

Outdoor Play Policy

In St Clare's Nursery School we understand play as being one of the key processes, along with exploration and talk, through which children become competent, confident and independent learners. It is important to all other areas of learning because without the opportunity to play with materials, environments and ideas children will not develop those crucial ways of thinking and knowing that emerge from uncertainty and problem-solving. They learn to make sense of things in ways that strengthens their rapidly developing repertoire of skills and understandings.

Rationale

We at St. Clare's realise that the 'outdoors' provide young children with one of the richest environments in which to learn. We know that outdoor areas which are well planned and well resourced, with adults who are highly involved with the children, will help instil joy and excitement as learning new skills and making fresh discoveries take place.

Our garden consists of grass and hard surfaces - a lawn, three large circular paved areas with stepping stones between them, a large winding path and a seated area. The paved areas comprise of flagstones and brick paviours. The path is divided into various sections of coloured gravel, stones and tarmac. We also have two raised herb garden areas and a large digging area suitable for planting bulbs, flowers and vegetables. The periphery of the garden consists of a selection of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. There is an abundance of natural materials - twigs, leaves, bark, logs, stones, seeds and so on. The garden naturally attracts birds.

'Principles of Outdoor Play In The Early Years' (Helen Bilton)

- Indoors and outdoors need to be viewed as one combined and integrated environment.
- Indoors and outdoors need to be available to the children simultaneously.
- Outdoors is an equal player to indoors and should receive planning, management, evaluation, resourcing, staffing and adult interaction on a par with indoors.
- Outdoors is both a teaching and learning environment.
- Outdoor design and layout needs careful consideration.

- Outdoor play is central to young children's learning possibly more to some children than others.
- The outdoor classroom offers children the opportunity to utilise effective modes of learning - play, movement and sensory experience.
- Children need versatile equipment and environments.
- Children need to be able to control change and modify their environment.
- Staff should be supportive towards outdoor play.

'These principles underpin the Outdoor Curriculum in the Early Years. Well planned and well resourced outdoor play experiences will allow for progression in a child's understanding and thinking. These will provide the context in which the principles become reality for all children'. (Learning Outdoors resource file)

Why Develop Outdoor Play?

- It enables and encourages children to explore their surroundings naturally through movement.
 - Other vehicles through which children can learn are talk, sensory experiences and play.
- It provides access to space where mind and body growth are nurtured.
- Physical development is the pre-requisite for children's growth. It:
 - enhances the development of fine & gross motor skills;
 - develops co-ordination, body and balance awareness;
 - contributes towards healthy bodies, heart and other organs;
 - fosters a life-long commitment of essential daily exercise & self motivation.
- It provides opportunities for assessed risky freedom whereby children can play and interact freely using their initiative and imagination.
- Each of the six areas of learning can be addressed in outdoor play. This will ensure the long-term physical, social, emotional and mental well being of the children are further developed.
- 'Exercise can affect emotions allowing for relaxation and calmness and a heightened sense of well being' (Armstrong 1996)

Young children are naturally curious and want to make sense of the world. Therefore to assist in this and to ensure in their well being it is necessary to encourage involvement and exploration through high quality play in the outdoor environment.

Aims of Outdoor Play at St Clare's Nursery

- To promote a safe, purposeful and happy atmosphere where children can experience joy and excitement in the outdoors;
- To foster positive, caring attitudes among all those involved in learning outdoors;
- To provide access to a variety of different of spaces in order to nurture mind-body growth;
- To plan for and provide high quality outdoor play activities for children of all abilities in which they can acquire new skills and discover new experiences;
- To enhance the development of motor skills (gross and fine);
- To develop co-ordination, balance and body awareness;
- To provide the opportunity for assessed risky freedom, where children can play and socialise freely and using imagination and initiative;
- To enhance children's long term social, emotional and cognitive development through learning outdoors;
- To raise children's self-esteem and self confidence through exploration of outdoor environment;
- To enable children, staff, parents and the wider community to have a sense of direction and a feeling of common purpose.
- To develop a wild garden, rock garden, pergola and a willow tunnel using real garden tools and other small equipment.

Planning & Organisation of Outdoor Play

We believe that it is the duty of all members of staff to actively plan and organise, the areas of learning in our outdoor play. For this reason staff draw up

- Long Term Plans - (Yearly plans showing progression in the anticipated learning outcomes for children and the nursery's provision of activities).
- Medium Term Plans - (Monthly plans detailing the anticipated learning outcomes for outdoor play over the six areas of learning).
- Short Term Plans - (Flexible Weekly Plans ensure that children's play is observed, supported and extended where appropriate).

Areas of Learning in the Nursery Outdoor Curriculum at St Clare's Nursery

- The Arts - Art & Craft, Music and Imaginative Play.

Children will have opportunities to:

~explore colour, shape, texture, and sound through a variety of materials and at various levels/heights.

~experience a variety of mediums and mark making techniques modelling and printing, both larger and small scale.

~develop a sense of spatial awareness using 3D and other materials

~listen to sounds in the outdoor environment and identify outdoor characteristics using all of their senses.

~explore rhythms, sounds, songs and dance in the outdoor environment.

~make music, explore senses, thoughts and feelings, using a variety of body sounds and home made/commercial percussion instruments.

~participate in collaborative role play, which encourages skills of co-operation, negotiation...

~further develop self-esteem, oral language, ability to express themselves through imaginative play.

~engage in large movement/'noisy' imaginative play, linked with indoor imaginative areas.

~access a wide range of equipment, resources and props to promote imaginative play.

- Language and Literacy - Talking and Listening,
 - 'Reading',
 - 'Writing'.

Children will have opportunities to:

- ~Talk about features/experiences in the outdoor environment.
- ~use language to describe, explain, predict, ask questions, follow instructions and directions.
- ~interact and converse with adults and peers to extend language and develop their ideas.
- ~talk, listen, interact, and play in a 'quiet' area.
- ~enjoy stories and a wider range of texts eg leaflets, catalogues, maps... in the outdoor environment
- ~experience a variety of meaningful/purposeful print eg labels, signs, symbols...
- ~experiment with early writing using chalk, sand, water and rollers, clipboards and pencils...
- ~express their ideas and feelings through drawings/early writing.
- ~write for a purpose during role play and other activities eg lists, messages... as modelled by adults

- Early Mathematical Development

Children will have opportunities to:

- ~use mathematical language through counting games, rhymes...
- ~understand and use both cardinal and ordinal numbers eg hopscotch, number of parking bays...
- ~experience the passing of time/seasonal changes.
- ~sort, match and categorise natural materials/equipment.
- ~investigate, explore and create patterns, shapes (include 2D) and colours eg shape of trees, leaves, clouds...
- ~sort, design, plan and build with a range of 3D shapes.
- ~make comparisons of size, length, capacity, weight and use contextually.
- ~explore spatial awareness through balance, locomotion and manipulation.
- ~understand and use positional and directional language.

- Personal, Social & Emotional Development,

Children will have opportunities to:

- ~develop confidence, self-esteem, independence and a sense of security/adventure as they acquire new skills.
- ~care for themselves and their personal safety by learning to follow simple rules.
- ~respect the needs and feelings of others and develop positive behaviours, tolerance and perseverance.
- ~develop respect and concern for the outdoor environment by taking care of it.

- Physical Development & Movement,

Children will have opportunities to:

- ~enjoy physical play and understand its importance for health and well-being.
- ~develop spatial awareness and how to share space safely with peers.
- ~develop sense of freedom/move confidently with increasing control and confidence.
- ~acquire essential movement skills like, balance, co-ordination, control of body actions, locomotion, manipulation, and use appropriate vocabulary.
- ~understand simple safety rules and use tools/equipment correctly with increasing control.

- The World Around Us

Children will have opportunities to:

- ~have 'caring hands' towards living creatures and Nursery grounds e.g litter, recycling....
- ~develop their observation skills using their senses in our Sensory Garden
- ~develop prediction and cause/effect skills e.g. when water is added to sand...
- ~problem solve, be inquisitive, experiment with equipment e.g. guttering, pipes, floating and sinking, forces of movement...
- ~recognise and experience change overtime.
- ~explore features in their local surroundings e.g. Nursery grounds, Clonard gardens.

- ~discuss their families, homes, local community.
- ~participate in imaginative/role play to learn about themselves and to express understanding of the wider community, eg hospital A & E...
- ~record findings using drawings, photographs, paintings, models, maps (individually or small groups)
- ~experience/explore sounds in the environment and properties of natural/man made materials.
- ~develop an awareness of how things are made and develop increased competency in use of small tools for construction, woodwork and gardening.

Areas of Play provided for Outdoor Learning

- Creative Area - (Art/Craft Music)
- Imaginative/Role Play Area
- Large Scale Construction Area
- Small Scale Construction Area
- Sand & Water Areas
- Horticultural Areas - (growing seeds etc, planting out. Tending to plants).
- Large Movement Area
- Wheeled Vehicle Area
- Quiet Area

Rules for Outdoor Play (Safe Practice)

At the start of each school year staff review the outplay policy and practices. Golden Rules to ensure pupils' safety are established and shared with the children. Our Golden Safety Rules are:-

- We listen to teacher and to each other.
- We share and take turns.
- We are kind to our friends.
- We wear helmets on all wheeled vehicles.
- We cycle/drive in clockwise direction around designated paths.
- We use two hands when climbing steps of slide. We descend slide on our bottom/tummies.
- We use the climbing frame two at a time.
- We use hurls/hockey stick at a low level.
- We help to tidy up.
- We use writing in designated area.

We anticipate that some children, particularly in the early stages of nursery school, will have some difficulties in following these rules. Strategies for reinforcing the rules are detailed in the nursery's Positive Behaviour Management Policy.

Routines Associated With Outdoor Play

In the mornings children go out one group at a time. Each set of children enters the out door area for a period of 50 mins.

- Children put on appropriate clothing, i.e. coats
In wet/cold weather
Sun hats in sunny weather

- Children are free to play in the covered area or outdoors.
- In the event of the weather preventing them from playing outside children can choose either to stay in the playroom or play in the hall area. A member of staff will be on hand to supervise each of the areas.
- Singing song 'Down at the station'... indicates the end of the first session. Children tidy up, line up to re-enter the playroom in an orderly manner.
- The remaining set of children are then able to enter the outdoor area for the second session of play.
- Staff and children ensure that the play area is tidy and equally well presented for the afternoon session.

Role Of The Adult

"The success of outdoor play rests with the staff. It is only when the whole staff support and enjoy outdoor play that it will work... It is the adult's role to ensure that all children can learn, enjoy and reach their potential."

("Outdoor Play in the Early Years" - Helen Bilton)

The specific role of the adult with regard to Outdoor Play is detailed in our weekly plans.

- Staff will observe children at play in order to have evidence from which to plan for children's current needs and abilities.
- These observations will be recorded as part of the ongoing evidence of children's development.
- The observations will be shared and discussed between all adults in the nursery in order to inform decisions about what is to be planned in the short and longer term.
- Staff will use the observations of children at play to inform judgements about children's current abilities that are to be passed on to parents.
- Our provision for outdoor play will be evaluated by staff to ensure that children are making progress in their play through exploration, consolidation or extension of skills and understanding.

Staff Responsibilities

- ❖ To treat all children fairly and with respect.
- ❖ To create a safe and pleasant environment - physically, socially and emotionally.
- ❖ To plan and provide high quality outdoor activities for all children (inclusive of ability, gender, educational needs and those children for whom English is a second language).
- ❖ To ensure children are wearing suitable clothing and footwear for safe play outdoors.
- ❖ To support and enhance learning by playing alongside children.
- ❖ To assess and record children's experiences and achievements to inform future planning.

Appendix 1: Developing Different Types of Movement

Cross Lateral (L/R sides of brain)	Vestibular (Co-ordination & balance)	Proprioceptive (Developmental skill to do something)
Crawling Climbing Peddalling Running Walking Stepping	Twisting Turning Spinning Tilting Tipping Jumping Bouncing Rocking Rolling Swinging Falling Sliding Moving fast	Pushing Pulling Stretching Hanging Throwing Lifting Carrying How much pressure to put on something without breaking it. Standing on edge of something without falling off (balancing) Awareness of space.

Policy for Outdoor Play
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