

### A message from Miss Arnold, our Outdoor Learning Lead

I am extremely passionate about the environment and nature. I love teaching in the outdoors and supporting our children to engage in outdoor learning. Outdoor Learning helps our children to make connections with each other and nature too. It is rewarding in so many ways. As an Outdoor Specialist and Beach/Coastal teacher we make use of our local area and extensive school environment within the curriculum. I also share expertise with other schools and collaborate with European schools having had the pleasure of learning about the roots of open-air culture and teaching in other countries. Outdoor learning is part of the connected curriculum with strong links to geography, environmental science, DT and food technology – we love to cook outdoors! I work closely with other specialists with links to Art using natural resources and creating outdoor sculptures alongside METAL. During local visits and residential, children engage in outward bound activities and orienteering too. Outdoor learning is great for developing the children's learning and life skills but also for their wellbeing.

### Design and Do

The Outdoor Learning curriculum is a bespoke package that is child-centred. It offers opportunities for holistic growth of the whole child through regular lessons outside. It supports exploration and risk taking. It develops our children's natural fascination of the world and helps facilitate knowledge gathering but also develop their confidence and self-esteem. It helps our children to develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually alongside their health, mindfulness and spirituality. Children start their journey at Darlinghurst as inquisitive and curious young children. This is encouraged and developed within the Early Years as they explore, discover and create. At the foundation stage there is a sense of awe and wonder with self-discovery and provocations that help them develop characteristics of learning. As children move to the next stage they enhance the characteristics through a focus on learning and life skills each half term. This allows them to apply skills in a hands on experience in a natural setting. Outdoor learning experiences support the development of these skills alongside their understanding of the world around them. Children's knowledge and skills advance through deep and meaningful connections. Connections are made to our connected curriculum subjects of science, geography and design technology across the year, deepening understanding within units of study. The curriculum allows our children to make links across relevant subjects. Links are also made to our community and local environment through visits to woodland, the beach and museums. Children develop their knowledge of physical and human characteristics, places and habitats. Progression is mapped across the year groups and linked to the Learning and Life Skills using the following strands:

- Orienteering and map reading
- Field studies
- Climate change
- Nature and biology
- Outdoor cooking

In Outdoor Learning we use natural and manmade tools with links to technology. This includes food technology with outdoor cooking. We grow our own plants and vegetables within the allotment. The children also care for the wildlife through providing habitats, food and animal care as they learn about biodiversity, bees and care for our own duck.

Each outdoor learning lesson starts with a key question and follow a series of layers allowing children to show what they know, discovery and do. This includes the development of subject terminology for outdoor learning but also application of vocabulary across the connected curriculum.

## Difference

Children gain a strong understanding of the world around them during their time at Darlington. Our hands-on approach to outdoor learning means that children gain a range of skills but also respect and responsibility for the environment. Due to the connections made across the connected curriculum and to learning and life skills children enhance and apply their understanding of other subject matter through a hands on approach. Learning and Life skills are integral to lessons:

- Learning together – e.g. team work, negotiation, compromise, collaboration, turn taking, team roles
- It's up to me – e.g. responsibility, independence, contribution, decision making, effort etc.
- Becoming better learners – involvement, making choices, taking ownership, persistence, risk taking
- Knowing me, knowing you-understanding self and others, impact on others including the world, building confidence, showing empathy etc.
- Think, Think, Think-problem solving, investigation, questioning, ask – what if? E.g. creativity, think outside the box, reason and enquire, evaluate.
- Speaking and listening – e.g. communication, opinions, discussion, sharing views, meaningful conversation, pupil voice, developing vocabulary

Outdoor learning develops children's understanding and their actions. They grow as caring and responsible individuals. Many families engage in community projects to care for the grounds and environment. There is a positive pupil and parental voice for outdoor learning with engagement in projects that support the academy grounds amongst families, staff and communities. This is also reflected in parental choice for the academy with recognition of the importance of learning outside the classroom and our approach. This is further reflected through the interaction in lessons, discussions, children's work, evaluations and teacher assessment. [Children show progress over time with knowledge, skills and understanding at each milestone. This demonstrates that the majority of our children have advanced or deep understanding of the concepts taught.](#) They acquire a sense of responsibility to the environment and recognise the importance that nature brings. This is reflected in their interactions with nature at break times as children play with natural resources, build bug hotels and enjoy nature freely. They have an extensive environment to thrive in and enjoy all areas from the woodland, wild gardens, allotments, animal corner, the pond, outdoor classroom and more. From the EYFS children explore in their own nature garden and mud kitchens, in addition to the academy grounds. Rain or shine, they learn outside and experience the changing seasons.

At the end of their primary education our children begin Secondary school with a strong understanding of the world around them and the impact and difference they make.

Our children are effective contributors who make connections and care for others and the world, supporting change. They become healthy, resilient and creative learners. Our learners (and leaders) love it too!

**'Achieving Excellence Together'**

## Outdoor Learning Reflections and celebrations

In the Early Years, the children look at signs of Autumn in the trees and other life forms, identifying the different colours using the Autumn leaves.

**Example of year 1** - Children learn how to keep safe outside and create outdoor games using natural materials, linking to their learning about toys in the past. They enjoy playing their games with each other.

**Example of Year 2** - Children engage in 'Autumn Watch' exploring photosynthesis and how the seasonal change affect our trees and animals.

By the end of this milestone they are able to show an understanding of the natural world, environments and identify and categorise plants and animals. They compare and describe habitats and surrounding well. This is supported by their knowledge of how the climate impacts on animals. Children have

developed map reading following simple maps and compass points and co-ordinates. During fieldwork they identify physical and human features and land use. They can use a range of tools including outdoor cooking utensils.

As children advance in ODL they increase their skills and understanding of Climate Change, Cooking and DT, Geography and map reading and nature and Biology.

**Example of Year 3** – Children take part in Outdoor art using natural materials, colour blending and making links to Stone Age cave paintings in history.

**Example of Year 4** – Children visit Belfair's Woods. They use their senses to explore the woods. They enjoy making animal habitats, art/music in the woods and blindfold challenges.

By the end of the second milestone children are able to show a great understanding of animals and plants – functions, nutrition and digestive systems. They can describe the impact of weather and climate. By this milestone children can use a variety of maps and follow compass points and symbols. In cooking children prepare ingredients and follow instructions with increased independence. They apply their scientific knowledge to cooking investigations.

**Example of Year 5** – Children conduct a site survey, creating a map of the academy using a key to then create designs for a new school pond.

**Example of Year 6** – Children design their own solar systems looking at terrain/atmosphere linked to their science lessons. They also learn different Army Survival skills – building fires using flint and steel.

By the final milestone children can classify and describe living things including life cycles and evolution. They understand the causes of climate change and the impact. They can apply map reading and orienteering skills practically working as a team including geo-caching. By the end of the milestone, children can cook using outdoor cooking techniques safely.

Children love exploring and learning outside. They are motivated and eager to engage. They enjoy the trips across the years in local woods, the beach and further field. This includes residential visits to PGL in year 6. The engagement in community projects, such as the collaborative project - Art Makes Children Powerful, planting trees with Trust Links and planning for future pond projects is highly supported by the community.

At Darlinghurst we value learning outside the classroom. Interests are continued for many children and an outlet for their own interests in nature. Children share and celebrate their engagement in nature, 30 days wild and adventures outdoors.



