



## ***Outdoor Learning Statement***

### **Rationale**

Ingfield Manor School is fortunate to be situated within a rural setting, which includes woodland, grassland and pond land which are an integral part of our teaching and learning. Outdoor learning is a broad term that includes discovery, experimentation, learning about and connecting to the natural world, and engaging in environmental and adventure activities.

Research shows that exposure to outdoor green space has a beneficial impact on cognitive development, (Natural England, 2016. Dadvand et al, 2015, Learning and Teaching, Scotland 2010). All students at Ingfield have neurological impairments resulting in complex physical disabilities, and many have significant sensory challenges.

Links between learning in the natural environment and special needs is documented by Natural England who suggest that students are more motivated when learning in a natural environment, which may result in higher achievement than their peers or their own targeted projected attainment, and develop a greater sense of community. The greatest cognitive benefits appear to be for children with below average achievement and/or special needs.

### **Intent**

At Ingfield Manor we know that education is not just about lessons within the four walls of a classroom, we recognise that all curriculum subjects can be successfully delivered in the outdoor environment. By linking to the school's holistic approach to learning and following the Conductive Education ethos, learning outdoors at Ingfield helps maximise the potential of our learners and enables them to achieve their personal aspirations.

At Ingfield, we provide first-hand experiences outdoors to motivate children and young people to become successful learners and to develop as healthy, confident, enterprising and responsible citizens. By providing well-constructed and well-planned outdoor learning, our students develop the skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection necessary for them to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges of their adult life. Outdoor learning connects children and young people with the natural world.

We believe learning outside the classroom will help make subjects more vivid and interesting for our students and enhance their understanding. Interacting with greenspace, contributes significantly to our students' physical and mental health, emotional well-being, as well as personal and social development. In addition, skills such as problem solving and negotiating risk can be encouraged and

developed. It also provides opportunities to become physically active in alternative ways and help reduce the impact of the sensory challenges faced by some of our students. Learning outdoors can also help students develop tolerance of different sensory stimuli, such as unfamiliar sounds.

By engaging all senses when learning outdoors, students can remember and recall their learning more effectively, as it becomes more deeply embedded through the multi-sensory approach. Also, learning in the fresh air enables the inhalation of oxygen-rich air, which aids focus and attention, as well as supporting the breathing of students with reduced lung capacity.

Most of our students rely on full or partial use of augmentative and alternative communication which impacts on their ability to show what they know. Learning outdoors at Ingfield provides opportunities to apply language to a variety of practical situations, which adds to the building of categorisation skills. It also provides meaning to abstract language and enables students to transfer skills and learning across contexts, thus embedding it.

Learning outdoors at Ingfield Manor encourages our students to make connections experientially, leading to deeper understanding within and between curriculum areas and meeting learner needs. Outdoor learning, used in a range of ways, enriches the curriculum, and makes learning fun, meaningful and relevant for our students.

Outdoor learning can deliver sustainable development education in addition to promoting citizenship and community experiences through initiatives such as working to improve biodiversity in the school grounds and taking part in national enterprises, for example, the RSPB Birdwatch and the Woodland Trust 'Plant a Tree' campaign.

Learning outdoors enables learners to broaden their experiences. It is in the world beyond the classroom that young people will apply their learning in the future and outdoor learning provides opportunities to develop social and emotional resilience, support wider learning and develop broader interests.

## **Implementation**

At Ingfield Manor, the majority of outdoor learning will take place in our school grounds and woodland and teachers will plan activities using the SAGED approach:

- Staff – ensuring sufficient numbers and appropriate trained staff
- Activity – linked to the curriculum subject, providing hands on and multi-sensory experiences, which are planned to develop specific skills, such as problem-solving, independence and team work.
- Group – ensure the mix of students is conducive to the learning intent of the session
- Environment – liaise with the school's woodsman regarding specific equipment necessary, ensure all resources are available and environments accessible
- Distance – consider how to keep in touch with the school in the event of emergency, for medication administration and enteral feeds.

The resources available at Ingfield Manor and that can be utilised for outdoor learning are:

- Woodland
- Accessible paths
- Green open spaces
- Sensory pond

- Accessible dipping pond
- Multi use games area
- Fire pit
- Ingfield Manor Light Railway, including stations
- Bug hotels
- Snake houses
- Bird watching hide
- Outdoor classroom
- Outdoor compostable toilet
- Lions den
- Individual tents
- Range of natural seating
- Woodland sensory trail
- Symbolised information points
- Outdoor whiteboard

As well as using the outdoor space to support the everyday curriculum, it will also be utilised for topic days and enrichment activities.

To support our students, manage their emotional wellbeing and sensory processing, our outdoor spaces are accessed as and when needed. Students are encouraged to recognise when this is needed and to request it.

Our woodland area is also accessed as a forest school environment for local schools, which provides opportunities for our students to work in partnership with their mainstream peers.

Our 6<sup>th</sup> Form students have the option of studying towards the John Muir Award, which encourages them to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places, as well as encouraging awareness and responsibility for the natural environment through a structured, adaptable scheme, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration.

### **Impact**

The impact of our outdoor learning is monitored through qualitative assessment:

- Student evaluation of the activities
- The development of students' metacognition skills
- Observing students' engagement and motivation whilst in the outdoors
- Student's ability to recall information learnt outside and transferring it back to the classroom
- Student's ability to put skills and knowledge into practice in real life experiences
- The ability for students to manage their emotions
- The ability for students to regulate and cope with sensory input
- The way outdoor learning enriches the other curriculum areas
- Completion of the John Muir Award

### References

Dadvand. J et al, (2015), *Green spaces and cognitive development in primary school children*, available at: [www.pnas.org](http://www.pnas.org)

Lovell. R, (2016), *Links between natural environments and learning:evidence briefing*: Natural England  
Smarter Scotland, (2010), *Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning*. Scotland: Learning and teaching.