

Resources, information and games aimed at teachers and pupils, with the overall aim of getting 80% of primary schools growing fruit and vegetables by the end of 2010.

### **Growing Schools**

[www.growingschools.org.uk](http://www.growingschools.org.uk)

Supports teachers in using the outdoor classroom as a resource across the curriculum for all age groups.

### **BBC Breathing spaces**

[www.bbc.co.uk/breathingspaces](http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingspaces)

Activities, success stories, resources for schools to encourage everyone to discover outdoor spaces.

### **Forest School – Norfolk**

<http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/go/forestschools>

Information on what Forest School is, where to get support, activities and health and safety.



## SECTION 7: Acknowledgements

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- Fairhaven Primary School
- Nelson Infant School
- North Walsham Infant School
- Norwich Road Primary School
- Pott Row First School
- Suffield Park Children's Centre and Nursery

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