



# Southridge First School Whole School Newsletter December 2025



*"Proud to Make a Positive Impact"*

## What's Inside

<b>Christmas time</b>	<b>Outdoor Learning at Southridge - a published review</b>	<b>Parent Governor vacancy</b>	<b>Leave of Absence requests and Attendance</b>
<b>Our Ambassadors &amp; Positive Impact</b>		<b>Celebration Assembly Achievements</b>	
<b>Passports</b>	<b>Friends of Southridge</b>		<b>Upcoming Dates &amp; Notices</b>
<b>Farewell to Mrs McIntosh</b>	<b>Flu vaccination update</b>	<b>Food Waste Project</b>	

## Christmas is coming!

The run-up to Christmas is a magical time in a first school, with a host of exciting activities and opportunities for the children. From last Friday's Christmas Fair to this week's performances, and the party days and Christmas dinner next week, there is lots going on! Teachers are also ensuring that the children continue to follow their curriculum and have opportunities for more structured, calmer parts of the school day.

We are now almost 14 weeks into this academic year, and when we, as a staff, reflect on how far the children have come since the start of September, it never fails to amaze us. How quickly they have settled, the volume of learning they have worked through, and the range of activities they have enjoyed, make us incredibly proud of them. Thank you for the work you have supported your children with over the past term—it has a huge impact on the high standards they achieve.

## Ambassadors and Positive Impact Passports

We have recently received two wonderful letters here at school—one from our Environment Ambassador, Ross Lowrie, and another from our Community Ambassadors in the local Rotary Club.

It was fantastic to hear how they are making a positive impact through their actions and to share this with the children. Even more pleasing was hearing how the children's own efforts have inspired

them. It truly is a symbiotic relationship, with both parties giving and gaining something positive.

A big thank you to all the children who have been selflessly giving up their time to help make the world a slightly better place for everyone.

It has been lovely to see so many of our children enthusiastic about how they can make a positive impact in their local community and beyond.

## Farewell to a faithful servant of our school

It is with great sadness that we bid a fond farewell and bon voyage to Mrs McIntosh, who will leave Southridge at the end of this term after almost 33 years of dedicated service to our school.

She is taking early retirement and will no doubt enjoy the time and freedom that this affords her. As a teacher who has taught around 1,000 children throughout her career—including many current parents here at Southridge—Mrs McIntosh can reflect on the incredible positive impact she has had on academic standards and the lives of so many families in Whitley Bay.

We wish her well and every happiness for the future.

## Outdoor Learning

As you will be aware, weaving opportunities for the children to enjoy their curriculum in our outdoor environment has been a keen focus for us here at Southridge. As such, it has been a great honour for the school and an endorsement of our amazing staff, to have had an article published about our Outdoor Learning journey in “Taking the Register 2026”.

The article was written by a former HMI (His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Schools) and governor here at Southridge, David Scott, and features a foreword by the world’s only professor of outdoor education, Jean-Philippe Ayotte-Beaudet. Having read about the work we have undertaken here, Professor Ayotte-Beaudet went so far as to describe it as, “Fantastic!” which is high praise indeed. If you would like to read the article - it is included, in full, at the end of this newsletter. Thank you to David Scott for his kind permission to share his work.

## The transformative power of outdoor learning

David Scott.

'This holistic, engaging and profound way of educating pupils taps into their innate curiosity and resonates with their physical, cognitive and emotional development. Pupils are also more resilient, concentration improves and learning becomes more memorable.' – Professor Jean-Philippe Ayotte-Beaudet, Research Chair in Outdoor Education, Université de Sherbrooke, Canada.



*Taking the Register* is a publication for former HMI and is read by many who are still very actively involved in educational governance, policy and the offering of expert advice.

## Friends of Southridge

A huge thank you to Jess Johnson and her amazing team, who worked alongside school staff to put on yet another wonderful Christmas Fair last Friday.

The weather gods smiled on us, as the wind and rain didn't really set in until after 6pm. This meant the outdoor activities could go ahead uninterrupted, with hot dogs served to the beautiful accompaniment of the Whitley Bay High School choir (and later a parent-led 'Pop-up Choir'). The Bottle-Chance game and children's Glow-Games proved a real hit for those keen to escape the heat and clamour indoors.

Inside, there was a fantastic range of activities, including Racing Reindeer, the ever-popular Post Office game, and the (not for the faint-hearted) Chocolate Tombola.

Once again, a huge thank you to the parents, grandparents, and staff who gave up their time and effort to make the event such a success.

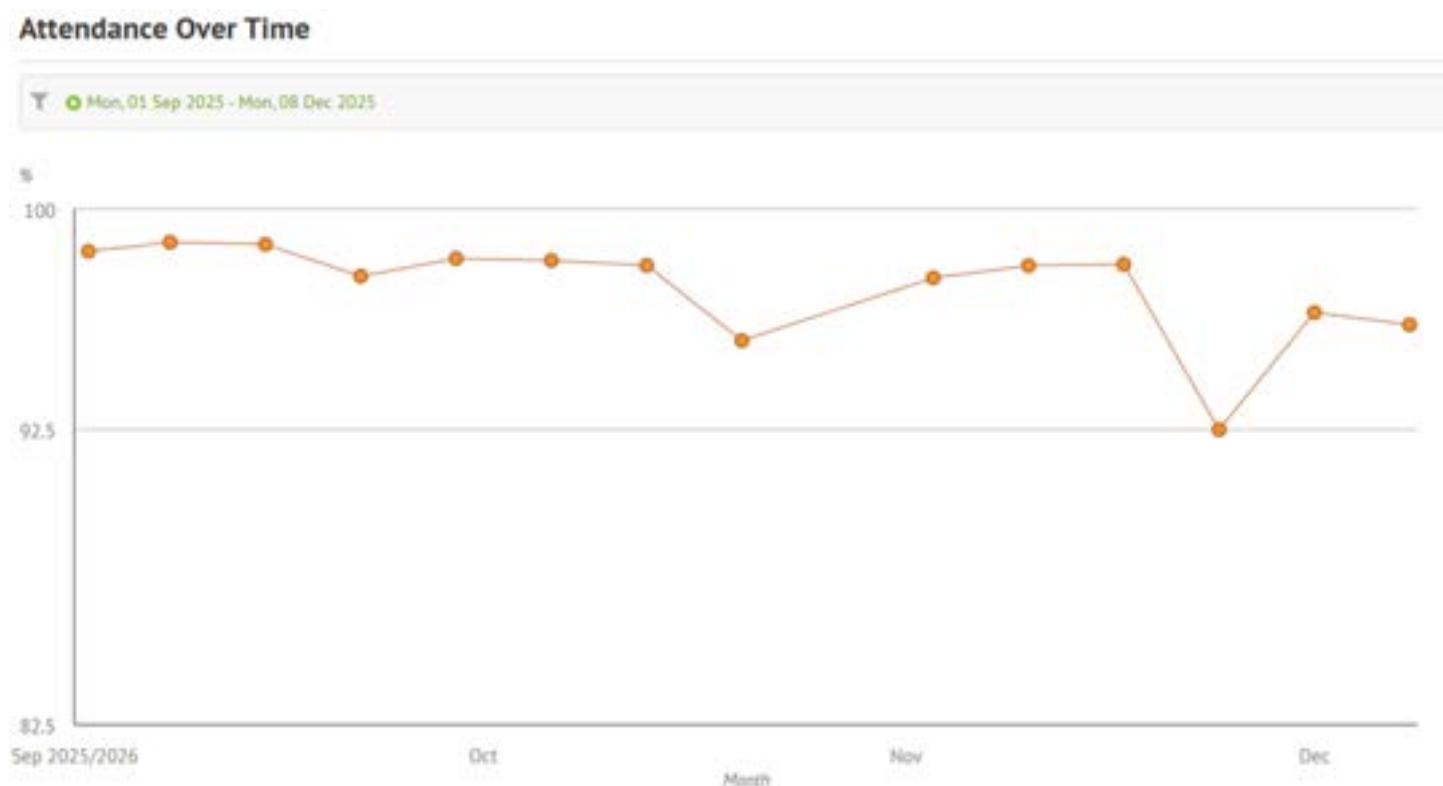
## Flu vaccination

This week, children across the school received their nasal flu vaccinations. Our take-up rate of almost 90% is one of the best the nurses have seen, and it will hopefully help protect us well into the spring term.

We have fed back that having the vaccinations earlier in the school year could make an even greater impact and help avoid the dip in attendance we experienced earlier this half term.

The chart below shows our whole-school attendance each week (represented by the orange dots). As you can see, attendance this half term dropped by almost 6%, from 98% in the third week to 92% in the fourth.

Hopefully, everyone will enjoy a good rest over the Christmas break and return fit and well in January!



## Parent Governor Vacancy

As we did not receive any applications for the vacant Parent Governor post, we will re-run the process after the Christmas break.

## Celebration Assemblies

Every Friday, we hold a Celebration Assembly here in school. Its aim is to highlight all the wonderful things the children have achieved, both in school and at home.

Headteacher's Awards, You & Me Awards, a seat at the Lighthouse Table for lunch, and the much-coveted Attendance Cup are all up for grabs—making for an exciting and overwhelmingly positive coming together of our children.

We also encourage children to bring in achievements from home that can be seen and commended. These should be awards or recognitions for accomplishments outside of school. They include an eclectic range of achievements such as Cubs/Brownies badges, swimming awards, sporting club trophies (rugby, taekwondo, gymnastics, dancing, football, and more), Great North Run medals, and even some old-school Blue Peter badges!

We do ask that these are recent achievements and that the children are ready to share a few words about what they did to earn them.

## Food Waste Project

After Christmas we will be working with an organisation called Eat Smart on a half term long project to try and reduce our food waste here in school and support our children to understand why this is important.



Eat Smart are looking for volunteers to support them in their work both here at Southridge, and in other schools. They have asked us to share the information below in case any parents are interested in being involved.

Would you like to gain experience in a primary school setting? Do you have an interest in the issue of food waste and sustainability? An exciting project is taking place in your child's school in January. The project is called Eat Smart and works with the children and staff to measure the food being wasted and find ways to reduce the school's food waste. Would you be interested in volunteering to help us deliver the project? No experience is needed. We will provide the basic training needed. If you are interested to hear more, please contact me, Georgie at [eatsmart@projectbind.com](mailto:eatsmart@projectbind.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

## Drop off and Pick up

We ask that parents and carers dropping off in the morning and collecting at the end of the day avoid accessing the main yard from the front of school (past Year One).

This is due to the potential for collisions around the corner of the building. Please respect this request and understand that it is intended to help keep everyone safe.

# Leave of Absence

We understand that there are rare occasions when children need to be out of school, and we greatly appreciate your help in completing a 'Leave of Absence' request form. This allows us to consider whether the absence can be authorised and ensures we know where your child is on the day(s) in question. It also prevents the office from needing to make safeguarding calls home if a child does not attend school.

A Leave of Absence request form can be downloaded from the school website <[here](#)>, or a paper copy can be requested via the school office. Unless due to exceptional circumstances, this request must be submitted ten school days before the date of the requested absence. This gives us sufficient time to review the request and send out a response.

More information can be found in the Attendance section of our school website <[here](#)>. The Leave of Absence process is particularly important in relation to the notice from North Tyneside Council in the next section.

## Attendance

### Attendance Reminder from North Tyneside Council

#### Important information for Parents

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, which may ultimately affect exam and test results.

Parents are required under the **Education Act (1996)** to ensure their child attends school regularly. There is no automatic right to take a child out of school during term time, but the law allows Head teachers to consider individual requests to authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

The Head teacher must be satisfied that the exceptional circumstances justify an authorised absence, and it is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide enough information and evidence in order to establish this fact.

The request for an authorised leave of absence must be made in advance and the Head teacher may invite the parent/carer into school to discuss the request before a decision is made.

If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the Head teacher, the expectation is that child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request.

If the request for a leave of absence is refused and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the Head teacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued

against you.

Under the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by the DfE, the following changes will come into force for School Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024:

**First offence:** The first penalty notice issued for unauthorised absence is a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £160 if the notice is paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

**Second Offence:** If a second penalty notice is issued within a 3-year period for unauthorised absence, then the fine is a flat rate of £160 paid within 28 days.

**Third Offence:** The third time an offence is committed a penalty notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.

Prosecution can result in Criminal record and fines of up to £2,500

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.

Where there is more than one child, each parent may be issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of each child.

As the Penalty Notice are fixed the legislation does not allow part-payment to be made or payments by instalments.

## Supporting children with new technology

With Christmas possibly heralding new technology in homes, it may be helpful for parents and carers to have a look at some of the advice on [Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre](#). They offer very helpful, objective advice on supporting families as their children move towards a more tech-enabled home environment. Specific types of technology are covered (see below).

## Parents guide to technology



### Phones

Guide to phones including top tips and advice about safety tools.



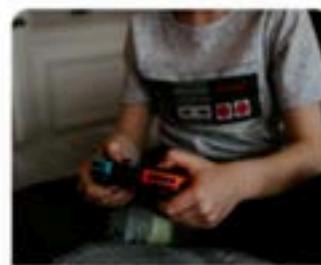
### Laptops

Looking for advice on how to support your child in using a laptop safely and responsibly? Read our guide and FAQs.



### Smart Speakers

Looking for advice on how to support your child in using a smart speaker safely and responsibly? Read our guide and...



### Games Consoles

Looking for advice on how to support your child in using a games console safely and responsibly? Read our guide and FAQs...



### Tablets

Guide to tablets including top tips and advice about safety tools.



### Smart TVs

Smart or connected TVs are televisions with integrated internet capabilities.



### Social media guides

Find out more about the safety features available on popular social networks.



## Upcoming Dates & Notices

### December

- **Mon 15** – Nursery Party Day
- **Tue 16** – Year 3 & Year 4 Party Day
- **Wed 17** – Christmas Dinner Day
- **Thu 18** – Year 1 & Year 2 Party Day
- **Thu 18** – Last day for Nursery
- **Fri 19** – Reception Party Day
- **Fri 19** – Last day of term

### January

- **Mon 5** – Teacher Training Day
- **Tue 6** – First Day of Spring Term
- **Mon 12** – After-school clubs start

## February

- **Mon 2** – Year 1 Book Look (9:10–9:40am)
- **Tue 3** – Year 2 Book Look (9:10–9:40am)
- **Wed 4** – Year 3 Book Look (9:10–9:40am)
- **Thu 5** – Year 4 Book Look (9:10–9:40am)
- **Mon 9** – Parent Consultations (3:30–6:30pm)
- **Tue 10** – Parent Consultations (3:30–6:30pm)
- **Fri 13** – Last day of Spring 1 half term
- **Mon 23** – First day of Spring 2 half term

## March

- **Mon 23 to Fri 27** - High Borrans Residential
- **Mon 30** – Reception Easter Assembly (2:30pm)
- **Tue 31** – Year 3 Easter Assembly (2:30pm)

## April

- **Wed 1** – Year 2 Easter Assembly (9:15am)
- **Wed 1** – Year 4 Easter Assembly (2:30pm)
- **Thu 2** – Year 1 Easter Assembly (9:15am)
- **Thu 2** – Last day of Spring term
- **Mon 20** – First day of Summer term

# leave a festive message on our tree of light!

Whitley Bay Rotary Club are working in partnership with Bright Charity, supporting North Tyneside General Hospital this festive season.

Whether celebrating a loved one or simply spreading festive cheer, your donation will make such a difference to our communities of North Tyneside and beyond.



**Rotary**   
Whitley Bay

[bright.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://bright.northumbria.nhs.uk)  
Registered charity 1083122

# TimbaTime

a free accessible story-time using storytelling,  
puppetry, music and makaton!

made for young people with learning disabilities and  
their families to enjoy this festive period...

North Shields Library

6<sup>th</sup> December - 1:30pm and 3pm

Shiremoor Library

13<sup>th</sup> December - 10:30am and 11:30am

Forest Hall Library

20<sup>th</sup> December - 1:30pm & 3pm

Booking made through Eventbrite!



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/festive-timbatime-north-shields-library-tickets-1960484424689?aff=oddtdtcreator>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/festive-timbatime-shiremoor-library-tickets-1960498867889?aff=oddtdtcreator>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/festive-timbatime-forest-hall-library-tickets-1960529549659?aff=oddtdtcreator>



North  
Tyneside  
Council

North Tyneside Community Hubs and Libraries

northtynelibraries

@NorthTynesLibs

[www.bookwhen.com/northtynesidelibraries](http://www.bookwhen.com/northtynesidelibraries)



# CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT THE EAGLES

VALID FOR  
BOTH THESE  
TWO GAMES

VS SHEFFIELD



VS LONDON



FRI 12 DEC



FRI 9 JAN

TIP-OFF 7:30PM AT VERTU ARENA, NEWCASTLE

THIS VOUCHER ENTITLES THE HOLDER TO TICKETS FOR

JUST **£8.50** EACH

WHEN PURCHASING ONLINE OR ON THE DOOR AT THE GAME

YOUR  
DISCOUNT  
CODE

SCHHAVA1212

SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY  
BOOK IN ADVANCE TO AVOID  
DISAPPOINTMENT!

APPLY IN THE CART AT [NEWCASTLE-EAGLES.COM/TICKETS](http://NEWCASTLE-EAGLES.COM/TICKETS)

FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE CALL 0191 2453880 OR EMAIL [BOXOFFICE@NEWCASTLE-EAGLES.COM](mailto:BOXOFFICE@NEWCASTLE-EAGLES.COM)

THIS SCHOOLS TICKETS  
PROMOTION VOUCHER WAS  
ECO-PRINTED THANKS TO

**sos**  
**GROUP**

IS YOUR SCHOOL A  
SMART SCHOOL?

E [info@sosgroup-ltd.co.uk](mailto:info@sosgroup-ltd.co.uk)

T 0345 230 8080

W [sosgroup-ltd.co.uk](http://sosgroup-ltd.co.uk)



OR SCAN  
OR CODE  
TO BOOK



**Vertu** ARENA

Terms and Conditions: Service charge of £1.50 per order applies.  
See view upgrade option of £4.00 per seat. Offer and tickets are  
subject to availability. See the box office for more details.

## Free school meals



### Your child may be entitled to free school meals

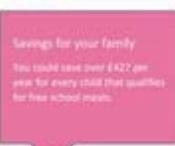
To check eligibility for free school meals you must apply online at [www.northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk) and enter 'free school meals' in the search bar.

If you don't have an e-mail address please call to register for free meals **(0191) 643 2288**

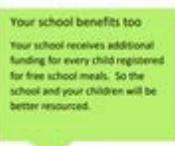
[Choose Option 3](#)



**Easy to apply**  
It only takes a few minutes to apply online, you will need your NI number or your NASS reference to register.



**Savings for your family**  
You could save over £427 per year for every child that qualifies for free school meals.



**Your school benefits too**  
Your school receives additional funding for every child registered for free school meals. So the school and your children will be better resourced.

### Please do not struggle in silence

If you are finding that financial pressures are affecting your child(ren)'s ability to access school, please email

[financial.support@southridgefirst.org.uk](mailto:financial.support@southridgefirst.org.uk)

which is a confidential email address monitored by the headteacher and we will contact you to see what support we may be able to provide and signpost for you.

# Is your child registered for **SCHOOL MILK?**

**Child  
UNDER 5**      **Child  
OVER 5**

Every child under the age of five is entitled to free school milk. Simply register your child online.



Every child over the age of five is entitled to milk at a subsidised cost of around £20 per term. Register your child and pay online.

**Children in receipt of benefits-based free school meals are eligible for free school milk. Speak to the school for further information.**

Free milk for under 5s is funded by the Department of Health and milk for over 5s is subsidised by DEFRA.

## **REGISTER YOUR CHILD TODAY**

Register online  
[www.coolmilk.com](http://www.coolmilk.com)



Need help?  
Send us a message  
at [www.coolmilk.com/contact](http://www.coolmilk.com/contact)  
or give us a call on **0800 321 3248**



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA - SEARCH COOLMILKSCHEME

# The transformative power of outdoor learning

David Scott.

'This holistic, engaging and profound way of educating pupils taps into their innate curiosity and resonates with their physical, cognitive and emotional development. Pupils are also more resilient, concentration improves and learning becomes more memorable.' – Professor Jean-Philippe Ayotte-Beaudet, Research Chair in Outdoor Education, Université de Sherbrooke, Canada.



## Context

Southridge First School, Whitley Bay is a popular and successful school with 323 pupils on roll aged 3-9 years. Over the last two years outdoor learning has become a central theme of Southridge's curriculum, taking full advantage of the school's extensive grounds and enriching children's education.

Outdoor education was already well established at Southridge in the early years through high quality provision and sustained and skillful interactions between staff and pupils. Year 1 continued with aspects of outdoor learning at appropriate age-related levels whilst teachers throughout the school pursued regular opportunities outdoors, including farming contacts, STEM activities and day and residential trips.



A newly created allotment has given a real purpose to the 'Farmer Time' video-link initiative (see below). Children learn about growing crops suitable for the school kitchen. This summer's produce was cooked for a celebratory 'Farmer's Lunch', the beds immediately cleared to plant autumn pumpkins with seeds provided by one of the farmers.



*'Farmer Time' is an established national scheme. It facilitates links between schools and working farms through regular video communications to provide engaging and relevant learning opportunities and 'real time' understanding of the daily issues which farmers face. – David Scott.*



## Key factors

The recent rapid acceleration of subject-specific outdoor learning across the school is due to a number of key factors. The following are integral to outdoor learning's positive impact on pupils' academic and physical achievements and their personal and social development and mental health:

- Unsurprisingly, strong and decisive leadership is the driving force of any successful and sustainable policy - in the case of Southridge, the vision, commitment and expertise of the headteacher with the support and encouragement of staff and governors.
- At Southridge, it is clearly understood that deep and meaningful changes are impossible without a collective mindset shift that outdoor learning is not simply teaching indoor lessons outside.
- Operational leadership by a nominated teacher plays a crucial role in supporting outdoor learning on a daily basis. The lead teacher has additional responsibility for oracy across the school and is able to promote pupils' collaborative communication, critical thinking and the reasoning which challenging outdoor tasks promote.
- Meticulous and extensive planning ensures coherent outdoor learning across the curriculum whilst securing sequential development of skills and content in each subject.

## Assessment

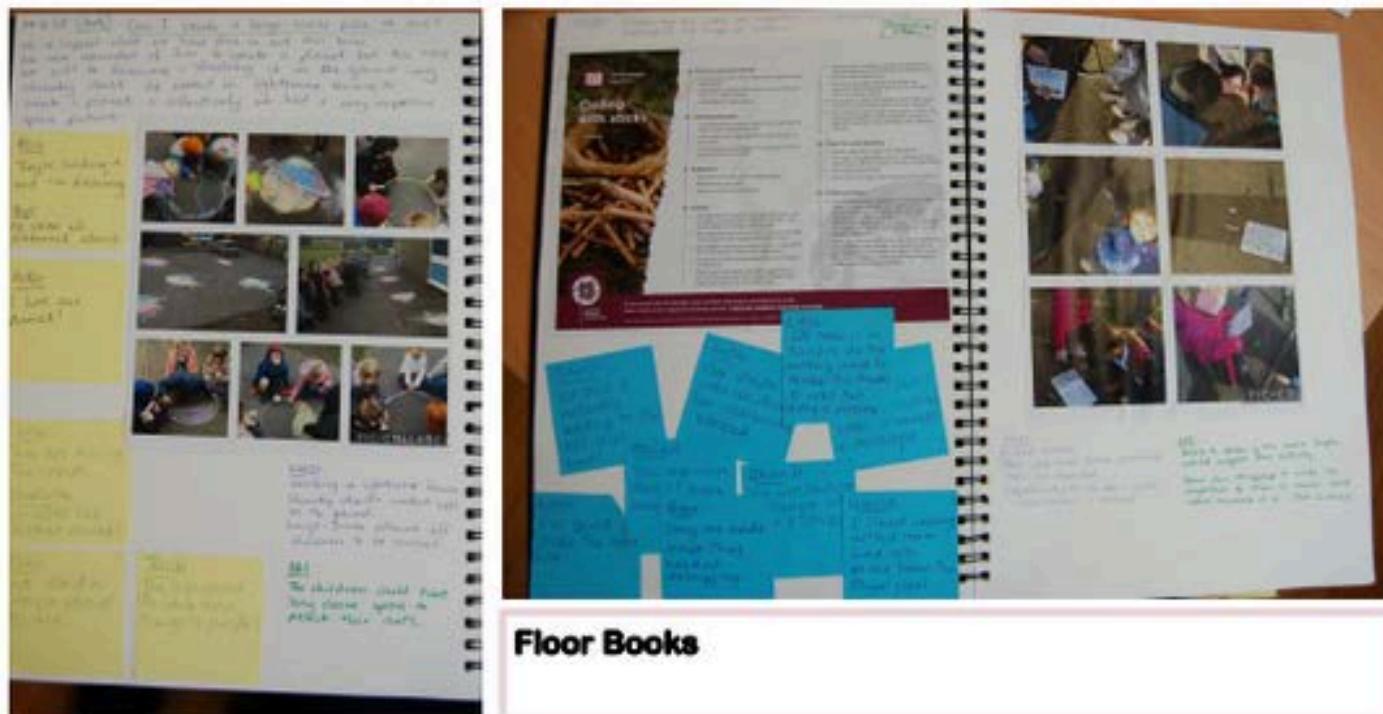




Assessment of children's learning occurs within the context of the outdoor placement and takes place through focused observations and recorded outcomes.

Each year group maintains a detailed 'floor book' of outdoor lessons (see below). The books include photographs, staff evaluations and pupils' observations.

The process involved in maintaining the books assists staff in monitoring learning across the school; it helps demonstrate progression over time whilst identifying what can be changed and developed further.



**Floor Books**

*Floor Books are large A3 books in which staff keep a record of outdoor learning activities. The record includes a lesson overview, photographs, 'pupil voice' and teacher reflections on the lesson's efficacy. These are designed to capture a whole-class record of a lesson's teaching and learning. The book is available for children and staff to share. This generally happens on the floor - hence the term 'Floor Book' – Finn Willcock, Headteacher.*

## Resources

Resources have kept pace with curricular developments in order to maximise outcomes.

Southridge has extensive outdoor hard and grassed spaces, a multi-use all-weather sports area, a large climbing structure and a small copse of mature trees.

Recent additions include raised beds for growing plants; several wooden outbuildings for storage and sheltered work spaces; supplies of waterproof and protective clothing; a butterfly path; wild flower areas and a bespoke pond. The latter has different depths and is shaped to make maximum use of its perimeter, allowing a whole class to access and observe the interactions between the living and non-living components of the pond's ecosystem.

Hundreds of saplings have been planted around the site. Pupils built and installed a range of nest boxes and birdfeeders, having learned how to identify bird species during the RSPB's 'Big Birdwatch.' A local farmer was consulted on how to grow a wildflower meadow. Yellow-rattle seeds were provided and sown alongside the seeds which pupils had collected the previous year in order to ensure an abundance of flowers.

Giving pupils the opportunities to transfer knowledge and skills to real life contexts is integral to the professional development of teachers. There is a clear understanding of the additional range of pedagogical competences required to deliver the highest quality outdoor learning outcomes. Trainee teachers, including SCITT students, benefit from their placements in this environment. Staff training is an important aspect, in-house by sharing ideas and practice as well as through external providers.

### **Examples of lessons outdoors**

Southridge's headteacher has recently observed lessons outdoors as part of staff appraisal; this to ensure that lessons are taught effectively and pupils' learning has been enriched through access to the wide range of opportunities that the school provides.

Governors have been involved in monitoring through joint observations. The main finding is that teaching outside of the traditional classroom offers a range of approaches that help learners build effective connections across the different learning experiences as illustrated in the following:

- Southridge follows the principles and legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In order to ensure that all pupils progress physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively, opportunities for exploration and development outdoors are provided daily throughout the year.



- Reception children recycled soft plastics and paper while finding innovative ways to repurpose such everyday items as milk bottles, turning them into watering cans.
- Children harvested vegetables from their raised bed 'allotment' and were intrigued by the purple *mange tout* and eager to discover the colour of the peas inside!
- While celebrating Diwali in RE lessons, groups enthusiastically created large-scale Rangoli designs in the playground, using coloured chalks and natural materials, including flowers. The children were motivated to learn more about the patterns and the Indian culture, religion and history behind them.
- During a Key Stage 1 PSHE lesson pupils worked outside, in small groups, to find specific locations on a map of the school site. Pupils collaborated effectively, spoke confidently and used locational and directional language during the assignment.
- Key Stage 2 pupils extended their application of mathematical learning by using natural materials to look for, identify and create angles and polygons. The confines of an internal space would have inhibited such a challenging task.
- A drama lesson during National Storytelling Week involved children deciding what props were needed to support their presentation outdoors when acting a scene, using expressions and stage directions to understand how the writer portrayed each character in 'Beowulf.'





- Year 4 pupils learned about solar energy by devising solar panels for their classroom and converting sunlight into electricity.

Such lessons suggest that high quality outdoor learning connects pupils of all ages with the natural world and supports their development in a range of skills and competencies including problem solving, reflection, engagement and a significant understanding of the environment. The depth of learning would have been restricted within the confines of a classroom.

### Impact on standards

- Pupils' oracy across the school has been taken to the next level in each subject through collaboration outdoors. Children have developed the confidence and acquired the skills to listen carefully, speak up and be heard. Pupils evaluate evidence to articulate their reasoning, understand the meaning behind key language, articulate strategies, find solutions and achieve team goals. Their conversations about tasks in science show pupils as 'budding ecologists', capable of investigating the relationships between plants, animals and the environment.
- Apart from evidence in lessons, an analysis of the school's pupil data confirms the strong link between high standards in the core subjects and increasing opportunities for education outdoors.
- Southridge also continues to be in the top 5% of schools nationally for Year 1 phonics results; this received a commendation by the government's Minister of State for Schools.
- Southridge has gained the coveted Platinum Sports Award – hardly surprisingly, due to the extensive scale of the site, the deployment of sports coaches and the range of resources for physical activity outdoors, including fixed climbing equipment which promotes core strength and agility.
- This reflects pupils' exceptionally broad PE entitlement, including multiple after-school sports clubs and the encouragement they have to walk to school and to run a daily mile. An annual residential visit provides the oldest pupils with additional opportunities for canoeing, ghyll scrambling, rope climbing and orienteering.
- Safeguarding, Health and Safety are given the highest priority outdoors as they are indoors with pupils taught how to stay safe and avoid potential hazards in different environments such as brambles in hedgerows.



- Supporting pupils' mental health is also a major focus. Their personal development and wellbeing are at the centre of regular lessons outdoors. From expressing their various feelings to developing positive relationships, pupils are extending their levels of independence and resilience.
- Another notable gain has been inclusion when linked to personal learning plans. Among the positives are increased confidence, independence, the development of wider social skills, and a greater understanding from the contexts of the tasks, especially when supported by a teaching assistant. SEND pupils benefit specifically from these memorable and authentic experiences.

### **Environmental aspects**

Southridge has a designated community 'Ambassador for the Environment'; the adult concerned visits and encourages pupils to conserve energy by walking or cycling to school regularly, saving electricity and water and, generally, having a positive impact on the environment.

Year 4 'eco-warriors' promote energy conservation and monitor and report any signs of excessive use. The older children volunteer to be compost collectors where they collect compostable waste from classrooms, the kitchen and the staffroom each day and use it to make compost for the allotment. All non-compostable food waste is collected and sent to make biofuel. Parents and carers appreciate and value outdoor learning through volunteering for the manual, ground-digging tasks but, mainly, through their understanding of the many educational and environmental advantages.

A recent parent survey of provision highlighted the benefits of 'the fantastic outdoor spaces'; 'interactions with farms and farmers'; 'accessing so many sports coaches'; and 'developing life skills'.

As one governor observed after seeing a lesson; 'This approach adds a dynamic and a level of engagement which the classroom cannot match.' The majority of pupils interviewed thought they learned and achieved more when learning outside.



Children's own words speak volumes: 'It helps me to feel calmer', 'I like being able to breathe the fresh air and hear the birds and the breeze when I'm working', 'I can concentrate and remember more easily than in the classroom', and 'It is educational and fun at the same time.'

### Conclusion

As a co-opted governor I am proud of Southridge's strong commitment to outdoor learning.

This contributes significantly to pupils' respect for the environment; it gives them a much wider understanding of sustainability, biodiversity, climate change and ecosystems. Such are of paramount importance – not just for schools but for society and the future of the planet in general. These are unlikely to be learned solely in the classroom.



