



St Gerard Majella School



Outdoor Learning and Nature Play Policy

PREAMBLE

At St Gerard Majella School, we believe that children can derive tremendous benefit from taking part in regular nature play and learning outside of the classroom. This can help to bring many learning areas alive as they focus on real results and consequences. For that reason, the outdoors can have a significant impact on addressing areas of the Australian Curriculum. Nature play also provides experiential opportunities allowing children to respond positively to challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change. Active outdoor learning and nature play readily develops the learning skills of enquiry, experiment, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem solving, an enterprising attitude and cooperative learning.

In addition, some key ways in which exposure to the natural environment is beneficial to human health are:

- enhanced personal and social communication skills
- increased physical health, supporting the development of healthy, active lifestyles
- enhanced mental and spiritual health
- enhanced spiritual, sensory, and aesthetic awareness
- the ability to assert personal control and increased sensitivity to one's own well-being

There is strong evidence that good quality learning and nature play adds value to classroom/indoor learning. It can lead to a deeper understanding of the concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone.

Quality learning experiences in 'real' situations have the capacity to raise achievement across a range of subjects/areas of development and to develop better personal and social skills. When these experiences are well planned, safely managed and personalised to meet the needs of every child, they can:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Provide a bridge to higher order learning.
- Develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments.
- Make learning more engaging and relevant to young people.
- Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment.
- Nurture creativity.
- Provide opportunities for informal learning through play.
- Reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance.
- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation.
- Develop the ability to deal with uncertainty.
- Provide challenge and the opportunity to take acceptable levels of risk.
- Improve resilience and positive attitudes in young people.



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POLICY

At St Gerard Majella School we aim to develop units of work and activities which provides inclusive, frequent and progressive outdoor learning and nature play for all children. The school will continue to develop and maintain nature play spaces within the school, available to enhance children's learning experiences and commits to improve the effectiveness of outdoor learning through planning and evaluating outcomes. To ensure the effectiveness of outdoor learning, the school commits to providing all educators with the relevant training, support and encouragement to deliver the curriculum, where most appropriate, in an outdoor setting.

VALUES

Community, Equity, Responsibility, Compassion, Justice, Commitment, Endurance, Communication and Sense of Wonder

PRINCIPLES

Risk Benefit Assessment

We believe that children benefit greatly from the opportunity to encounter and manage small risks for themselves, in order to build their self-confidence, resilience and independence. Curriculum Risk Assessments are completed as required by Workplace Health and Safety regulations and are monitored as required.

Health and Safety

Society needs to strike a reasonable balance between the value of experience and levels of acceptable risk. In the first instance, the school's policies relating to Health and Safety and Curriculum Risk Assessment should be referred to and applied, prior to any outdoor learning activity that may require additional support beyond the activities which would normally apply within the classroom. It is important that the school applies supervision and safety procedures to effectively manage and minimise risks. It is equally important that all involved, including parents, acknowledge that a degree of residual risk remains and regular communication regarding the benefits and risk of outdoor learning and nature play will feature in school newsletters. Parents/carers receive information and sign consent forms for outdoor activities which have been deemed a higher risk.



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EVALUATION

This policy is to be reviewed as part of the School's renewal cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Board on 28 November 2018

Chair Signature.....