

## Core Purpose of Nethergate Academy

*'To enable every individual to achieve personal wellbeing and a place of value in society through education and promotion of equality'*



**Communication  
and Engagement**



**Personal Safety**



**Emotional  
Wellbeing**



**Independence**

Nethergate Academy Key Curriculum Drivers

### **Aspect: Learning outside the classroom**

#### **How do the Arts link to Nethergate's key curriculum drivers?**

- **Communication and engagement:**

Outdoor Learning at Nethergate supports communication and engagement in many diverse ways with emphasis on curiosity, awe and wonder, exploration and on sharing discoveries with others. Sessions take place outside in all seasons, throughout the school year and in many different spaces - leading to an incredibly rich outdoor learning environment which fosters a deep purpose for communicating. Pupils and staff are constantly discovering things to talk about and share when learning outside with a wide variety of engaging experiences, objects, emotions and changes in the seasons. Lots of interesting opportunities are created outside for communicating and listening; this includes writing whilst sitting in a hammock, drawing and writing in huge chalk, talking whilst cycling around, making maps and treasure hunts, making instructions for den building, singing songs around the fire circle, talking about ladybirds on leaves, talking with Baxter whilst taking him for walks, using large talking tubes and so much more. There are many opportunities for slowing down and noticing interesting details in the natural world – which feeds into a sense of calm and a purpose for communicating. The outdoor environment boosts higher order thinking skills of curiosity, questioning, applying learning, analysing and creating; it promotes imagination and improves attention.

- **Personal safety:**

Personal Safety is crucial with Outdoor Learning and there are constant opportunities for pupils to think about their own safety and that of others. Pupils are encouraged to take part in risk assessing activities and they are encouraged to think about suitable clothing and equipment needed for different seasons and activities. The different outdoor areas used have been carefully set up to foster a rich learning environment

with a wide variety of hands-on experiences which feed into an awareness of personal safety. There are many engaging opportunities offered to pupils which involve clear safety rules; these include cooking on a small fire in forest school sessions, pond-dipping in the small wildlife pond, riding bicycles, navigating on D of E expeditions and using climbing equipment. These all provide real-life and tangible experiences where there are clear reasons for safety rules. There are many ways pupils share their learning about safety with others – including creating safety posters for different outdoor areas around school, making a gate for the pond area, sharing the fire circle safety rules through song, making films and digital presentations about outdoor learning and much more. Pupils are encouraged to think about the safety of the natural world too as well as ways of looking after equipment which all link with personal safety.

**Emotional well being:**

Outdoor Learning promotes emotional well being in very many ways; with endless opportunities for igniting curiosity, for connections with other people and with the natural world, for promoting self-esteem and for finding calm and nurture. The outdoors provides many different activities where learning and a deep sense of enjoyment and fun are intrinsically linked – and this leads to social interaction, communication and a sense of self-worth. There are rich sensory stimuli that can offer deep calm and regulation (for example the effects of natural light filtered through leaves, lying in a hammock, riding a bike, bouncing on a trampoline, listen to the rain). Activities outside engage gross motor and fine motor skills and many opportunities for exercise – which has deep positive benefits for emotional well being. The physical space outside provides rich opportunities that are different to an inside space: you can use your body in very different ways leading to positive emotional responses. There are many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their skills and interests, to shine and achieve success. Outdoor Learning can provide important and poignant opportunities for exploring complex issues which feed significantly into emotional well being. These include exploring issues around grief and loss through looking after wildlife and making connections about the cycle of the seasons and time through growing edible plants on the allotment. Working outside provides many opportunities for mindfulness and for noticing calming details in nature which all feed deeply into emotional wellbeing. There are many opportunities for caring for the natural world which can really boost self-esteem as well as enabling pupils to explore issues around Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Pupils across school grow a range of organic fruit and vegetables on the Nethergate allotment and there are many opportunities for harvesting, cooking and eating this food – creating a safe environment to try new healthy food which also carries links with emotional well being.

**Independence:**

There are many opportunities to develop independence through Outdoor Learning and to build on this as pupils progress through school. Pupils are encouraged to gather information and to make decisions through a host of tangible learning experiences outside. This encompasses a wide variety of things including wearing appropriate clothing for both the weather and the activity, helping set up and pack away equipment, helping plan sessions, helping to risk assess activities and growing and cooking fruit and vegetables on the school allotment. Pupils are given achievable tasks that build on their skills and encourage a sense of pride and independence (this includes using tools, riding bikes, walking Baxter, map reading and navigating). Both gross and fine motor skills are developed widely through Outdoor Learning and this feeds wonderfully into developing independence. There are many opportunities to learn new skills and to reinforce and develop existing skills, with lots of challenges and problem solving: all of which builds self-esteem and leads to a desire for independence. Skills developed in Outdoor Learning come into play as pupils grow and as they look to life outside school; this can include growing and cooking food, using tools safely, measuring in order to make things and learning to read maps.

**How do we ensure that there is progression within the Outdoor Learning curriculum at Nethergate?**

Outdoor Learning at Nethergate is a vital part of the curriculum for all key stages and opportunities are developed as pupils progress throughout the school. A variety of different spaces are used – on the school grounds and also in off-site visits – and these provide a deeply rich and engaging environment carefully chosen to be relevant and interesting for different year groups. Students across school are encouraged to share their learning with each other and there are some wonderful ways this happens in Outdoor Learning – for example when 6<sup>th</sup> Form are on the allotment primary pupils might come and see what they are doing and ask questions. This also means pupils are aware of the ways opportunities in Outdoor Learning progress through school, for example being able to take part in D of E expeditions in KS4. Sessions outdoors draw on learning from all other areas within school and pupils are encouraged to make cross-curricular links. There are also lots of opportunities to reflect upon and consolidate learning, often revisiting ideas and discoveries from previous years; for example older pupils being able to build complex dens outdoors and reflect on how their skill set has developed since they were in primary. There are opportunities for older pupils to help younger pupils and to help set up equipment and resources for Outdoor Learning and to help with documenting and sharing learning.

## **How does outdoor learning support our pupil's individual needs and disabilities?**

Outdoor Learning has vast potential for pupils with SEND and offers some unique experiences; it provides a deeply sensory environment which fosters curiosity, connections, awe and wonder and well-being. The different spaces and activities used at Nethergate in Outdoor Learning provide wonderful scope for development of all the senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, proprioception and vestibular) and for different learning styles. It offers a safe and engaging environment which promotes connections with other people, connections with the natural world and develops a sense of self-worth. Because of the way sensory needs are met outside it really aids with concentration, with focus, with calming stress and anxiety and with providing motivation. Outdoor Learning offers individuals many chances for development, success and to share their expertise and interests. It enables many different kinesthetic ways of problem solving, of creating things and for working in groups or alone. It greatly aids self-regulation through offering sensory feedback, physical space, exercise and igniting curiosity. It offers many opportunities to reflect on learning in other areas of the curriculum and to consolidate this – thereby allowing time for things to be embedded.

There are many aspects of Outdoor Learning which are especially nurturing for pupils with specific conditions. Natural spaces provide a rich sensory environment which can meet the needs of individuals with autism and ADHD in really beneficial ways. Pupils craving sensory feedback can find endless positive ways to develop this outside (often in ways that might be harder inside), for example using hammocks, climbing the hill, exploring tactile qualities of leaves and bouncing on trampolines. There can be a huge sense of calm and soothing outside and this can be especially beneficial for pupils who might experience sensory overload inside. The outdoors provides opportunities to explore things on a huge scale (such as making large marble runs) but also on a micro scale (such as looking at tiny details in moss) which provides huge benefits for pupils. There are many opportunities to explore complex issues, to experience clear boundaries, positive experiences and to develop trust which can be really beneficial for pupils with SEMH.

There are many aspects to Outdoor Learning which are really beneficial for physical disabilities; the rich sensory environment provides lots of opportunities for vestibular stimulation, for developing balance, for exploring different tactile surfaces and for exploring movement and developing the sense of proprioception. Sound and light have different qualities outside and there are many ways for exploring these which can be deeply beneficial to pupils with hearing or sight impairments. There are many nurturing opportunities for exploring gross motor and fine motor skills in ways that

might be harder inside – such as using sand and water or riding bikes or pushing wheelbarrows. Activities and equipment can be accessed at different heights so it's fully accessible for those needing to sit or stand.