
Strathearn Preparatory Department
OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY



Strathearn School

Preparatory Department

Outdoor Play Policy

Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development as 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.

In the Preparatory Department, the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the primary curriculum. The Prep. 1, 2 and 3 children have a play based learning experience in the outdoor "Rainbow Garden" once a week (usually on a Friday), for approximately forty minutes per class. The Prep. 1 and 3 classes gain access to the garden via the rainbow gate adjacent to the Prep 1 and 3 door, while the Prep 2 class enters the garden via the rainbow gate beside the caretaker's workshop. 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 the developing interests of the children.

'Some opportunities for learning can only happen outside. The experience of a change in the weather, finding an insect under a big stone, making a large-scale construction with huge cardboard cartons or painting on great long strips of wallpaper - all of these 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'-
by Marjorie Ouvry - The National Early Years Network.

The Outdoor Area

The outdoor area is well laid out and provides for: -

- Challenging and exciting play.
- Safety.
- Grassed, hard and safety surfaced areas.
- Shady areas.
- Growing/digging areas – (garden soil, compost, tubs, vegetable, 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 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. (Photographs as well)

The Role of the School Caretaker

- Toys must be set out according to the half-termly planning requirements by nine o'clock every play day morning.
- Water trays must be filled before play begins if required.
- Hand gels must be filled regularly.
- A thorough check of the play area must be made to ensure that the environment is safe.
- Fallen twigs and leaves must be cleared away from the play area around the climbing frame every week, to allow for safe play.
- The soft surface around the whiteboards and the slide must be raked and levelled every week, to allow for safe play.
- At 2.30 every play day all equipment is to be put away in the specified area, with bins being emptied, whiteboards being cleaned with the provided baby wipes.
- Any issues regarding the condition of the play equipment must be reported to the P1, P2 and P3 teaching staff.

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 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:

1. Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
2. Communication, Language and Literacy
3. Mathematics and Numeracy
4. The Arts – Drama / Art/ Music
5. The World Around Us – Science and Technology / Geography / History
6. Physical Development

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding

‘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’

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
- Tidying equipment at end of free play session / finding ways to move awkwardly shaped 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
- Freedom of movement - enables children to build a variety of friendships

Behaviour and Self-Control

- Turn-taking
- Sharing tricycles/scooters with others
- Taking care of growing plants - watering them in the dry weather

Self-Management Skills

- Wash hands independently after gardening / sand play / painting
- Put on Wellingtons for outdoor play
- 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 (e.g.: - chalking on ground and boards / using water and brush / 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.

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 negotiating for turns or objects
- Children recalling particular processes and events they experienced during the session.
- Children listening to and solving problems with language.
- Inviting others to join in collaborative games.
- Describing particular objects or natural phenomena e.g. "It's soft, it's crawling"

- 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.
 - Listening to natural and man made 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 / researching
- Environmental print.
- Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities e.g. traditional rhymes and simple poems.
- Chalked / pencil marks / independent story reading
- Decoding visual information to complete puzzles / words e.g. looking at shape carefully
- Following road systems e.g. pathway and road signs
- Table top and construction toys e.g. large mosaics
- Making role-play signs and displaying these around the garden e.g. café
- Reference books placed near objects.

Writing

- Imitating adults by 'jotting down notes' e.g. using a notebook and pencil to scribble, write, record and draw
- In role play areas
- With a clipboard and pencil, moving around the outdoor areas
- On the large whiteboard, using both fine and chunky pens
- On the ground using giant chalks / water bottles to squirt letters
- Chalking up scores on blackboard.

Mathematics 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
- 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 items
- Lining up items - 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 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

The Arts – Drama, Art and Music

Exploring Media and Materials

- Looking at colours of leaves and flower
- Building obstacle courses, towers, bridges, sculptures
- Describing texture of grass, wood, sand, soil, worms, snails, snow or ice
- Mixing sand and water
- Playing with cardboard boxes
- Large scale painting, weaving, chalking
- Painting with water and paint, large 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 circle 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/ designing 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, aeroplanes)
- Large block building
- Barbecue
- Dens
- Hospital
- Boats/ Builders
- Pirate ship / Car / Train
- Dressing up
- Café
- Builders (in sand using bricks and trowels)

Responding to Experiences - Expressing / Communicating Ideas

- Noticing weather, vegetable garden, minibeasts etc
- Smelling plants / herbs
- Listening to environmental sounds – (bird song, sirens)
- Making maps
- Painting from observation
- Drawing on chalkboard

The World Around Us – Geography, History and Science and Technology

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
- Tools / Den making equipment

Information and Communication Technology

- Highlight technology in the local environment
- Telephones in the house
- Digital camera

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 outdoor environment e.g. garden area, road way, covered area etc
- Notice features of local area when walking to the library, other schools etc

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,

Weekly opportunities are planned to develop children's gross and fine motor skills. Some examples of appropriate activities are as follows:

Movement with Confidence, Imagination and in Safety

- Pulling / pushing ride-on vehicles
- Carrying equipment to set up in a different location
- Playing musical instruments in a moving band

With Control and Co-ordination

- Stilt walkers
- Riding scooters and tricycles / Pushing prams and pushchairs
- Large scale painting and drawing
- Climbing ladders / rock wall.
- 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 climbing frame and attachments

Sense of Space

- Movement / dance
- Running around garden area, swinging from climbing frame
- 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 outdoor 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 at targets and large ball into basketball net
- Bat and ball games, throwing / catching balls, kicking balls
- Range of gardening tools
- Skittles

Using Tools

- Malleable material tools, joining and cutting tools
- Large and small construction materials
- Using broom, scrubbing brushes and dustpan and brush

Mud Kitchens

Mud kitchens are exciting, messy creative areas to play. The learning potential from mud kitchens is immense due to their creative nature. Children experience sensory, emotional and imaginative play as well as developing Maths, Science and speaking skills. Teachers guide role play by adding equipment that develops specific skills, such as the mud kitchen becoming a science lab or a Michelin starred restaurant. Language skills develop because children talk about what they are making and answer questions about their recipes. Cognitive skills such as problem solving and judging which pot is the biggest are learned through experience. Sitting in a classroom learning about mud is not as effective or as much fun as playing in a mud kitchen.

Maths and Science provide explanations for lots of questions and generates many more. Volume and capacity involves measuring liquids and solids to compare quantities and weight. Recipes effectively combine weights, measures and the reaction of different types of mud to water. Children learn how to read the scale on a measuring jug by looking at it. They discover that 250mls of water and 300mls of water doesn't fit into a 500ml measuring jug. Children hypothesize about the outcomes of experiments and discuss methods and results with the rest of the class. Teachers guide learning by including the relevant utensils and setting the scene. Telling the class about their experiment helps children to sequence events and makes them better story tellers. They learn about beginnings, middles and ends as well as first, second, third and final. The more children recount their experiment the better they become at it and their writing skills improve.

STEAM

In our Outdoor Play Garden, we provide opportunities for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics. STEAM learning is very important because these 5 disciplines are used in everyday activities. They promote problem-solving and creative and analytical thinking. It is never too early to introduce STEAM learning as each discipline helps children to grow and navigate through everyday challenges. These disciplines all go hand in hand with each other and all STEAM learning will involve more than one focus of learning.

We have ongoing plans for STEAM focus days once a term, where the children get an opportunity to participate in 10 activities in mixed class groups, enabling them to learn from each other as well. (See STEAM Day notes, film and planners).

Examples of STEAM learning: -

Science

- Plant bulbs / grow plants from seeds in a jar
- Make magnetic slime
- Create your child's name out of crystals
- Rainbow volcano

Technology

- Zip wire rockets
- Balloon cars
- Ramps

Engineering

- Ramps
- Building a 3D tower with newspapers and cellotape
- Marshmallow structures

Art

- Research what happens when mixing water colours and oils
- Determine how plants absorb water with food colouring
- Nature Art

Mathematics

- Learn about odd and even numbers
- Covering an area with unifix cubes
- Discover which shaped wand blows the biggest bubbles

Safety in the Outdoor Play Area **(See Risk Assessment)**

- When checking over the equipment already set out by the caretaker each week and during sessions, staff must always be aware of safety in the outdoor play garden.
- Any medication required must be brought to the outdoor play area by the teacher responsible for the care of the child. (epipens etc.)
- Once the children are in the play garden a member of staff must always check both gates are closed.
- 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 the play area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- It is most important for staff to move around the area constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised.
- At the end of the session the areas should be scanned carefully in case children should be left outside unsupervised.
- Students helping outdoors must never be left in charge of any area.

- All equipment should be stored away sensibly and carefully by the caretaker, to allow for safe and easy removal next play time.
- If a child is injured 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.
- Details of the accident must be written up as soon as possible in the first aid book. The child's parent must be informed of the accident and treatment.
- Students may administer minor first aid under supervision of a member of staff. A member of staff should always be informed and should supervise / check details in accident book.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully e.g. unfastened shoelaces and buckles, scarves and ties on coats which are too long can easily cause accidents, particularly on wheeled toys and climbing equipment.
- Wheeled toys should only be used on the tarmac play area. Wheeled toys other than prams or wheelbarrows should never be used in the garden area.
- Encourage children always to look before they move on the slide, or when jumping off apparatus; also encourage children to leave space between themselves and the child in front when crossing planks or climbing up / down apparatus.
- When children are climbing on climbing frames, staff must be continually aware of any risks (e.g. objects left underneath).
- Whenever children carry equipment (clearing away or carrying planks etc.) they should be taught how to do it and adults should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.