



# Highfield Primary School Outdoor Play Policy

“THE BEST CLASSROOM AND THE RICHEST CUPBOARD IS ROOFED ONLY BY THE SKY”.

(Margaret McMillan)

## **Rationale**

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 the daily routine. At Highfield Primary, children rotate through the different ‘classroom areas’, including the outdoor area throughout the day. They are involved in self-chosen activities which best meet their needs all 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 EYFS curriculum. Close observation is essential to assess the 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 a larger scale 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.

**EYFS, 2007**

## **The Outdoor Area**

The outdoor area is well laid out in zoned areas and provides for:

- Challenging, stimulating and exciting play.
- The opportunity for risk taking in a safe and secure environment.
- Different levels of play- flat and sloping.
- Hard and ‘grassed’ areas.
- Canopy and trees to provide shady areas.
- Growing/digging area – garden soil, compost, planters, vegetable and flower beds. A free digging area is provided so that children can enjoy the physical satisfaction of just digging; also to provide opportunities for finding mini-beasts, planting tubs and gardening for different seasons, sowing seeds, harvesting vegetables, providing opportunities for environmental science, caring and responsibility.
- Magic Garden area consisting of trees, plants, flowers, a variety of textured surfaces and logs to attract insects- to visit in the main school area.
- Sand and water areas consisting of large standing trays and low level trays with various resources i.e. small world, pipes etc. Water guttering system to develop the understanding of forces.



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- Quiet, reflective areas for reading and thinking and busy moving areas for wheeled toys and bats, balls etc.
- Role play area to develop story telling skills and imagination
- Music area using traditional instruments and household pots & pans
- Construction area with large & small scale resources wooden bricks, boxes, tubes and tools etc.
- Small world area comprising cars, garage, house, people, dinosaurs, mats
- Creative areas of: painting large & small scale, mark-making (writing, drawing), weaving.

## **Planning**

Planning for Outdoor play must take into consideration

- Balance / breadth of curriculum provision
- The specific purpose of the outdoor play
- Opportunities for individual, parallel and cooperative play
- Skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes to be acquired and developed by the children
- Resources and their use
- Staff interaction, guidance and support
- Quality play opportunities

Planning should contain clear goals for children's learning but at the same time be responsive to children's enthusiasm and their interests. Within the planning there should be the flexibility to meet individual learning needs as they arise during the session.

### **Long term plans**

Long term plans for each area of provision are available which identify resources, learning opportunities and possible activities.

### **Medium term plans**

Within the medium term plans opportunities for specific outdoor learning activities have been identified.

### **Short term plans**

Weekly plans are to be created which identify the resources to be used, short, focused tasks and the learning objectives for these.

## **Learning Opportunities in the Outdoor area**

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

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication and language
- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding the world
- Physical development
- Expressive arts and design

Further detailed information about each of the seven areas of learning can be found within the EYFS curriculum.

Long, medium and short term plans will clearly identify the specific learning opportunities of each area.

## **Staff Management**

Each member of staff will complete sessions of outdoor play throughout the day following the timetable. A third of the children will be sent outdoors during sessions on a rotational basis throughout the day, ensuring that every child has the opportunity for outdoor play each day.



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## **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

- Engaging and communicating with children in a variety of ways (conversing, discussing, questioning, modelling and commentating)
- Helping children to find solutions to problems
- Supporting and encouraging
- Extending their activities by making extra resources available and providing new ideas
- Initiating games and ideas
- Joining in games and activities
- Completing focused activities
- Observing, assessing and recording
- Evaluating observations in order to plan appropriate resources and experiences
- Being aware of safety issues – completing health and safety risk assessments daily
- Being aware of every child's right of access to a full outdoor curriculum which is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated regardless of race, culture, religion, gender or disability
- Helping to set out and tidy away resources
- Providing role models for appropriate clothing

In these ways adults are making positive contributions to the children's play and encouraging 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. Observations are kept on Tapestry or on teachers class tick lists. Photographs are used to document both the process and outcome of their activities. These are used to plan for future activities.

Alongside these observations, staff make judgements about their achievements in relation to the descriptors and record these on the FSP at regular intervals.

## **Safety In The Outdoor Area**

- When setting out the equipment each day and during session, staff must be vigilant and aware of safety issues. Check for and remove hazardous and dangerous objects such as cans, bottles or cat faeces.
- Staff outdoors must always be aware of the safety of all the children in their care, be vigilant at all times and never leave the outdoor area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- It is most important for staff to move around the outdoor area constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised. If more than one adult is outdoors, each person should position him/herself in separate areas so that no area is unsupervised.
- At the end of the session the outdoor area should be scanned carefully to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Hot drinks should not be taken outdoors, unless in thermos cups.
- Children to have access to drinking water at all times.
- Parents and students helping outdoors must never be left unsupervised.
- All equipment should be stored away sensibly and carefully, to allow for safe and easy removal next day.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully e.g. unfastened shoes, anorak ties etc, as these can easily cause accidents.



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- Wheeled toys should only be used on hard surfaces and in the zoned area.
- Whenever children carry equipment they should be taught how to do it correctly and adults should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.
- Gates to always be shut and/or locked.
- For further safety information also see Risk Assessment for the Outdoor area.

## Procedures for accidents

If a child is injured he/she should be handed to a member of staff indoors as quickly as possible for treatment so that the supervision of the Outdoor area is interrupted for as short a time as possible. If there is more than one adult outdoors then it would be safe for them to administer first aid either in or outdoors (wherever is most appropriate). Details must then be recorded in the accident book and appropriate contact with parents must be fulfilled.

## Weather

We aim to play outdoors every day, regardless of the weather. In extreme weather conditions (wind, rain, snow, ice, heat) it obviously won't be safe to be outside. This decision will be made as a FS team. Children and parents will be reminded about wearing appropriate clothing in Winter and the application of sun cream and wearing of sunhats in Summer. Children have continuous access to water.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Is the outdoor area used daily and effectively?  
Is there evidence of progressive and meaningful learning?  
Is there evidence of child initiated learning?  
Does FSP data reflect that children's needs are being met in the outdoor area?

## Equal Opportunities/Race Equality

We are committed to an environment that promotes equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their race/colour/gender/ability and religion, and any work undertaken reflects this commitment. Please also see the school's Race Equality and Equal Opportunities policy.

## Health and Safety

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are safe within the school environment. Please refer to the school's policy for Health and Safety. See also section 'Safety in the outdoor area'

## Roles and Responsibilities

The FS coordinator will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the application of this policy.

**Policy created by:** L Bowker (EYFS Lead, Deputy Head)

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Signed:

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