



Rethinking Curriculum

Outdoor and nature-based evaluation framework

Delivering an expansive and inspiring curriculum for all

This evaluation framework has been developed by the Chartered College of Teaching as part of the Rethinking Curriculum project, funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust. It is one of a series of evaluation frameworks that have been shared as part of our Rethinking Curriculum toolkits.

The framework captures some of the key ideas explored in the Rethinking Curriculum **outdoor and nature-based** toolkit and offers some key ideas for you to evaluate your school's curriculum practice on this theme. These ideas are drawn from research and evidence and from our work with schools, and include input from leading experts.

The ideas explored are not intended to provide a definitive approach to curriculum development on this theme. There may be gaps or omissions and this should be viewed as a work in progress, which we will aim to develop further as the evidence base continues to evolve. You are encouraged to consider this framework alongside the [outdoor and nature-based toolkit](#), and to undertake your own reading and research to build your understanding of the key ideas discussed prior to implementing changes in your context.

This evaluation framework has been developed in collaboration with Dr Gemma Goldenberg, impact and learning lead at The Country Trust, and Jenna Crittenden, curriculum development lead at the Chartered College of Teaching.



Chartered College
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Part 1: Building a curriculum for outdoor and nature-based learning

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

- ✓ The vision and the purpose of outdoor nature-based learning, whether engaging with the natural world and/or traditional curriculum lessons outside, has been discussed, agreed and shared with the school community.
- ✓ An approach for outdoor learning has evolved from the vision. This could be a programme of learning or expectations of regularity and duration of outdoor learning, and these expectations have been shared and understood by staff at all levels.
- ✓ Staff at all levels have been provided with training and support to understand the role of outdoor and nature-based learning within the curriculum. Training has also been provided to effectively deliver outdoor and nature-based approaches as required. (This could be for accredited programmes, such as Forest School, or general outdoor learning, depending upon the chosen approach.)
- ✓ Planning includes preparation and follow-up activities that may be indoors. These are given equal importance to the lesson that may happen outside and are viewed holistically as a learning sequence.
- ✓ Resources are effectively provided and protected for staff to deliver outdoor and nature-based lessons. This could include timetabling, outdoor space allocation and physical resources such as tools. (The physical space should also have been audited and risk-assessed, finding off-site alternatives if required.)
- ✓ The impact of the approach that has been (or will be) chosen is regularly reviewed, and barriers are acted upon to improve impact. This should include feedback from all stakeholders, including staff and pupil voice.

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

The vision and approach to outdoor and nature-based learning do not align, leading to conflict and limited impact.

The approach to outdoor learning is not supported by training, resources and/or staff expertise. It is seen as one person's role and not a collective goal.

Staff have limited knowledge, skills and understanding about how to approach outdoor and nature-based learning, resulting in limited opportunities being given to pupils.

The physical space is limited and used as an excuse to not deliver outdoor and nature-based lessons.

Equipment, such as suitable clothing and tools, is not provided and so lessons are regularly cancelled or limited to small groups being involved.

Outdoor and nature-based learning is not valued alongside other curriculum areas and time is not taken to evaluate and improve the provision.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do our values and vision outline nature-based and outdoor learning as a priority and how is this seen in the culture of our school?
2. How do we ensure that staff and the school community have a clear understanding of the value of outdoor and nature-based play-based learning in our curriculum for all ages and understand the collective approach that we use?
3. What CPD or other support do we have in place (or do we need) to build our staff expertise and how adequate is this for the whole team?
4. How do we monitor the impact of our approach to outdoor and nature-based learning as a school and how do we act upon our findings?



Part 2: Key considerations for successful implementation

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

- ✓ Leaders clearly set out the vision and values to inform the school's work around outdoor and nature-based provision and the wider curriculum, ensuring that these are understood by all.
- ✓ Leaders ensure that sufficient time, resources and supporting structures are in place to enable staff to deliver and develop an outdoor and nature-based curriculum effectively.
- ✓ Leaders draw on research and evidence to inform curriculum development work relating to outdoor and nature-based provision; they gather data from their context to evaluate existing practice and consider how they will evaluate the impact of implementing a new approach across the curriculum.
- ✓ Implementation and development of an outdoor and nature-based approach is a collaborative process, characterised by iterative cycles of development, meaningful professional learning, shared problem-solving and ongoing review.
- ✓ There is an identified outdoor and nature-based champion (or group of champions), who leads upon the work around outdoor and nature-based provision; these champions, and middle leaders (where appropriate), have clarity around their role and are well positioned to support colleagues and help to drive the curriculum forward.
- ✓ Teachers are supported to build their expertise so that they develop strong subject/pedagogical content knowledge, have a deep understanding of effective pedagogical approaches and are able to combine these with knowledge of the school curriculum, pupils' needs and the wider context, in order to plan and implement the curriculum effectively.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Is your school ready to implement curriculum development activity in this area? Have you already evaluated existing practice using the full Rethinking Curriculum evaluation framework to ensure a strong foundation for this work?
2. Do you have a clear plan for implementation? How will you involve staff in this process?
3. Is there existing capacity and/or how will you create capacity for this work? Is there anything that you will need to de-implement to enable this to happen?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Leaders and/or staff find it difficult to articulate vision/goals/values.

Implementation may be rushed or not well thought-through.

There is a lack of resources/time to support development of curriculum.

Curriculum changes are implemented wholesale, without sufficient consideration of context, school needs and/or capacity.

School leaders do not systematically seek staff input into curriculum development and, as a result, there may be a disconnect between the intended and enacted curriculum.

Curriculum changes are seen as a 'quick fix', with new ideas introduced with limited further development or impact evaluation.

Teachers implement new approaches too quickly, without a clear rationale or understanding of how they fit into the school context, ultimately resulting in a lack of impact on pupil learning.