

Teach it Outside

General guidelines for working with natural materials

These guidelines talk you through the common hazards you might encounter when taking your class outside for learning and describe the basic ground rules for children and you to follow when using natural materials. If the children want to use something you think might be hazardous or have doubts about – don't let them!

Gloves: If a child has an open wound that requires their hand to be protected, a clean pair of gloves should be available. For all other children gloves are only advised during cold weather. Remember hands are easier to clean than gloves.

Animal faeces: Teach children to manage their own risk by being aware of poo! Common animals that poo in school grounds are foxes and cats. Foxes often poo in visible places, on rocks, raised ground tree stumps etc. Cats will bury their poo. If a child finds poo an adult must remove and dispose of it, or the area is to be avoided.

Soil: If children are digging remind them to be careful **not** to flick soil, put hands in mouth or eat with muddy hands. Children with open wounds should have a plaster and wear gloves.

Sticks: Teach children how to use sticks safely – do not run with sticks, wave them around or use them as weapons. When pushing them into the ground hold the stick from the side and do not push from the top. Branches must never be snapped off trees.

Insects: Children (and teachers!) to be aware that most insects carry little risk unless provoked. Wasps are generally only likely to sting in late summer – autumn. Be aware of any allergies children might have. No living thing to be harmed or disturbed more than necessary.

Leaves: Children to be aware of the risk of litter, debris and faeces hidden in leaves. No-one is to pick leaves off a living plant or tree.

Stones: Large stones are to be rolled or flipped, not carried and children are to be aware of the risk to fingers and toes. Remind children of sensible behaviour – no throwing, bashing etc.

Rubbish/litter: Involve children with site inspection if litter is an issue. Teach them to report anything unusual e.g. dead animals.

Flowers, petals, berries and seeds: We encourage the use of daisies and dandelions, but no other living flowers, petals, berries or seeds are to be picked. Fallen blossom, seeds and berries are fine, just check they are not poisonous and if unsure just say no! Remind children not to eat anything or put it in their mouths!

Plants: Nettles, brambles etc. to be pointed out to children. If there are fungi on site remind children not to touch.

Rope and string: No rope or string to be left in school grounds after any activity.

Please note these are only guidelines, it is expected that the school has a current risk assessment or risk/benefit assessment (RBA) in place. More information regarding risk benefit can be found [here](#).