



## Natural Learning at Hennock Primary School

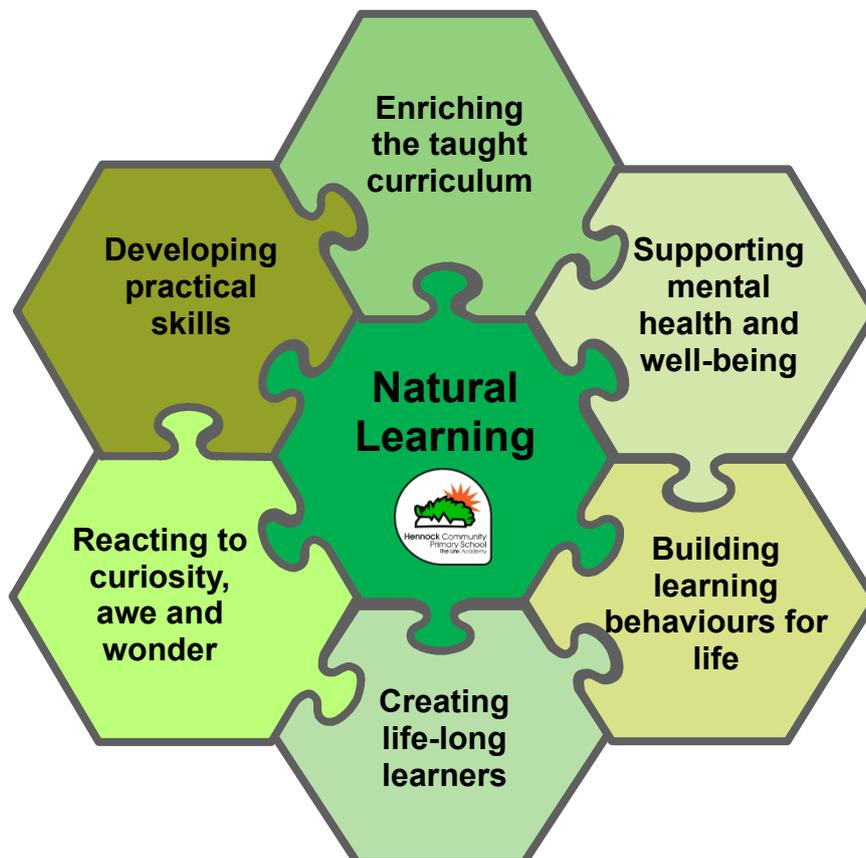


### **Intent – why do we do natural learning?**

At Hennock Primary School, we believe that the children should access the amazing natural resources on our doorstep to further their understanding of the world we live in and learn through having real experiences. Natural learning enhances and enriches all elements of our taught curriculum, which is planned carefully and sequentially from the National Curriculum; we do this because we recognise the benefits that learning, understanding and applying hands-on skills and knowledge outdoors has on the children at our school.

We also know that learning outdoors has a hugely positive impact on children's mental health and wellbeing. Being in the natural world gives children time to explore big emotions and build upon important learning behaviours: resilience, team work, independence and responsibility are key life skills we want children at Hennock Primary School to acquire. Learning these skills starts in the Early Years with outdoor child-led, heuristic play (play with natural resources) and progressively build as the children journey through school until they reach year six where they leave us tooled up with the skills and attributes they need for their next step. Natural learning also helps children to form an appreciation for our environment and sustainability – we ensure that children leave our school with a broader view of the world for the future.

Finally, we believe that natural learning provides unique opportunities for unplanned learning moments such as being curious about the world and experiencing awe and wonder through nature. We find that the most powerful and successful moments are when we can link these opportunities, planned or unplanned, to our curriculum to give children a deep and robust understanding of the natural world.



## **Implementation – what does this look like?**

Natural learning at Hennock is always linked to our curriculum so that it is purposeful and impactful on their learning. It can take many different forms; we use the environment, resources and time to our best advantage to make the most of learning opportunities.

### **When does natural learning take place?**

Natural learning can take place at any point in the school year – we carefully plan our topics to make use of the time of year. For example, in Willows class, the topic of ‘weather’ is studied in the Spring term to make the most of the natural environment. In Birch class, the topic of ‘From Stone Age to Iron Age’ takes place in the Autumn term to make the most of the moorland on our doorstep so that the children experience a sense of what life was like for people in the past. For whole topics that lend themselves to natural learning, we will make best use of the outdoors by planning a series of sessions or set days and times where the children will be learning outside.

However, we also recognise that some topics lend themselves better to other ways of learning; in these topics, we use natural learning to enhance elements of the topic so that the learning experiences are meaningful. Teachers at Hennock often take opportunities for impromptu moments of natural learning to experience awe and wonder; for example, a flock of birds in the playground or wind whistling through the trees. These moments are then linked back to revisit the taught curriculum.

### **Where does natural learning take place?**

Natural learning takes place both on and off the school premises. On our school site, our garden, playground and the Netton all form a space for natural learning to take place. This could be undertaken through learning experiences such as gardening, Muddy Maths or creating artwork from natural resources; teachers at Hennock plan with natural learning in mind and take opportunities to use our outdoor space to enrich children’s learning experiences. We also make use of external spaces locally such as open grassed area, woodlands and moorland so that children get the most of learning in different environments.



### **What do children learn? What elements of the curriculum are covered?**

Many aspects of the National Curriculum can be taught through natural learning but the subjects that best lend themselves to learning outdoors are Science, Design and Technology, Geography and Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE). We weave natural learning into our taught curriculum for these subjects, along with others subjects where strong links to the outdoors can be made, so that children have concrete experiences which aids their learning and understanding. We also incorporate many of the skills taught by Forest School practitioners into our natural learning sessions; shelter building, fire-lighting, campfire cooking, natural art, using knots and lashings, animal tracking, climbing and balancing, bug hunting, using tools and collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials, as well as other outdoor skills, are taught and linked to our taught curriculum.



Alongside these practical skills, we ensure there is a strong focus during any natural learning session on building personal and social skills and attributes, which link to the PSHE curriculum. We encourage children to:

- overcome challenging as well as managing failure - **resilience**
- discover how they learn best and pursue knowledge that interests them – **life-long learning**
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk - **independence**
- build on experiences and learn from mistakes - **reflectiveness**
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth – **responsibility**
- develop their language and communication skills with others – **team work**
- use tools and natural materials – **creativity**



The attributes highlighted are skills we feel are vital to ensuring that children get the most out of any form of learning and are built upon in other areas of school life as well as through natural learning. The practical and personal skills are planned progressively by staff so that they can be built upon throughout each child's time at school.

**Impact – what effect does natural learning have on the children of Hennock Primary School?**

Throughout each child's journey in our school and by the time they come to leave us, each child will:

- have enjoyed a variety of natural learning experiences that enhance their understanding of a wide range of curriculum areas;
- have built practical skills that teach valuable personal and social attributes so that they can succeed in whatever path they choose to take;
- have a better understanding of their emotions and wellbeing forged through a connection with the natural world;
- have developed a love and curiosity for the outdoors, nature and the environment that travels with them through life.

