

Milngavie Primary Outdoor Learning and Environmental Sustainability Strategy Paper



June 2020



Date of Policy: June 2020

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Review Date: TBC

Purpose of the strategy

To lay out plans for the development of Learning for Sustainability within the school

The strategy will reflect national, local and school priorities and is based on the following key documents

- How Good Is Our School 4? (HGIOS 4)
- National Improvement Framework (NIF)
- Learning for Sustainability (LfS)
- Vision 2030+
- East Dunbartonshire Council Sustainability and Climate Change Framework
- GTCS Standards for Registration

Our Vision

In partnership with our school community, our vision is to successfully deliver/achieve the following within our school:

“Learning for sustainability (LfS) is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. An effective whole school and community approach to LfS weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education, outdoor learning and children’s rights to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences.”

How Good is Our School 4? Education Scotland, 2015

Quality Improvement Framework

In relation to HGIOS 4 this strategy will address the following indicators as it is implemented:

1.3 Leadership of Change (*Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community; Strategic planning for continuous improvement; Implementing improvement and change*)

2.2 Curriculum (*Rationale and design; Development of the curriculum; Learning pathways z Skills for learning, life and work*)

2.7 Partnerships (*The development and promotion of partnerships; Collaborative learning and improvement; Impact on learners*)

3.3 Increasing Creativity and Employability (*Creativity skills; Digital innovation; Digital literacy; Increasing employability skills*)

Outdoor Learning and John Muir Award

Introduction

The Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning was created in 2010 aiming to provide children with the opportunity to learn out with the classroom in a variety of locations from the school grounds to further afield.

Outdoor learning experiences are often remembered for a lifetime. The experiences in the outdoors are vital in connecting children to the world around us and the skills that they are learning in the outdoors can be transferred across the curriculum.

The curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning (2010) vision for Scotland is that:

- All children and young people are participating in a range of progressive and creative outdoor learning experiences which are part of the curriculum
- Schools and centres are providing regular, frequent, enjoyable and challenging opportunities for all children and young people to learn outdoors throughout their school career and beyond
- Teachers and educators embed outdoor learning in the curriculum so that learning in the outdoor environment becomes a reality for all children and young people

What is outdoor learning/Definition

‘Talking to the trees and hiding in the trees precedes saving the trees’ Sable

Outdoor learning and learning through play connect children to the natural world around us. Outdoor learning is a broad term that includes exploring, experimenting, discovery, encouraging courageous play. The outdoors opens experiences to children that would be near impossible indoors. By learning in the outdoors children can use natural resources to try and solve problems which might limit them in the classroom.

The John Muir Award

In Primary 5, children have an opportunity to gain certificated recognition for their commitment to the outdoors by completing The John Muir Award. John Muir (1838-1914) grew up in Dunbar, near Edinburgh. He spent his childhood in the outdoors, exploring the natural world around him and it was here that his passion for wild places grew. He explored the large mountains ranges to the tiny insects making connections between all living things around him and the importance of saving them. He was active in his role to save wild spaces and educated people to ensure they understood the importance of nature.

(John Muir Trust, 2020)

An application is applied for yearly with teachers agreeing what activities the children will take part in. This is very much a working document that can be changed and adapted

throughout the award which means it can be altered to meet the needs and interests of the children. Through the award, children have an opportunity to discover, explore and conserve a wild place and share their experiences with others. The John Muir Award:

- Helps you appreciate the value of nature, urban green spaces and wild landscapes
- Encourages awareness, understanding and responsibility for wild places
- Promote personal development through outdoor experiences
- Encourage an environmental agenda-for individuals and organisation
- Recognise and celebrate the achievements of everyone that meets awards criteria

(The John Muir Trust, 2020)

There is an endless list of benefits in children learning in the outdoors. Learning through Landscapes states “Outdoor learning allows children to connect with nature, become more active and learning in the outdoors.”

“Outdoor learning experiences are often remembered for a lifetime. Integrating learning and outdoor experiences, whether through play in the immediate grounds or further afield, provides relevance and depth to the curriculum in ways that are difficult to achieve indoors.” (Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning, 2010)

Global Citizenship

“Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies.” (UNSECO, 2019). Through outdoor learning, Global Citizenship can be taught in a way that helps children make sense of their role in the world around them.

Why include Outdoor Learning in Learners Experiences?

Personal Development

Learning in the outdoors a huge impact on children’s health and well- being, development, social skills and education. Unfortunately, media has played a huge part in children spending less time playing in the outdoors with the percentage of children doing so dramatically decreasing by 30 per cent.

The John Muir Award allows young people to discover a wild place, explore it, conserve it and share their experiences with others which results in children having increased confidence, improved team working skills, more resilient and higher self-esteem. Ulset Vitaro et al (2017) suggests that time spent in the outdoors improves children’s cognitive and behavioural development. Fresh air, daylight and the increased movement of learning in the outdoors enables children to retain more of what they have learnt resulting in raising attainment.

Social Development

Outdoor learning enhances social skills, builds relationships and increases confidence in group working. Evidence suggests there is a strong link between outdoor learning and social development. Children use their senses to experience the world around them. Good quality

learning outside the classroom enhances the learning within the classroom which will have an adverse effect of raising attainment. Studies show that there is an improvement in children's behaviour and attendance with the introduction of more outdoor learning.

Where should John Muir Award and Outdoor Learning take place?

Milngavie Primary is located in a semi-rural location, allowing for several places in and around the school grounds where children can safely explore and learn in the outdoors.

The Local Environment

The school grounds have lots of little areas within the school that are ideal for exploring and learning in. The school playground benefits from the secret garden area and the school garden has a variety of plant life which attracts lots of insects and wildlife perfect for learning in the outdoor classroom.

Places Further Afield

A short walk from the school is Barloch Moore which has a lot of plant life and open spaces that is great for exploring and learning in whilst being in a safe area. The Mugdock Rangers have led many great lessons with the children in this location.

A short bus journey away is Mugdock Country Park. The park offers huge diversity from vast greenery, lots of nature, pondlife, parks and exciting forest trails to explore and discover.

The Mugdock Rangers are on hand to teach classes or offer invaluable advice.

Residential Places

In Primary 7 a trip to Ardmay is offered which is the majority of children's first experience of staying away from their family for more than a couple of nights. These experiences are monumental in offering children a chance to try new activities that they have not experienced before. They can develop their social skills, teamworking skills, grow in confidence and discover new skills that they may excel in.

The Curriculum for Excellence states that children who spend time away from home are given;

- Confidence by living more independently and making their own decisions
- Resilience, by having individual and group ownership or learning, community living and sharing free time
- A sense of adventure by exploring new places and new environments
- An appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity
- A chance to reflect on experiences and learning

(Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning, 2010)

Culture and Community

For Milngavie Primary School, the aim is for children to access the curriculum whilst experiencing the benefits of nature and the outdoors.

Milngavie Primary School will continue to give children the opportunities to complete the John Muir Discovery Award in Primary 5 which will provide children with new learning experiences out with the classroom. Liaising with John Muir Award staff provides support and additional ideas for teachers to complete with children.

Children have an opportunity to participate in outdoor learning through a variety of planned lessons across all curricular areas. There are lots of ideas of the outdoor learning progression framework available for P1-P7 which is very much a working document which staff are encouraged to add to and amend.

Involving Mugdock Rangers in outdoors should continue as they can share a lot of knowledge and expertise in lots of different subject areas in nature which ultimately enhances the teaching and learning experience for all.

A yearly celebration to Mugdock Country Park should continue. P1-P3 arrive and return by bus with P4-P7 walking from school through the start of the West Highland Way to Mugdock Park for a planned end of year fun day. Activities include nature trails, toasting marshmallows and games.

The Common curriculum 'gardening club' should also continue to give children additional opportunities to experience the outdoors through personal choice.

Global Citizenship through fiction, which can be found on the outdoor learning progression framework, should be used to expose children to complex themes through nature.

Barriers to Outdoor Learning and how they can be overcome

There are endless benefits of outdoor learning, however there is often a few barriers that need to be removed before any progression is made.

- Lack of confidence to deliver lessons in the outdoors. Risk and liability is a major factor in feeling less confident in taking children into the outdoors, so it is important to be clear of limitations. Risk is something that children need to experience to learn and develop and to understand the world around them so they must be given the opportunities to do this whilst being in a safe and secure environment. Through forest schools, staff CPD opportunities, stage partner and forward plan meetings there are plenty of opportunities to develop these skills and increase confidence in this area. By planning more lessons in the outdoors, confidence in this area will gradually increase.
- Weather is a factor which can have an immediate impact on outdoor lessons going ahead. Ensuring children have the correct clothing and footwear and are warm they will not be put off by some bad weather. This encourages children to be more resilient and often feel a sense of huge achievement and enjoyment as a result.
- Heading off into the wilderness can feel quite disruptive, to begin with, children are excited about the thought of leaving the classroom and going somewhere new, however as frequency increases, the more integrated into everyday teaching it becomes.

Learning for Sustainability

Introduction

Learning for Sustainability is an international priority (UNESCO 2013). It involves learning to live within the environmental limits of our planet and to build a just, equitable and peaceful society. It is concerned with every level and type of learning and the provision of quality education for all.

In Scotland, Learning for Sustainability became the umbrella term created by the One Planet Schools Working Group to cover Sustainable Development Education, Developing Global Citizenship and Outdoor Learning. In December 2012 the group produced a national Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) Report which was accepted and adopted by The Scottish Government.

The 2016 publication of the Vision 2030+ reinforced this.

As part of its Sustainability and Climate Change Framework as well as its ESD policy paper (which is currently in development 2019/2020), East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) has also accepted the ideas put forward within the Lfs report and aims to promote awareness and build the capacity of these government/GTC sustainability requirements within all centres of education (East Dunbartonshire Council, 2016).

Lfs - A Definition

The One Planet Report Working Group definition is as follows: 'A whole-school approach that enables the school and its wider community to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society.' This definition has been adopted in East Dunbartonshire.

Recommendations

The report of the One Planet Schools Working Group recognised the need to move from a system which was often reliant on the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals, to one where a learner's access to Learning for Sustainability is recognised as core to their learning experience. Their high-level recommendations are:

- All learners should have an entitlement to Learning for Sustainability in their curriculum.
- In line with the new GTC Professional Standards, every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate learning for sustainability in their practice.
- Every school should have a whole school approach to Learning for Sustainability that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels.
- School buildings, grounds and policies should support learning for sustainability.

General Teaching Council Scotland (GTC Scotland) Expectations

GTC Scotland has adopted the One Planet Working Group's definition of Learning for Sustainability and has embedded it in their suite of Professional Standards: The Standards for Registration, the Standards for Career-Long Professional Learning and the Standards for Leadership and Management. GTC Scotland seeks 'to support leaders in actively embracing and promoting principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work' and state that 'all teachers should have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge

concerning important cross-cutting themes across the curriculum, such as international education, sustainable development, citizenship, enterprise and creativity’.

Why include Learning for Sustainability within pupils’ learning experiences?

Many practitioners have found that Learning for Sustainability provides motivational, relevant, challenging and creative learning experiences which engage learners and improve behaviour, attitude and attainment.

LfS is about ensuring that we all recognise our responsibilities to each other and the wider world. Our children and young people are growing up in a global world and their education must help them develop skills for learning and prepare them for living and working in an increasingly multicultural, sustainable and international society.

Our planet is affected by major issues such as climate change and global poverty. These require our young people to be part of an innovative generation that knows how to work with others to find solutions, that cares about human rights and values and celebrates cultural diversity.

Within the school community the general feeling, as expressed by members of the parent council throughout multiple meetings, is in line with the current societal trends advocating sustainable lifestyles.

LfS allows pupils to:

- Learn **about** the world – become **successful learners** by developing a knowledge and understanding of the landscape, the natural and cultural heritage of Scotland and the wider world and, while doing so, become reflective and open to new thinking and ideas.
- Learn **for** life and work in a global society – by developing into **responsible citizens** and **effective contributors** who have a respect for the environment, others and understand and appreciate different beliefs and views while being able to communicate their own beliefs and views to others with confidence (also helping them become **confident individuals**).
- Learn **through** global contexts – learning to live sustainable lives by appreciating the inter-dependence of people and the environment worldwide, and able to apply critical thinking in new contexts, locally and beyond.

What does this mean for Milngavie Primary?

All learners have an entitlement to Learning for Sustainability as part of their education. Therefore, MPS needs to:

- adopt a whole school/community approach to Learning for Sustainability
- ensure that school buildings, grounds and policies support learning for sustainability approaches

To do so, MPS will ensure that the following areas are addressed through the lens of LfS - curriculum, campus, culture and community:

Curriculum

By adapting the curriculum, we can plan relevant and meaningful LfS opportunities.

Moving forwards MPS should work to integrate the Environmental Sustainability Planner into core IDL teaching over all stages ensuring that during a pupil's journey from P1 – P7 they are allowed to

experience and engage with the key aspects of environmental sustainability. This will happen over and above any positive LfS learning opportunities that already take place at MPS.

The planner is a working document and staff will be encouraged to actively add to the planner and expand upon it as they explore the environmental sustainability themes so that the planner provides challenge and enjoyment, breadth, progression, depth, coherence, relevance, personalisation and choice.

Campus

MPS will maximise the use of its resources, buildings, school and community grounds as part of its work to embed Learning for Sustainability.

Moving forwards the school should incorporate its Secret Garden and Orchard areas as well as community areas Barloch Moor and Mugdock Park into any environmental sustainability learning plans. This interaction with nature through outdoor learning will not only benefit the wellbeing of the pupils but will boost the seven capacities of curricular design.

The school should also audit and review its recycling capabilities and energy usage. These actions can again be carried out and monitored by pupils building upon the positive culture of sustainability already within the school. Key areas of focus moving forward are bistro waste, paper waste, playground recycling and energy waste from lighting/electronic equipment.

In collaboration with local business Gavin's Mill the school already has in place the plans for a crisp packet recycling scheme. Work will be undertaken over the coming year to take these plans to fruition and hopefully, similar processes can be expanded into other areas.

Culture and Community

MPS aims to promote awareness and understanding of global environmental issues and to provide its pupils and the community surrounding the school with the skills to be able to address them.

Moving forward the school will continue to operate its Sustrans cycling scheme providing pupils and families with skills and an incentive to participate in green transport/travel where possible.

MPS should also make use of the school leadership groups with regards to LfS. Each year there should be continues progression demonstrated in the work that is undertaken. House Captains should also play a core role in promoting a culture of sustainability within the school. House captains could be allowed to take on specific additional roles following personal interests of theirs. In this case, a sustainability captain position could be offered. This position would need to be applied for by the captains individually and would lead to the successful pupil taking up further leadership responsibilities and being awarded an

additional leadership badge. These are all ideas that should be explored to promote sustainability throughout the school.

The environmental sustainability planner within MPS also delegates whole class roles for each class P1-P7 to undertake throughout the year, including litter monitors/cycling monitors/animal conservation, in the coming school year these class activities should be taken up and so instilling thinking about LfS throughout the school. Again, the IDL learning outlined in the planner should be phased into the curriculum which will also boost the positive LfS culture within the school.

Currently, the school works closely with a parent suitability group who will be contributing their expertise, manpower and connections to the work going on concerning the IDL planner. They also have been key in forming the relationship with local business Gavin's Mill as mentioned previously. They have also been running green action workshops as part of the school's common curriculum programme. This group are keen to help the school however they can with regards to LfS and moving forwards MPS should continue to collaborate with them as a means of engaging the wider community in its sustainability efforts.

Barriers to LfS and how they can be overcome

In a recent (Kang, 2019) study it was found that the core barriers to the teaching of LfS were a lack of information/knowledge within the teaching staff of the area of sustainability and secondly a lack of teaching resources.

Firstly, with regards to the lack of teaching materials the Environmental Sustainability Planner created in 2019 provided a base set of lesson ideas that as mentioned earlier will be built upon by staff as it is progressed.

Secondly with regards to the lack of knowledge staff should be encouraged to take part in CPD with a focus upon LfS. Again, through the link formed with the parent working group and their outward connections possible future carbon literacy courses may be offered to members of staff.

Evaluation

Moving forwards MPS should make use of self-evaluation framework tools to support its cycle of sustainability self-improvement. Education Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Self-Evaluation and Improvement Framework is designed to supplement wider conversations around whole school evaluation and improvement and could be used as a means to measure progress in at MPS.



EMERGING PRACTICE		HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
<p>Self-evaluation for self-improvement We have identified LFS as an area for improvement in our establishment. Looking inwards, outwards and forwards, we are building a shared understanding of LFS and its relevance to our learners. Planning is underway to gather baseline LFS information. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 1.1, 2.6)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>Planning for LFS is well embedded in our culture. Almost all stakeholders have a good understanding and a strong and well-established vision for LFS and its relevance to learners. We are looking inwards, outwards and forwards more effectively and systematically, gathering a wide range of evidence to demonstrate the impact of LFS.</p>
<p>Leadership of learning Some staff have benefitted from LFS career-long professional learning (CLPL) opportunities. Some coordinators lead LFS with groups, such as the Pupil Council, but groups have yet to work together in a coordinated way. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 1.2, 2.7)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>We have a collegiate learning culture within our school aligned to the GTCS professional standards. The effectiveness of our CLPL is evidenced by a range of reliable data demonstrating improved outcomes for learners. There is leadership at all levels in relation to LFS. There is a strategic balance across the different aspects of global citizenship, sustainable development education, outdoor learning, participation and learner voice. All of our LFS activities are recognised as contributions towards a coherent and holistic whole school approach to learning for sustainability.</p>
<p>Leadership of change and management of staff Our staff are aware of some LFS themes and can identify what these look like in their context. There is good practice in some aspects of LFS. A coherent unifying vision for LFS has yet to be developed. Some of our policies reflect LFS themes and some attempt has been made to make decision-making processes more inclusive. Driving forward the LFS agenda is largely left to one or two practitioners, co-ordinators or champions. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 1.3, 1.4, 2.7)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>Our LFS culture is fully embedded in our establishment and all stakeholders are fully involved in decision-making and planning. A positive, open and participative ethos is exemplified in a warm, respectful and caring atmosphere and a strong community spirit. Staff have ownership of the LFS vision and LFS themes are reflected through policies and inclusive decision making processes, from ethical purchasing to CLPL provision. Staff engage effectively with a range of partners to ensure all learners receive their LFS entitlement.</p>
<p>Management of resources to promote equity We are beginning to explore how our school buildings and grounds can support LFS. Some work has been done to improve environmental practice in relation to waste minimisation and energy and water usage. Some effort has been made to improve our school grounds. The grounds are beginning to support daily contact with nature. We have a basic school travel plan. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 1.5.2.1, 2.2, 2.5 2.7)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>We have evidence and data to demonstrate improvements to the sustainability of our school building and grounds. Our grounds are varied and provide stimulating opportunities for learning, developing skills and engaging with nature. Our outdoor learning practice aims to tackle inequity and is informed by research. Our school travel plan is linked to our curriculum. Learners lead action plans and we have gathered data to show that active travel has increased.</p>

EMERGING PRACTICE		HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
<p>Curriculum, Learning, teaching and assessment LFS themes have been embedded in a few obvious curriculum areas as a result of the commitment of a small number of dedicated practitioners and/or involvement in award programmes. Some attempt has been made to connect learning across a small number of subjects or curriculum areas through one-off focus days/ theme weeks. Learners in some classes or pupil groups are developing skills for learning, life and work through LFS. There is some evidence of high-quality learning experiences relating to LFS in our school but a consistent approach is yet to emerge. Learners have some opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and wider community. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 2.2, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 3.1, 3.2)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>The development of our curriculum is underpinned by a whole school approach to LFS. LFS themes and approaches are embedded in the four contexts for learning. All practitioners demonstrate LFS in their practice and all learners receive their entitlement to learning for sustainability. Outdoor learning is a regular, curriculum-led experience. Learners engage in motivating and relevant interdisciplinary activities relating to topical LFS themes. LFS is being used to promote skills for learning, life and work including leadership and higher order thinking skills. Our learners contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community. Learners' LFS achievements are recorded, recognised and accredited, where appropriate.</p>
<p>Partnerships Our school has partnerships with a number of local organisations, businesses and national third sector organisations including charity and voluntary groups. Some parents are involved in our LFS work through the parent council or volunteering for one-off events. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 2.5, 2.7)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>Our school effectively engages with partners to promote a coherent whole school approach to LFS. We have a clear strategy for growing existing LFS partnerships and establishing new ones. The school is recognised as being open to new ideas and is highly regarded for the active role it plays in personal development and active citizenship. LFS activities have significantly enhanced parental and community engagement. Relationships between staff, learners, parents and wider community groups are wholly positive and mutually beneficial.</p>
<p>Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion Raising attainment and achievement Creativity and employability Some learners have the opportunity to engage in activities such as charity fundraising, conservation work, campaigning and awareness raising through committees, clubs and societies. Pupil councils and focus groups are in operation but we have yet to consider how their work relates to LFS across the whole school. LFS activities are improving outcomes for some learners particularly through participation of pupil groups or as a result of a small number of committed practitioners. Some learners are being given an opportunity for personal achievement in LFS. Staff are beginning to engage children and young people in meaningful discussion about their skills development in relation to LFS activities. (HGIOS4? Q.I. Links 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Our next step:</p>	<p>LFS activities support our ethos and culture of participation and inclusion (linked to GIRFEC and the UNCRC). There is a strong focus on learner voice in decision-making and planning. We value and celebrate diversity and challenge discrimination and prejudice. LFS is helping to achieve the best possible outcomes for all learners. Motivating and engaging LFS experiences are raising attainment and promoting a culture of achievement. Particular attention is given to removing barriers to learning and raising attainment of our most disadvantaged learners. Learners contribute to the school and society as global citizens, developing an international mind-set to help them thrive in an increasingly globalised world. LFS methodologies support creativity and encourage learners to think critically, be imaginative, open-minded and solution-focused. Information about careers linked to the breadth of the LFS agenda is embedded within learning and teaching.</p>