

Colleges Nursery & Family Centre

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It provides 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 years provision. At Colleges, whilst children are involved in self-chosen activities, they move freely between indoor and outdoor areas using the resources which best meet their needs on a daily basis all the year round.

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.

"The outdoor environment

- Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development.
- Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.
- It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world.
- Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant."

The Early Years Foundation Stage, 2007

"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 - 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', Marjorie Ouvry, The National Early Years Network, 2000.

The Outdoor Area

The outdoor area is well laid out and provides for

- challenging and exciting play
- safety
- different levels of play - flat, hilly, sloping
- grassed and hard areas (including straight and winding paths) should be wide enough for safe, easy play with a safety surface area for climbing equipment
- shady areas
- growing/digging areas - garden soil, compost, tubs, vegetable and flower beds. A free digging area is easily provided so that children can enjoy the physical satisfaction of digging; also to provide opportunities for finding mini-beasts, planting tubs and garden for different seasons, sowing seeds, harvesting vegetables providing opportunities for environmental science, caring and responsibility
- wild areas - long grass, wild flowers and trees, logs and shrubs to attract insects
- a sandpit with hard surround to provide sitting areas and to facilitate easy sweeping; also a sturdy cover protection
- 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 on individual Foundation Stage Profiles.

Learning Opportunities in the Garden/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

Further detailed information about each of the six areas of learning can be found in the relevant curriculum policies.

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
- providing role models for appropriate clothing i.e. hats, coats, boots to suit weather conditions

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

Recording and Assessment

Records of the children's development and progress when outside are made following observations and assessments. These observations are then recorded in the Year One Foundation Stage Profile*. Alongside these observations, staff make judgements about their achievements in relation to the descriptors and record these on the Foundation Stage Profile matrix*.

Examples of the children's work may be kept and exhibited, or put into Special Books, and photos are used to document both the process and outcome of their activities.

Assessments of the children's experiences of the outdoor area are shared with parents verbally during the first term and in a written end of term profile in the third term.

*See Foundation Stage Profile Document file.

SAFETY IN THE GARDEN

- When setting out the equipment each day and during sessions, staff must look out for safety and remove any objects such as cans, bottles or needles which may have been left by others.
- Staff outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant at all times and never leave the garden for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- Whenever there is a large number of children in the garden, there must be at least two members of staff outside with the children maintaining appropriate ratios according to the age of the children.
- It is most important for staff to move around the garden constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised. If more than one adult is in the garden, each person should position him/herself in separate areas so that no area is unsupervised.
- At the end of the session the garden should be scanned carefully in case children should be left outside unsupervised.
- Hot drinks should not be taken into the garden.
- Water is provided for all on hot days.
- Parents and students helping outdoors must never be left in charge of the garden.
- All equipment should be stored away sensibly and carefully, to allow for safe and easy removal next day.
- If a child is injured he/she should be handed to a member of staff indoors as quickly as possible for treatment so that supervision of the garden is interrupted for as short a period of time as possible. In the event that there are several members of staff in the garden, it would be safe for one of those adults to administer first aid to the child
- 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 given.
- Climbing apparatus should be set out on the grassed and safety surface areas whenever possible. If the hard areas are used, safety mats should cover the surrounding area.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully e.g. unfastened shoelaces and buckles, sandals, scarves and ties on anoraks which are too long can easily cause accidents, particularly on wheeled toys.
- Wheeled toys should only be used on hard play surfaces.
- If it is necessary for an adult to put toys away whilst children are still in the garden, there must always be at least one other member of staff supervising remaining children in the garden.
- Children are encouraged to climb and balance independently and to be aware of the level of their own abilities. Adults to offer encouragement whilst being aware of their own safety.
- 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.
- Whenever children carry equipment (clearing away or carrying ladders/stepladders) they should be taught how to do it and adults should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.

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