**Managing outdoor learning and social distancing**

**Notes and guidance for schools**

**Background - DfE Guidance, as of 30/04/20:**

Try to follow the [social distancing guidelines](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults) – 2m relevant when outside.

Social distancing within education and childcare settings with very young children will be harder to maintain. Staff should implement the above measures as far as they are able, whilst ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for within their settings.

DfE are asking you to:

* think about how the above can be implemented in your education or childcare setting
* ensure all staff and children:
  + wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds frequently
  + are encouraged not to touch their faces
  + use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste
* ensure help is available for children and young people who have trouble washing their hands
* increase cleaning of surfaces in classrooms, including desks and handles, and within toilet blocks and changing rooms, adhering to [guidance on cleaning of non-healthcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)
* for children and young people with an EHC plan, work with the local authority as well as with parents to decide how best to continue supporting these children and young people to stay healthy

As much as possible, children, young people and staff should be spaced apart at all times.

This means:

* sitting children at desks that are far apart
* ensuring everyone queues and eats further apart than normal
* keeping apart when in the playground or doing any physical exercise
* visiting the toilet one after the other
* staggering break times
* putting guidelines on the floor in corridors
* avoiding unnecessary staff gatherings

We acknowledge that social distancing for settings with very young children will be harder to maintain. Staff should implement the recommended measures as far as they are able, whilst ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for.

Staff should pay particular attention to handwashing before and after supporting children who need help with nappy changing, toileting or eating, as well as avoiding touching their own face whilst at work. Teachers and other staff may want to use age and developmentally appropriate ways to encourage children to follow social distancing, hand-washing and other guidance, including through games, songs and stories.

As much as possible, settings should seek to prevent the sharing of food, drink, utensils, equipment and toys. Equipment, toys and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.

**Key consideration for schools, when undertaking outdoor learning**

Assuming any return to school will be under the requirements set out above, school will continue to face real challenges in terms of delivering teaching and learning. Spending more time out of doors could reduce, but not eliminate, the chances of spreading of coronavirus and also contribute towards significantly improved health and physical wellbeing.

**On overview from other countries (early May)**

In Denmark, where children up to grade 5 (Primary) could return, social distancing is enforced both outside and inside schools. Classrooms and gyms as well as the outdoors are used for lessons, although the 2m distancing is enforced. However, at play times they can play in ‘small groups’.

Germany has delayed its decision until the 6th May.

In Norway, only primary aged children have returned. They are placed in classes of 15 and must maintain 1m social distancing within their class group and they should stay with their own class group. If two groups are to collaborate then this should happen outside.

School arrival and departure is staggered.

In China, pupils have their temperature taken on arrival and they carry a ‘green code of health’ via a phone app as part of China’s Health Code Progamme. Some distancing and staggering of arrival, all wear masks and windows are open.

**The Outdoor Education Service view is for Key Workers being ‘outdoors as much as possible’   
as one control measure to reduce risk.**

Outlined below are some considerations that could be borne in mind when planning for outdoor learning and managing risk in the outdoors.

**Location:**

The areas easiest to manage will be the school grounds themselves. Spaces, distances and tasks can all be easily managed. For many activities spaces around the site will need to be considered, how big is the space?, what is the task?, and how do I use it for the activity?, bearing in mind group size and social distancing. Consideration of all spaces around the school site will release other spaces for other groups to also work outside.

At present, local walking and journeys beyond the school boundary need much greater consideration justifying the intent or need, and will create challenges in terms of both social distancing and in relation to whether the journey is ‘essential’. Travel in vehicles will be highly restrictive if social distancing is to be maintained. Travel by walking will be equally challenging in terms of supervising a group that needs to maintain 2m spacing!

The considerations for walking off-site would be:

Justifying the need/intent – can the experience be gained within the school grounds? What will be the likely reaction of the public in your area? What are the benefits and do they outweigh the risk?

Implementation - staffing ratios in relation to the number, age and ability of the young people to comply with social distancing. Confidence of staff, what you plan to do etc – refer to Use of Local area plans and risk assessments.

**Health and Well-being:**

Having spent a significant time in isolation with only ‘family’ members a return to a location where there is greater contact with others has to be managed carefully, as will undertaking activities in outdoor settings or off-site locations. The confidence of staff will also vary according to their experiences over the last few weeks and how comfortable they feel about undertaking and managing outside learning. However the benefits are very clear, and especially for children who have not had easy or much access to outside space at their homes, then the use of the outdoors at all opportunities is very important. Staff and pupils may value space for being outdoors for reflection peace and quiet

**Outdoor Considerations – On-site:**

The request from government is that social distancing guidance should be followed. In relation to using outdoor space this suggests that 2m distancing is maintained. However, they do acknowledge that young people should be kept apart ‘as much as possible’. The challenge changes as you progress through the ages of children.

Trust guidance currently states:

* *Minimum of 2 mtrs in all directions between people e.g. between children and between children and staff*
* *Maintain distancing when moving through the building or when outdoors*
* *Minimum allowance per person = 4m²*

In terms of managing the spread of COVID-19, briefings for young people will replicate those given for indoor work, if anything being outdoors will dilute the ability to spread the disease, though this should not breed complacency.

**Participants**

As with indoor work, reacting to signs of young people or staff displaying symptoms of coronavirus have to be managed according to current guidance.

Vulnerable pupils – needs to be accounted for as part of any risk management process

The ability of pupils to comply with social distancing and instructions will need consideration.

**Activities**

Reduce the number of activities that take place where there is a higher likely hood of even minor injury, and incudes a consideration of the surface, to reduce the need for first aid, and close contact with pupils, or visits to hospital.

Adapt activities to suit this new working environment.  
AfPE website quotes Government Guidance by saying, when being physically active, participants should be have minimal social contact and practice good hygiene**.**

**Equipment**

All equipment with a hard surface to be cleaned/sanitised after use – any soft equipment, can this also be washed?

For some equipment used as part of an activity there may be a value in wiping down surfaces during an activity.

Take a bag to contain any tissues, wipes used during an activity and dispose of according to current guidance.

**First Aid**

First aid kits to be carried and contain both gloves and face masks and if possible disposable apron and eye protection. For more information see government guidance [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-interim-guidance-for-first-responders/interim-guidance-for-first-responders-and-others-in-close-contact-with-symptomatic-people-with-potential-2019-ncov)

**Hygiene**

Recommend hand washing, as recommended indoors, after outdoor activities, especially if equipment is shared or jointly used. Use hand sanitizer for intermediate hand cleansing while on activities. Be prepared to wipe hard surfaces down during within an activity.

**Development of activities**

This creates both a challenge and opportunity for taking your learning outdoors as in the past this particular approach to learning encouraged team working and a range of associated skills.   
With the introduction of social distancing in the short to medium term this presents a challenge. On the flip side, working and being outdoors and close to nature has a very positive impact on mental health and well-being.

One framework for planning could be activities that develop the 3C’s, Communication, Consideration and Cooperation.

**Adapting Outdoor Learning Activities – some thoughts:**

**Some of the references are for the Outdoor Learning Cards or Environmental Learning Cards**These cards could well be in your school – or email Stephen Brown for a loan set.

Stephen.brown@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

<https://www.harveymaps.co.uk/acatalog/Environmental-Learning-Cards-MENV.html#SID=67>

All could be managed in groups of 15 (Likely class sizes) I teacher and 1 TA?

**Green gym: Physical well being**

The social distancing hike! With 2m! lengths of rope or string do a ‘Follow the leader’ activity – take it in turns to lead. Could work in small groups up to six – also encourages team work! Stop every now and then and do 10 star jumps on the spot, run on the spot, press ups etc.

Balloon – ‘keepy uppies’: A balloon is kept in the air by using breath. Then the ‘leader’ call out a body part which is then used to keep the balloon in the air, then someone else can call out another body part etc.

**Scavenger Hunts**

Pupils could work on their own looking for items and be aware of their need to abide by social distancing as they move around.

**Orienteering**

Considerations – within the overall course, set individual courses say of 3-6 check points that only one pupil will use. For a group of 12 this would mean at least 36 checkpoints. Once completed they come back to a checkpoint and check results/answers, then move to another location to collect another map. This process will need supervising, may be useful to mark out waiting zones and would probably need to look at supervision levels according to ability, numbers etc. Organise to reduce pupils going to the same checkpoint and waiting around one teacher before moving on to the next mini course of checkpoints. (OL Cards – OEAP Outdoor Learning cards – all PE Leads will have been given them)

Can also do sprint races, the start and finish process would have to be closely managed. O12 OL Cards

Map Symbol running game and Memory Map 04 and O14 OL cards– small teams of 4. Mark waiting lines while one person collects a symbol and comes back.

Netball numbers on a football pitch O6 OL Cards and Cardinal Cones if a bigger course 07 OL Cards.

Blind Direction (Cardinal Points!) Space the pupils out give them all a blindfold. Identify north asking them to all face north and put their blindfolds on. Then call out various compass points and ask the group to point to where they think they are. Can be replicated for degrees and angles.

Natural health service: Mental health and well being

**Social well-being/ team working**

Using OEAP - OL Team building Cards:

Ski walk – 2 per ski! 2m apart! TB15 OL cards

Spiders web – one at a time TB18

Sheep and Shepherd – TB12 – One shepherd up to four sheep to get into different pens all 2m+ apart. Special comms if getting too close to another sheep!

Electric Fence – TB14 – all have to go over under fences joined by 2m rope lengths, loads of communication and support.

Toxic waste – TB13 – if all over 2m apart

Robot Race – TB8. Caller and talker 2m apart and the robot over 2m away.

**Nature Detective:**

Close observation of nature, work in a quadrat! How big would the quadrat have to be to maintain social distancing?

<https://www.harveymaps.co.uk/acatalog/Environmental-Learning-Cards-MENV.html#SID=67>

Plant discovery activity – AE3 Enviro Cards

Mini beast hunt – EU8 Enviro Cards and CS19 Mini-beast models

**Problem solving and maths:**

Individual activities – shape hunts, patterns observed around he school site. Use sticks to make a range of shapes, measure the height of a tree (EU7 Enviro Cards) or building on site, design playground mazes for other pupils try.

Fizz – Buzz: Maths and team game played in a circle. One pupils starts, by saying ‘one’ and deciding which way round the circle the counting goes. The next says ‘two’ and on it goes, however, you could ask that any number with 3 in it or divisible by three they shout out ‘fizz’. Once they get the hang of this add another challenge by asking them to ‘buzz’ for any number that includes 5 or is divisible by 5. Of course, a number that is divisible by 3 and 5 is fizz-buzz!

Cambridgeshire Outdoor Maths Cards   
An onsite Maths trail or trails? Could involve looking beyond the fence for answers.

**Creative**:

Natural art installations – Nils-Udo or Richard Shilling or Agnes Denes as good starting points

Make a musical instrument using natural resources and create a natural orchestra.

Musical statues. One group to make ‘music’ and the rest are spread out and do various activities on the spot – dictated by a ‘leader’ and they have to stop when the music stops!

**Reflection and PSHE:**

Circle time – spaced out!

Raccoon Circle work – 2 to a 4m circle and join the circles up.

**The Outdoor Education Adviser Service  
Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Councils**

Support and Assistance  
If you need support and assistance in developing your plans, please email

[Stephen.brown@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.brown@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

**Outdoor Learning Cards / Environmental Learning Cards**  
Packed full of ideas designed for activity that can be linked to curriculum  
For free loan sets of the cards – please email Stephen to borrow the sets of cards  
  
**Maths trails**  
<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/english-and-maths/maths-trails>

**Alfresco Maths**  
Taking your maths outside – designed for a Primary School, with exercises for KS1 LKS2, UKS2 all ready to be used on your school site.