

The sky is the limit  
on learning







Outdoor learning and learning outdoors – there is a difference but both are fun and useful for stimulating curiosity, teaching vital practical skills, developing aesthetic appreciation and building resilience.

The sky is the limit on learning when you have 27 acres of outdoor space and dedicated, knowledgeable staff available to provide stimulating learning experiences in the great outdoors.

This includes:

- gardens and courtyards
- playgrounds and trim trails
- astros and pitches
- courts and tracks
- a wild area complete with dipping pond, bug hotel, bird feeding station and all-weather shelter

# The Early Years

Girls learn through play and exploration at their own pace and according to their own preferences.

**Maths concepts?** They can measure length and compare distances in the classroom, or study wiggly worms or sticks and branches in the outdoors.

## **Building vocabulary?**

Planting **p**ansies in **p**ots is great for learning about the letter 'p'.

The mud kitchen is always a favourite, while growing crops in raised beds teaches about the rhythm of the seasons and the food cycle.





# Key Stage 1



Natural curiosity finds a ready outlet in sessions outdoors which complement the greater structure and formality of the curriculum in Years 1 and 2.

Learning where food comes from and understanding the changes of the seasons, making art from natural materials, building catapults, measuring trees – the outdoors provides an invigorating counterpart to the vibrancy of the classrooms.

We can move faster, look higher, dig deeper and shout louder when the sky is our limit.

*“I wonder why some of my leaves in my garden are turning purple?” - Avleen*

# Years 3 and 4

We try out theories we have learnt in real-life situations – calculating perimeters and areas with measures and a trundle wheel, looking for evidence of evaporation and condensation in nature and exercising all five senses in the wild to make our nature poems even more vivid.

We explore at the limit of our comfort zones in our first residential – to Beaumanor in Leicestershire where outdoor learning, including challenging ourselves to show initiative and working together well as a team, is the whole point. That, and having fun with our classmates.

We explore beyond our boundaries, testing our map skills in a walk around the neighbourhood.





# Years 5 and 6

*“It gets the clog out of your ears.” - Felicity*

Learning outdoors gives us the space to breathe and to move freely. We love the way being outdoors refreshes our brains and makes them feel more energetic.

In winter, we can observe the signs of hibernation in the flora and fauna (and build igloos in the snow on those rare, white days). In the warmer months, we love to read and do presentations in the gazebo, sketch and do role plays on the grass, go in search of fruit to pick or insects to observe in the gardens.

A visit to Grafham Water or Osmington Bay brings opportunities to test our courage on the high ropes or

in the water. The orienteering skills we learn now will come in useful when we have a go at Outward Bound or Duke of Edinburgh in the Senior School...



# Forest School

## **Forest School is much more than outdoor education.**

A fully integrated and structured programme of activities underpinned by a wealth of research and risk assessment, it combines elements of bushcraft, skills-building, adventure, environmental awareness, character education and personal well-being.

## **Girls love Forest School.**

From Nursery upwards, all our girls have the opportunity to take part in Forest School sessions coordinated by a fully trained and experienced Forest School Leader in our dedicated wild area.





# There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.



What the girls experience is the freedom to choose their own challenges and to give free rein to their imaginations. Whatever the weather, there is something exciting to do.

**Snowy?** We can build snowmen, finding stones and leaves for eyes and noses.

**Freezing?** We can build a fire in our fire pit and then warm up with hot chocolate in the shared shelter.

**Raining?** We can build dens and then test whether they are waterproof.

**Misty?** If the long view is invisible, we can visit our bug hotel to see how the mini-beasts are doing.

**Sunny?** We can make natural dyes with whatever is to hand and then have a picnic in our log circle.

# Play and Learn

Children need to play as much as they need formal learning in lessons – and not just when they are in the Early Years. They need play throughout childhood.

Our girls are experts at play, using the space and the many resources they have available to them to exercise body, mind and imagination to the full.

Here are just a few of their favourites: bat-and-ball, chalks, cheerleading, chicken hero twins, climbing, cup-and-ball, cross the golden river, football, frisbee, gymnastics, hoops, hot potato, netball, reading, role play, roly poly, skipping, splat!, stilts, tag, tag rugby, tennis, three legged races, trim trail...







# How families can help

*“By following the lead of the child, listening, observing, and questioning when appropriate, we are able to extend the play experience in a positive and non-controlling way and enhance learning” - Leigh-Anne Stradeski*

All the research shows that play, supported by encouraging adults, can greatly enhance the learning experiences of children. Overleaf are just a handful of

suggestions of ways in which you can build on the work we do in school to help your daughter to learn through play and exploration in the outdoors.



**Let her get dirty** – giving her free rein to explore will involve messy hands and clothes.

**Giving your attention is the best gift** – she will enjoy telling you what she knows and what she has seen and done.

**Look and listen** – watching what she notices and what she says about it will give you vital clues about how her view of the world is developing and how you can build on her understanding with new vocabulary or knowledge.



Some specific activities:

### **Autumn:**

Tree bark rubbing

Making natural dyes from berries

Collecting leaves to compare and tracing their outlines or using them in artwork

Drying seeds for use in artwork or for planting later

Setting up a bird feeding station

### **Winter:**

Making Christmas decorations out of natural materials

Building a snowman

Watching what happens to icicles during the day

Having a bonfire

Feeding the birds

## Spring:

Identifying spring flowers

Planting seeds and watering the plants

Minibeast hunting

Building a waterproof den

Making stick sculptures

## Summer:

A neighbourhood walk investigating local amenities such as post boxes, shops and the war memorial

Pond dipping

Building a teepee

Looking after a patch of garden and learning gardening routines

Starting a weather log and taking the temperature each day











NORTHAMPTON  
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GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST