

## Outdoors Play Policy and Procedure



### Rationale

*“There is a growing body of research that shows that young children’s access to nature and outdoor play is positively associated with improved self-esteem, physical health, development of language skills and disposition to learning.” JM Davis, 2009 in “My World Outdoors”.*

Outdoors play is a positive influence on children’s learning and development and is supported by national guidance within Scotland from the Care Inspectorate (*My World Outdoors*) and Education Scotland (*Curriculum for Excellence* and *Building/Realising the Ambition*). Children have a right to relax and play in the way that they want (*UN Convention on Rights of the Child Article 31*).

*“The development of movement and coordination for a child is linked to communication and cognitive development. For instance, a young child with a developing vestibular system will find it almost impossible to sit still for any length of time or possess the fine motor skills and coordination required for writing before they are ready... **The best way to help babies and young children develop this system is through providing daily opportunities for physical play, especially outdoors.**”*

*Realising the Ambition, Education Scotland, 2020*

Outdoors play also enables children to experience the wonder of the natural world – the weather and seasons, plants and growth, the sky and levels of light and dark. When children take risks in their play, be it through climbing, swinging, balancing or supporting adults to cook over a fire, they learn the meaning of “safe” and how to regulate their own behaviour to keep themselves safe. They also learn their own limits.

*“Through access to a range of outdoor activities we expect that children will: develop the skills to access and manage risk” (My World Outdoors, Care Inspectorate, 2016)*

*“When planning and providing play opportunities; the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped up in cotton wool.” Health and Safety Executive, 2012*

Outdoors play is healthy for children because of the benefits of physical activity and to give exposure to sunlight in order to help produce enough vitamin D to be healthy. NHS advice is for 3 and 4 year old children to have 3 hours per day of physical activity including active and outdoors play. Outdoors play also reduces infection risk at the present time of COVID-19 pandemic. Lower levels of vitamin D, due to being indoors or during winter, reduces the

effectiveness of the immune system. Although cold temperatures allow viruses to reproduce faster, indoors dry air and more time indoors in close proximity can allow viruses to cross to other people and promote viral spread. Evidence supports outdoors play with suitable clothing as being of health benefit to children.

## **Aims**

- the outdoors is a key environment in which to deliver the curriculum therefore the full range of learning experiences should be available outdoors as well as indoors
- all children are able to choose to access outdoors play daily, and in all almost all weathers, at nearly all times of day
- we will utilise local space and facilities to provide a sense of place and community for the children and their families as well as enhancing learning
- we will enable children to participate in appropriate experiences which include a limited level of risk, where this is of benefit to their holistic development and where the risk has been carefully assessed
- we will work in partnership with parents and carers to support a shared understanding about the benefits of outdoors play for all round development, and invite parents and carers in to nursery to experience this
- we will support the staff team to access suitable training and development opportunities focussed upon outdoors play

## **Procedures**

What we will do:

- We will support children to wear suitable outdoors clothing for the weather, so as to keep warm and dry as much as possible. We will provide some outdoors jackets, trousers and wellies when children need them (but we ask parents/carers to provide these where possible)
- We will support children to have sun cream applied (and reapplied) and to wear a sun hat to ensure they are not exposed to harmful rays of the sun
- We will share examples of children's learning outdoors through Twitter and individual Learning Journals

What we ask of parents/carers:

- Please provide suitable clothing for outdoors play if you can – hats, gloves, wellies, jackets and waterproof trousers suitable for wet and cold weather
- Help your children to learn to be independent by asking them to put on shoes, jackets, hats and gloves themselves as much as possible
- Remember that children can get messy at nursery through their play, indoors or outdoors – please provide spare clothing in case they need to get changed

- Children have a right to access outdoors play. If you want them to stay indoors, you will need to meet with the Head of Nursery to discuss this. The health benefits of outdoors play are so positive that it would be very unusual for us to agree to keep a child indoors
- Please provide a bottle of sun-cream, with your child's name on it, when requested
- Please give your child positive messages about being outdoors, whatever the weather. As the saying goes "there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing"