

Crich Junior School



Outdoor Learning

Our curriculum is designed using and extending the National Curriculum and conforms to the Equality Act and SEND regulations 2014, which ensures accessibility and inclusion to all children.

At Crich Junior School, our curriculum is designed to build on children's prior learning, provide meaningful and memorable learning experiences where our children are taught to be independent, confident and resilient learners.

Our curriculum has been designed to ensure that all children leave us with a wide body of knowledge, and the skills needed to be successful, lifelong learners with a real curiosity about the world around them.

The curriculum encompasses all the planned learning that is sequenced to promote learning, personal growth and development. Whilst fully including all statutory elements of the National Curriculum, our curriculum also gives our children the chance to explore a variety of additional 'enrichment' experiences, learning and opportunities to ensure all our children thrive and find their passion.

Our children are at the heart of every aspect of our curriculum. Developing the children's ability to learn more, know more and remember more is underpinned by quality first teaching of a broad body of knowledge and vocabulary. We provide engaging opportunities where children are immersed in independent problem solving techniques. We are committed to developing the whole child. Children have a strong awareness of their local community, their role within it and the value they bring to it. Children leave our school with a sense of belonging to an inclusive tightly-knit community where they have the confidence, knowledge and skills to make decisions, self-evaluate, and feel valued.

Our curriculum is based on the following key principles:

- A clear, shared vision of the knowledge and skills our children need to take advantage of future opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- Commitment to a rich, varied, academic, practical problem-solving curriculum experience, which is inclusive for all our children.
- A curriculum that reflects the needs of the local community context.
- Planning and sequencing. Knowledge builds on previous learning.

Our Unique Intent:

- Practical Problem Solving rich curriculum
- Bushcraft, gardening, cookery, STEM technologies, local community projects etc
- Develop self worth
- Timetable designed to enable creative curriculum.

I want to be:

**an independent
learner**

resilient

**respectful and
tolerant**

**knowledgeable
and curious**

happy

confident

a team player

creative

**healthy and
active**

**a problem
solver**

kind



Introduction

At Crich Junior School, outdoor learning is a regular part of our curriculum, which ensures positive intellectual, emotional, and social development, whilst building the foundations for a lifelong connection with nature and our planet. Our Outdoor Learning supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting. It helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to try stuff out and take risks. We believe that it inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of how a learner fits within it. Our approach to risk means that learners constantly expand on their abilities by solving real-world issues, building self-belief and resilience. There are risks in everything we do, and we grow by overcoming them. Outdoor learning helps our children to become, healthy, resilient, creative and independent learners.

In November 2022, the NHS released statistics showing the scale of the mental health crisis that children and young people are facing in the UK. It's reported that 1 in 6 children and young people have a diagnosable mental health condition, and those experiencing mental health difficulties are less likely to report enjoyment of learning.

We all know that spending regular time outdoors brings abundant benefits for the health and wellbeing of young people. As mental health challenges rise and pressures on young people increase, it becomes more and more vital that we harness these daily easy-to-achieve benefits. Regular time outdoors is valued and appreciated, and outdoor learning, play and connection with nature are recognised as fundamental parts of education, at every stage, for every child and young person.

In 2008, the New Economics Foundation established a set of evidence-based messages aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole population. The 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' have stood the test of time, and are still used by the NHS and many other mental health organisations to promote wellbeing at both an individual and a collective level.

Importantly for schools, the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' are easily achieved through outdoor learning and play, improving mental health and wellbeing on a whole school level. Indeed, when telling us why they choose to teach outdoors, many educators cited the mental health and wellbeing benefits for both pupils and staff.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

1. **Connect**

Healthy relationships with family, friends, and others support our mental health and wellbeing. School grounds are an invaluable space where everyone can get together to connect, socialise, learn, and play together

2. **Be active**

Being active is beneficial for mental health and wellbeing, as well as physical health and fitness. However, physical activity isn't only reserved for P.E. lessons! High quality play provides children and young people the chance to experience risk and challenge in a familiar setting, helping to develop the skills they need to manage uncertainty.

3. **Take notice**

Sometimes called 'mindfulness', taking notice of the present moment helps with managing feelings and emotions. However, while mindfulness requires purposeful practice to produce mental health benefits (and therefore doesn't always engage children and young people), taking notice of the present moment is effortless in the outdoor classroom. Being in nature encourages us to be curious, observe the beauty all around us, and notice the changing of the seasons. By encouraging these experiences we can help children to appreciate what matters. In the outdoor classroom.

4. **Keep learning**

Trying new hobbies and developing new skills builds self-esteem and broadens horizons. This is especially important for children and young people who struggle in a traditional classroom environment. Our projects like 'This Place is like a Building Site!' show that — for those with different learning styles — the real-life, hands-on, experiential learning that takes place in the outdoor classroom is a vital chance to shine.

5. **Give**

Acts of kindness offer clear benefits for mental health and wellbeing — and that includes acts of kindness towards the natural world around us. Nature connection is the first and most important step in equipping children and young people with the tools they need to take climate action and protect the environment. Whether through creating climate-ready school grounds or boosting biodiversity in the local area, we need to help children and young people develop nature connection at school — for their sake and ours.

Intent

Regular time outdoors is valued and appreciated, and outdoor learning, play and connection with nature are recognised as fundamental parts of education, at every stage, for every child and young person. Outdoor learning is one of the tools we need to use to raise attainment in our school

We inspire and enable positive outdoor experiences through the transformation of school grounds and outdoor community spaces. In so doing, we encourage greater appreciation of the environment and access to nature. As advocates of experiential learning we are committed to promoting the benefits it brings to health, wellbeing and whole person development.

At the heart of everything we do is a vision of sustainability and effective use of resources.

It is our intent that through outdoor learning, all of our children:

- are equal, unique and valuable
- are confident and competent to explore & discover
- experience appropriate risk and challenge
- choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- experience regular success
- develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

Implementation

We allow many opportunities for outdoor learning throughout the year. All pupils spend 2 hours following our outdoor learning activities on a rota basis (4 weekly). A wide range of seasonal activities are sequenced and planned to involve all pupils. These activities include:

Looking after our chickens, Planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting our fruit and vegetable beds, maintaining our pond and wildlife garden.

Indoor classroom activities are also a valuable part of learning, for example, a research project looking at how to look after chickens in the most effective way and The Big School Birdwatch.

Our children also have outdoor learning opportunities during metacognition/activity days and our Festival of Fun Week.

Impact

Being in nature encourages us to be curious, observe the beauty all around us, and notice the changing of the seasons. By encouraging these experiences, our children appreciate what matters. By making use of the outdoor spaces and places we have in our school, we engage learners and this builds their confidence, improving their resilience, using their imaginations and creativity and their ability to solve problems (metacognition).





