



OUTDOORS POLICY

This Policy applies to all year groups at Thomas's Schools, including the EYFS.

Thomas's London Day Schools operates as a united group of schools with a similar ethos and values and as such is referred to as a singular body.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Thomas's Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Policy, Educational Visits and Off Site Activities Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thomas's has always believed in the benefits of learning beyond the classroom and we recognise that outdoor education offers children unique opportunities and experiences that cannot be taught within the constraints of their everyday education and surroundings. In response to changing times and different pressures on children, outdoor learning is in every pupils timetable from Reception to Year 8 at Thomas's Battersea, Clapham, Fulham & Kensington. We have a clear vision for outdoor education provision at Thomas's:

- All children of all ages participate in a range of outdoor learning experiences throughout their school career.
- We provide pupils with regular, frequent, challenging, enjoyable and safe opportunities to learn outdoors.

Outdoor learning has a positive impact on the individuals involved thus making Thomas's a happier and stronger community.

It should be noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic some elements of the Thomas's Outdoors programme have had to be curtailed. However rigorous risk assessments have taken place to enable the curriculum to be operational again as soon as government guidance allows.

2. RATIONALE

The lessons learnt whilst taking part in outdoor education are many. We have highlighted key areas that will be developed in the curriculum. These skills, including the Thomas's values, will equip the pupils with the life skills of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, enquiry and reflection. We believe these skills are tools our pupils will need to succeed socially, economically and environmentally in the ever-changing 21st Century.

Thomas's Values:

Our school values - 'Kindness & Courtesy,' 'Honesty & Respect,' 'Confidence & Leadership,' 'Humility & Givers not takers' and 'Perseverance & Independence,' are at the heart of Thomas's Outdoors and underpin all that we do.

Personal and emotional development:

Pupils will be able to complete activities and tasks that have been designed to develop their self-esteem and build confidence. The programme will improve wellbeing and resilience. It will also enable pupils to develop the skills of leadership and 'fellowship' (the ability to stand back and work as part of a team).

Group development:

By binding a group together through common experience over a period of time pupils grow stronger and their identities both as individuals and as a group develop. This growth will have a strong and positive impact on school culture.

Organising, Planning and Risk Management skills:

Pupils will be exposed to an element of risk (in a controlled and caring environment) and learn to develop strategies to manage and overcome challenges.

Nature Pedagogy:

Pupils will be immersed in nature and will learn to explore and appreciate the wonder of the outdoors. Isolation from everyday circumstances for extended periods of time will lead to self-reflection. Pupils will then begin to make a realistic assessment of their own personal strengths and weaknesses.

Physical literacy:

All activities will be inclusive and increase physical competency and develop team-building skills.

3. SUPPORTING THE OUTDOOR CURRICULUM

We are able to offer our children this opportunity due to two key factors:

1. Thomas's Outdoors Department (TOD)

The first is our Outdoor Department. We have a talented department of 12 Outdoor Education specialists (formerly employed by The Exploration Society) who deliver the discrete outdoor curriculum to all pupils across all schools. They also help plan and bring alive Quests across the school.

2. Thomas's Daheim

The second is Thomas's Daheim, a hotel in Upper Austria, in the resort of Wurzeralm which we have visited for over 25 years and which is at the centre of outdoor education at Thomas's. We have named it Thomas's Daheim (which means Thomas's At Home) because in all those years of taking children to live up this mountain, all have benefited from it in ways that are hard to describe. Going there is like going home to the spirit of Thomas's, something we want all our pupils to have experienced in time.

4. THE CURRICULUM

4.1 Woodland Adventure (Reception to Year 2)

All Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 sessions take place once every half term for half a day resulting in six sessions per academic year. Each session is designed to reinforce and develop the following interwoven themes:

- The Academic Curriculum

The learning intentions will stem from the school's academic curriculum and by taking the classroom outdoors the children will consolidate and deepen their learning in a new environment.

- The Great Outdoors

The sessions will also be dedicated to the appreciation of nature and the abundant life lessons that can be learnt by working collaboratively or independently in a known outdoor environment. The Thomas's values and the children's learning attitudes will be reinforced and developed through experiencing challenges in the great outdoors.

4.2 Young Explorers: Base Camp (Year 3 & 4)

All Year 3 sessions will take place once every half term for half a day, resulting in six sessions per academic year. Each session is designed to reinforce and develop the following themes:

- The Academic Curriculum

The first being the enquiry curriculum, (the learning intention will stem from the school curriculum) and will deepen their understanding.

- The Great Outdoors

The second is exploration and problem solving in the great outdoors. Through problem solving based challenges pupils will enhance their communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills.

In Year 4 the programme progresses to allow the pupils to experience outdoor activities at a more adventurous and challenging level.

- Types of activities

There will be a total of 10 sessions over the academic year and the activities will range from bushcraft and climbing to sailing and first aid. The programme is designed to give the children an opportunity to experience an abundance of outdoor activities in a safe environment and strengthen their understanding and respect for the outdoors.

- Residential
In celebration and to round off Year 4 and the Young Explorers programme, all pupils take part in a residential trip in the summer term.

4.3 Young Explorers: Ascent Group (Year 5 & 6)

All year 5 & 6 pupils will take part in the Experienced Explorers programme. The programme consists of 2 key areas:

- UK curriculum
Experienced Explorers continues to build and develop the core skills learnt during the Young Explorers programme. Throughout the year the pupils in both Year 5 and Year 6 will spend a day in the Michaelmas term and two in the Summer term increasing their depth of knowledge and mastery of four key areas; watersports, navigation, bushcraft and first aid.
- Thomas's Daheim
See below

4.4 Young Explorers: Summit Team (Year 7 & 8)

In line with the progressive programme from Reception to Year 6, the Year 7 & 8 programme is built around the practical and life skills they have already learnt during the Explorer programmes. The pupils will apply these skills to realistic challenges and scenarios where the emphasis is on collective problem solving, leadership & teamwork. In short putting the skills they have learnt to the test! Each year group will take part in 3 days throughout the school year. The pupils will work in class size groups allowing the programme to be more personal and giving pupils the opportunity to explore team dynamics, leadership and problem solving to greater effect.

5. THOMAS'S DAHEIM

5.1 What, where and why

During the first half of the Lent term, Year 5 spend five nights at Thomas's Daheim in Austria. Time is split between outdoor pursuits and ski lessons with the Thomas's Outdoor vision at the heart of their learning. Year 6 return to Daheim for a week in the second half of the Lent term. Revisiting a familiar environment enhances their learning ability and the programme of outdoor activities allows them to access the curriculum with greater confidence and independence.

Thomas's Daheim is a hotel in the Austrian ski area of Wurzeralm near the Kalkalpen National Park. It has been purchased in order for every pupil to see the truly outstanding beauty of the mountains and to offer them an unrivalled opportunity to spend and experience time in the mountains. Thomas's has been visiting the ski area of Wurzeralm for over 25 years and has developed a strong relationship and close bond with the people and area.

5.2 Year 5 & 6 Daheim programme

The trips consist of skiing, outdoor pursuits and a rich diverse evening programme including activities such as astronomy, snow-shoeing, and night walks. All activities are delivered by qualified Skifahrer (ski instructors) and Bergfuhrer (outdoor instructors) through 'Peter & Stefan's ski school,' an organisation that has been at the heart of our

experiences on the mountain. They have been teaching Thomas's children for over 25 years. The objective of Thomas's Daheim is ...

"To give every pupil an unrivalled opportunity and experience to develop key life skills in a safe and secure environment of natural beauty, away from their everyday lives. Thomas's Daheim will provide an environment where specific skills can be developed. These skills are necessary to succeed and be happy in life now, and in later years."

It is important that as a school community we recognize the unique outcomes of Thomas's Daheim. It will make our pupils better citizens and in doing so make Thomas's an even better school.'

6. POLICY REVIEW RECORD

This policy will be reviewed every two years unless there is a change in legislation		
Created: May 2017	By:	Paul Wild, Head of Thomas's Outdoors
Latest Review: April 2021	By:	Joanna Copland, Vice Principal Paul Wild, Head of Thomas's Outdoors
Approved: April 2021	By:	Tobyn Thomas, Ben Thomas, Principals Simon O'Malley, Head, Thomas's Battersea Prep School Ben Thomas, Head, Thomas's Battersea Senior School Nathan Boller, Head, Thomas's Clapham Annette Dobson, Head, Thomas's Fulham Jo Ebner, Head, Thomas's Kensington
Next Review: February 2023	By:	Paul Wild, Head of Thomas's Outdoors Cross-School Leads