

# OUTSIDE PLAY POLICY

Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It can provide children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically. In doing so it provides a rich context for the development of their language and encourages positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Outdoor play should be seen as an integral part of early year's provision. At The Green Umbrella Day Nursery the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the nursery curriculum.

Close observation is essential in order to assess children's ability and to ensure appropriate planning and continuity for the outdoor curriculum.

The provision and planning for outdoor play, just as indoor play, must reflect the Diversity and richness of the experience and developing interests of the children.

*"Some opportunities for learning can only happen outside. The experience of*

- *a change in the weather*
- *finding a colony of ants under a big stone*
- *making a large-scale construction with huge cardboard cartons, or*
- *painting on great long strips of wallpaper*

*Will motivate children into mental and physical engagement, and can only be done outside."*

*"The outdoor space must be viewed as an essential teaching and learning environment which is linked with the learning that goes on inside, but with even greater status because it allows for children to learn through movement."*

*'Exercising Muscles and Minds - Outdoor Play and the Early Years Curriculum',  
Marjorie Ouvry, The National Early Years Network, 2000.*

## ***The Outdoor Area***

The outdoor area should be well laid out and provide for:

- challenging and exciting play
- safety
- grassed, hard and safety surfaced areas
- shady areas
- growing/digging areas - garden soil, compost, tubs, vegetable and flower beds
- planting tubs – gardening for different seasons, sowing seeds, harvesting vegetables, providing opportunities for environmental science
- caring and responsibility
- exploring area with trees, shrubs to attract insects, bark and log piles to provide opportunities for finding mini-beasts
- a covered sandpit which protects the sand from animals and is roofed to give some shelter from the weather
- quiet, reflective areas and busy, moving play areas
- developing exploration and imagination
- opportunities for large scale experiences

## ***Planning Outdoor Play***

Adults must consider the following points:

- the specific purpose of the outdoor play
- individual, co-operative and parallel play
- skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes to be acquired/developed by the children
- appropriate use of resources
- staff interaction, guidance and support
- balance/breadth of curriculum provision
- alteration, addition or removal of resources
- quality play

To ensure balance and breadth of provision, adults planning an outdoor activity need to think carefully about what it should include and why. They need to have clear goals for children's learning, at the same time they need to be responsive to children's enthusiasm and their interests.

Within the planning there should be flexibility to meet individual children's needs as they arise during the session. Resources should be available to enhance and extend their play. Staff will make notes of children's' achievements (through observation) to record in individual profiles.

## ***The Role of the Adult Outdoors***

Adults should be actively involved with children in their games and activities where appropriate and should not be solely in a supervisory role.

Adults should be

- talking with children in a variety of ways (conversing, discussing, questioning, modelling and commentating)
- helping children to find solutions to problems
- supporting, encouraging
- extending their activities by making extra resources available and providing new ideas
- initiating games and activities
- joining in games and activities when invited by children
- observing, assessing and recording
- being aware of safety issues
- being aware of every child's equal right of access to a full outdoor curriculum which is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated regardless of race, culture, religion, gender or disability
- Evaluating observations in order to plan appropriate resources and experiences.

In these ways adults are making positive contributions to the children's play and setting up challenging situations for children to experience.

## ***Learning Opportunities in the Outdoors***

There are many opportunities for the following developmental areas to be enhanced outdoors in varied and challenging ways:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development  
Communication, Language and Literacy  
Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

Knowledge and Understanding of the World  
Physical Development  
Creative Development

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*“Successful personal, social and emotional development is critical for very young Children in all aspects of their lives and gives them the best opportunity for success in all areas of learning.”*

*‘Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage’, 2008*

For children to develop in this area many experiences are necessary. The outdoor area can contribute immensely to development in this area.

### **Dispositions and attitudes**

- space to play, following their own interests, for extended periods of time e.g. making an obstacle course for others to use
- freedom to use a wide variety of large equipment e.g. climbing frame/slide

### **Self-confidence and self-esteem**

- children plant own vegetables/flowers plants and take care of them
- take equipment to shed at end of free play session/finding ways to move heavy equipment
- listen to the birds singing
- opportunity to develop an awareness of nature
- reflecting/a chance to be thoughtful

### **Making relationships**

- can choose to work/play with a variety of children/adults in the nursery from any group
- freedom of movement between outdoor areas for all children at the same time enables children to build a variety of friendships

### **Behaviour and self-control**

- share tricycles/scooters with others
- take care of growing plants - watering them in the dry weather
- self-care - wash hands independently after gardening
- put on Wellingtons to play in sand pit or work in the garden
- change wet clothes if necessary
- gardening, washing equipment etc

### **A sense of community**

- opportunity to talk about real life experiences in the garden e.g. gardening at home, trips to the shop with their families
- observe events in the immediate area e.g. sound of a police car, ambulance passing aeroplanes overhead

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Children are able to try out a lot of the pre-writing skills in the outdoor area, by building up first their gross and then their fine motor skills. Opportunities for large scale drawings are numerous e.g. chalking on ground and boards, using water and brush, and painting on a large scale.

Children can retell familiar stories, and take part as one of the characters.

They can enrich their vocabulary by listening to others and by exploring, investigating and interacting with peers and adults. Gender imbalances regarding boys' writing and pre reading skills can be addressed.

### **Language for Communication and Thinking**

- Children talking together in co-operative play situations e.g. on the climbing frames, when making play dens.
- Adult/child conversations where adult may extend or introduce new vocabulary.
- Children's negotiating for turns or object e.g. "Can I come in the swing-boat with you?"
- Children recalling particular processes and events they experienced during the session e.g. "I played with Gemma. We used the hats and bags to be mums."
- Children listening to and solving problems with language support as necessary e.g. "I'll get the sand-timer to have a go on the bike."
- Inviting others to join in collaborative games e.g. "Let's play Goldilocks together."
- Describing particular objects or natural phenomena e.g. "It's soft, it's crawling quickly to me."
- Talking about activities they are engaged in e.g. water, sound, wheeled toys, and using appropriate vocabulary e.g. prepositions and speed adverbs.
- In all practical activities the adult needs to give children the time and space to describe what they are doing and what is happening and to use opportunities for recalling, questioning, prediction, estimating and discussing cause and effect.
- Children using non-verbal communication, particularly body gestures, facial expressions and glancing at things in order to communicate and respond to events and other people.
- Learning nouns and adjectives around objects e.g. the Wave drum, the one minute sand-timer.
- Listening to natural and manmade sounds e.g. thunder, chime bars.
- Listening to instructions, conversations and explanations.
- Listening to rhymes, poems, songs and chants.

### **Reading**

- Looking at books e.g. sitting on the cushions or a rug with the book box, 'reading' to a friend
- Environmental print e.g. Garden centre banner, Car wash sign
- Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities e.g. traditional rhymes and simple poems.
- Chalked, pencil marks or tally-like marks
- Decoding visual information to complete puzzles e.g. looking at shapes carefully
- Following road systems e.g. pathway and road signs
- Table top and construction toys e.g. large mosaics
- 'Reading' own names from the magnetic letter board
- Making role-play signs and displaying these around the garden e.g. café
- Reference books placed near objects e.g. near mini-beast tray, fictional books near puppet box

### **Writing**

- Imitating adults by 'jotting down notes' e.g. using a notebook and pencil to scribble and draw
- With the magnetic letters
- At the garden centre, shop or noting down orders in the café
- With a clipboard and pencil, moving around the nursery garden/ outdoor areas
- On the large blackboard, using both fine and chunky chalks
- On the ground using giant chalks

- Chalking up scores on blackboard

### **Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy**

A carefully planned outdoor provision offers children opportunities to experience mathematical activities which extend/contrast with those provided indoors and so extend the scope of the curriculum.

#### **Children should have opportunities to experience:-**

- mathematical language measurement
- sorting and matching number
- classifying and sequencing
- spatial/positional awareness estimation
- directions problem solving
- time

Mathematical Language should be encouraged when appropriate. Opportunities could include discussion, questioning, predicting, and estimating through working with materials and observation.

Songs, rhymes and 'playground' games are a rich context in which to build a Child's language and vocabulary, in addition to those areas of development.

#### **Numbers for Labels and for Counting**

- Counting buckets in the sand, throwing bean bags into a bucket, planting seeds
- Ordering First, second and third with cars, skittles, tubes in the sand
- Cooking in the sand e.g. 1 : 1 correspondence with bun tins
- Picnics
- Laying the table in the house
- Tallying when knocking skittles over, throwing bean bags into buckets
- Reading numbers on objects – skittles, cars
- Writing numbers on chalkboard on path with big chinks, puzzles

#### **Calculating**

- How many more? e.g. when laying the table in the house, flowers in shop, buckets in the sand
- Counting cars - how many? are they the same?
- Tidy-up time - solving problems, are they all there?
- ordering numbered skittles
- playing magnetic fishing games - adding dots on fish, comparing one with another
- lining up cars - more than, less than

#### **Shape, Space and Measure**

- use of indoor table-top activities e.g. wild/farm animals
- house play (dolls' bedding, laying tables, sorting cutlery, cups and saucers)
- block play (large and small)
- throwing coloured beanbags into buckets
- sorting seeds by colour, shape and size
- making collections of natural objects
- making patterns with natural objects
- sequencing found natural objects
- obstacle courses (hoops, tunnels, boxes, barrels, planks and logs)
- giving opportunities for positional language e.g. high/low, under/over, through, along, upside-down, in/out
- straight/curved pathways, edge of garden

- setting up the train track
- assorted puzzles
- volume and capacity in sandpit and water tray
- lengths of ribbon/crepe paper on windy days
- weaving
- using tape measures
- sand timers
- noticing how long plants/seeds take to grow
- changes to garden
- seasonal change
- use of speed on/in wheeled toys

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

In this area children are given opportunities to make sense of their world. The outdoor area provides many opportunities for real experiences including exploring the weather, the natural environment and building on a large scale.

Children should have opportunities to develop the following knowledge/skills:

### **Exploration and investigation**

- noticing different weather conditions and impact of the weather on them
- noticing the plants in the garden/taking care of them
- planting seeds and bulbs
- exploring mini-beasts
- identifying objects that float/sink
- exploring different speeds cars go down a ramp

### **Designing and Making Skills**

- a variety of constructional toys
- large blocks
- a variety of large equipment e.g. tyres, planks, spools
- wet sand
- woodwork bench and tools
- den making equipment

### **Information and communication technology**

- highlight technology in the local environment e.g. pedestrian crossings
- telephones in the house

### **A sense of time**

- notice changes in the garden through the seasons
- talk about when different things happen in the garden e.g. planting vegetables, raking leaves,

### **A sense of place**

- talk about different parts of the nursery outdoor e.g. garden area, steps, front and back playgrounds
- notice features of local area when walking to the post box, other schools

### **Cultures and beliefs**

- role play resources from a variety of cultures

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

*"Young children's physical development is inseparable from all other aspects of Development because they learn from being active and interactive"*

*Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, QCA and DfEE, 2008. Daily Opportunities are planned to develop children's gross and fine motor skills. Some Examples of appropriate activities are as follows:*

(Please note that the nursery could not possibly have all of the resources mentioned but alternatives could be sourced or other resources used in their place)

### **Movement with confidence, imagination and in safety**

- Pulling/pushing wooden trucks in fire fighters game
- Carrying house equipment to set up in a different location
- Playing musical instruments in a moving band

### **With control and co-ordination**

- Flowerpot walkers
- Riding scooters and tricycles, prams and pushchairs
- Large scale painting and drawing
- Climbing scramble nets

### **Travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment**

- Obstacle course constructed with planks, spools, tyres, wooden steps and boxes
- Large fixed climbing frame
- Wooden 'A' frames, planks and ladders
- Small wooden climbing frame and attachments

### **Sense of Space**

- Movement/dance
- Running around garden area in small groups, swinging from wooden bar
- Building and climbing inside dens and hidey holes

### **Health and Bodily Awareness**

Adults communicating and explaining, describing and feeding back to children as they access health promoting activities in the nursery environment

- Healthy eating café (role play)
- Vegetable gardening
- Noticing breathlessness, increased heat and perspiration after exercise
- Noticing tiredness in body, legs and arms, feet and fingers after exercise

### **Using Equipment**

- Aiming beanbags into buckets and large ball into basketball net
- Bat and ball games, throwing/catching balls, kicking balls into football net
- Range of gardening tools
- Painting with water and paint, large chalking
- Skittles

### **Using Tools and Equipment**

- Woodworking, clay, cooking tools, joining and cutting tools
- Stickle bricks, Lego, small and large wooden blocks
- 10 green bottles
- Using broom, scrubbing brushes and dustpan and brush

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Exploring Media and Materials**

- looking at colours of leaves and flowers
- building obstacle courses, towers, bridges, sculptures
- describing texture of grass, wood, sand, soil, worms, snails, snow ice
- mixing sand and water
- playing with cardboard boxes
- large scale painting, weaving, chalking

### **Music**

- playing a wide variety of musical instruments
- singing songs i.e. songs inspired by the things outdoors like worms, snails, the weather, plants and trees
- playing ring games
- making up dances to music made by children on the instruments
- marching and being a band

### **Imagination**

- large scale painting in 2D and 3D
- drawing with large chalks/pastels
- mark making with large paint brushes and rollers
- pattern making with found objects
- designing and building dens, sand castles, sculptures, collages, weaving, obstacle course, props for role play (boats, rockets, helicopters)
- large block building
- barbecue
- dens
- hospital
- boats builders and workmen
- pirate ship, car train
- dressing up
- café
- builders and workmen (in sand using bricks and trowels)
- fire fighter clothes

### **Responding to Experiences, and Expressing and Communicating Ideas**

- noticing weather, vegetable garden
- minibeasts
- smelling herbs
- listening to bird song, sirens
- making maps
- painting from observation
- drawing on chalkboard

### **SAFETY IN THE OUTDOOR AREA**

- When setting out the equipment each day and during sessions, staff must look out for safety and remove any objects that could be a danger to children. Before children go outside a member of staff must check the gate is closed.
- Children must be split into all three areas of the garden where appropriate and no more than 16 children in the natural garden at any one time and no more than 12 children in the all weather garden, 8 children in the sand pit and 8 children on the hard standing.
- Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant at all times and never leave any of the play areas for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.

- Try to have two members of staff on duty in each of the play areas where appropriate and when getting ready to go out in the garden try to stagger going out i.e. taking a group while another gets ready to join you.
- It is most important for staff to move around the areas constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised. Each person should position him/herself in separate areas so that no area is unsupervised.
- At the end of the outside session the areas should be scanned carefully in case children should be left outside unsupervised.
- Unqualified staff and students/volunteers helping outdoors must never be left in charge of any area.
- All equipment should be stored away in their respective areas sensibly and carefully, to allow for safe and easy removal the next day.
- If a child is injured he/she should be taken indoors for treatment as quickly as possible if necessary; if possible the child should be treated with the 'portable' first aid kit outdoors. Both child and staff member should remain within sight of another member of staff while treatment takes place. The staff member (with the injured child) should not go into the building without first replacing themselves with another member of staff. If this is not possible then the children should be returned to the all weather garden or the building as quickly as possible to maintain staffing levels.
- Details of the accident must be written up as soon as possible. Normal accident procedures must be followed.
- Students/volunteers may administer minor first aid under the supervision of a member of staff. A member of staff should always be informed and should supervise/check the procedure and make sure the accident is recorded.
- Climbing equipment including natural climbing objects such as trees must be supervised closely at all times when being used by the children.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully e.g. unfastened shoelaces and buckles, scarves and ties on anoraks which are too long can easily cause accidents, particularly on wheeled toys and climbing equipment.
- Wheeled toys should only be used in the natural garden unless as part of a specific activity in the natural garden.
- If it is necessary for an adult to put toys away whilst children are still in the play areas, there must always be at least one other member of staff supervising remaining children in the area.
- Encourage children always to look before they move, or when jumping off anything in the garden; also encourage children to leave space between themselves and the child in front when walking, running, crossing or climbing.
- When children are climbing on climbing frames, trees or any other nursery equipment or resources staff must be continually aware of any risks, for example objects left underneath.
- Whenever children carry equipment (tidying up) they should be taught how to do it and adults should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.

**All policy and procedure documents are subject to regular review**

**This policy was reviewed: April 2013**