

## Outdoor Learning

**Learning** across all areas of the Early Years Foundation can take place in the outdoor area. It is an area which offers opportunities for all children from birth to 5 and beyond to:

- Experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors.
- Enable young children to thrive, develop their minds and bodies through free access to stimulating outdoor environments. Learning must be through play and real experiences.
- Connect with knowledgeable and enthusiastic adults to support the child in discovering how to unlock the potential of outdoors.

### Remember:

**“The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky.”**

Margaret McMillan (c1925).

### Location

- Ideally as close to the indoor environment to enable free flow accessibility.
- However large or small, unkempt or too pristine there are possibilities to be explored.
- Within a secure boundary.
- Thought must be given to providing shade.



### Resources

- Provide a variety of resources that will promote all 7 areas of learning and development, whilst also drawing on the unique nature and natural resources in the outdoor area.
- Provide different experiences to those found inside. The outside is one half of a whole in terms of provision.
- Regularly rotate resources to maintain interest and reflect current fascinations and lines of enquiry.
- The ‘world of plastic’ must be heavily supplemented and complemented by a range of open ended, natural, thought-provoking materials and found resources.
- Provide resources that challenge physical skills and enable children ‘get out of breath’ through having their heart rates raised.
- Ensure that storage enables children to make independent choices. Ideally a safely accessible shed or storage trolleys on wheels.
- A water source, whether it be outside tap or lidded water butt adds another dimension to the quality of play and exploration.
- Multi sensory experiences that encourage children to use their whole body should be available.

- If wheeled toys are available they must stimulate cooperative play and offer links with role play.
- Provide planting, growing and eventual eating experiences in innovative ways such as hanging baskets on pulleys, tyres and other interesting containers.
- A 'diggery' is essential preferably of a size that children can get into. 'Diggeries' might contain leaves, sand, soil, gravel and more.
- Offer resources such as drapes for dens, pop up tents, bushes, cardboard boxes and more to build structures that encourage communication and imaginative play.
- Provide suitable clothing to enable children and adults to work and play outside in ALL weathers.

### **Adult's Role**

- To enjoy and celebrate and participate in the special nature of learning outdoors.
- Be generous with time to allow children to develop their own ideas.
- Provide a balance of child initiated, adult directed or led learning through play. Recognise the importance of being a play partner with children. (Shared control).
- Recognise that children will often behave differently when playing outside.
- Plan time when you can observe and consider how play and learning can be supported, extended and challenged.
- Be prepared to understand that gender differences might impact upon the nature of play eg interest in superhero play.
- Include outdoor learning on written planning.