



## **Outdoor Play Policy and Procedure**

### **Policy Statement:**

Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Pre-school and Acorns After School recognises the importance of outdoor play and experience for all children. The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children. Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Pre-school and Acorns After School are committed to following good practice in relation to ensuring ratios are maintained when outside the service and all staff members are aware of which ratios will be maintained. Outdoor play is an important part of our daily curriculum at the Service. We aim to ensure that children play outdoors every day. Our intention, through our outdoor programme is to enhance gross motor skills, coordination, balance, and body awareness. It also gives children opportunities to socialise freely and use imagination and initiative.

### **Principle:**

This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

The Service's outdoor area is located at the back and front of the Service and is accessed by the children and staff through the service.

### **Outdoor Area:**

The outdoor area consists of:

Mixed Surfaces (Pebble, Astro, Woodchip).

### **Policy and Procedure:**

A well-planned environment provides opportunities for children to seek new challenges as they master old ones. Close observation is essential in order to assess children's ability and to ensure appropriate planning and continuity for the outdoor curriculum. Staff will be vigilant about supervising children outdoors. The outdoor time is play time for the children. The adults are there to supervise and lead garden games or play and ensure that the children are in no danger to themselves or their peers. Outdoor time is an extension of indoor activities therefore sitting should be kept to an absolute minimum.



- Staff should ensure that their presence and position in the outdoor play area allows that all areas of the outdoor area are under constant supervision and that all children are in the sight of at least one member of staff, at all times. The outdoor play area must be checked by a member of staff for safety before any children use the outdoor play area. (Risk Assessment)
- Staff must engage with the children during the outdoor play time. Curriculum planning should be used outdoors as well as indoors.
- Children should not be allowed to interfere with the gate in the outside area.

### **Clothing:**

It is important that children are dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Parents are asked to ensure their children have the appropriate attire for the weather.

### **Adult/Child Ratios:**

The adult/child ratio for outdoor play will be in compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, staff will be vigilant about supervising children outdoors.

- A rota system is usually practiced in relation to classes going outdoors.
- Where there is exceptionally good weather all children may be outdoors at the same time.
- In such a situation staff will be cognisant of this fact and give due consideration to the supervision and safety of the children.
- We aim that each child spends a minimum of 60 minutes outdoors every day, weather permitting.

### **Rationale:**

A new requirement under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 stipulates that all services –

. a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access to daily is provided on the premises, or  
a. where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space.

The regulations also outline that where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises, services must ensure that the outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.



- Children learn through play, movement, communication, and sensory experience which the outdoors provides for on a much greater scale than indoors. The outdoors is one of the best learning environments for young children, providing them with an opportunity to explore, experience and make meaning of the natural world. The outdoor provision offered to young children with the early years sector is very varied. It can range from small outdoor spaces with short periods spent outdoors right through to large natural spaces where children spend most of their time. It is important therefore that your outdoor policy statement clearly and accurately reflects the type of outdoor provision you provide.
- Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Pre-school and Acorns After School recognises the importance of outdoor play and experiences for all children and provides access to outdoor play each day, weather permitting.
- Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Pre-school and Acorns After School believe that the outdoors is one of the best learning environments for young children. Our outdoor environment is accessed daily and offers diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching experiences for our children.
- Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Pre-school and Acorns After School is a nature-based outdoor focused early years centre. We offer seamless provision where the children can choose to spend their time either indoors or outdoors. Our outdoor environment offers diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching experiences for our children with lots of opportunity for play, movement, and sensory stimulation.

### **Interactions:**

Staff should be actively involved with children in their games and activities where appropriate and should not be solely in a supervisory role.

### **Staff 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.



- Aware of safety issues. 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.

### **Outdoor Safety:**

- The outdoor area and equipment must be well maintained including any equipment in the outdoor area.
- When setting out the equipment each day and during sessions, staff must look out for safety and remove any objects such as cans, bottles etc. which may have been left by others.
- The area should be checked for animal droppings. Before children go outside a member of staff must check the side gate is closed.
- The outdoor area must allow for children to be supervised. Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant at all times and never leave the play area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- There must be at least two staff on duty in the outside area, one staff member has to be available to take children for bathroom breaks.
- It is most important for staff to move around the area constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised.
- Each person should position him/herself in separate areas so that no area is unsupervised.
- At the end of the session the areas should be scanned carefully in case children should be left outside unsupervised.
- Hot drinks are allowed to be taken into the outdoor areas but make sure they are up out of reach of children.
- Students helping outdoors must never be left in charge of any area.
- All equipment should be stored away sensibly and carefully, to allow for safe and easy removal the next day.
- If a child is injured they should be taken indoors by a staff member for treatment as quickly as possible. Both the injured child and staff member should remain within sight of another member of staff while treatment takes place.
- A floating staff member or another member of staff should be able to help the staff member treating the injured child in the outdoor area so that supervision of the area is interrupted for as short a period of time as possible.
- Details of the accident must be written up as soon as possible in the Accident/Incident book. The child's parent must be informed of the



accident and treatment. Students/volunteers may not administer first aid.

- Climbing apparatus should only be set out on the safety surface.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully e.g. unfastened shoe laces and buckles, scarves and ties on anoraks which are too long can easily cause accidents, particularly on wheeled toys and climbing equipment.
- If it is necessary for staff to put toys away whilst children are still in the play areas, there must always be at least one other staff supervising remaining children in the area.
- Encourage children to always 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 children are climbing on climbing frames, staff must be continually aware of any risks (e.g. objects left underneath).
- All equipment is risk assessed and children and staff know and understand the rules of use.
- Whenever children carry equipment (clearing away or carrying planks, blocks etc.) they should be taught how to do it and staff should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.

### **Risk Play:**

A natural part of children's physical play involves engaging in play that is challenging and somewhat risky. Providing opportunities for all children to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability, and potential hazards as part of their play is extremely beneficial to children's development. This does not mean putting children in danger of serious harm.

Good risks and hazards in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. These might include being in touch with the natural environment and loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity and imagination.

Bad risks and hazards are those that are difficult or impossible for children to assess for themselves, and that have no obvious benefits.

In our setting, we are aware of and alert to possible dangers, while recognising the importance of encouraging young children's sense of exploration and risk taking. We maintain children's safety, while not unduly inhibiting their risk taking.



## Procedure:

- Due to our weekly planning, our daily programme of care requires that all children participate in various outdoor activities, lessons, projects and play.
- If a child is unable to participate in outdoor play due to common health conditions such as coughs or colds, we would request that they not attend preschool for the duration of their complaint.
- During colder weather conditions all children must be properly clothed with coats, hats and scarves. Upon returning from outside all clothing, shoes must be removed if they are wet.
- During warmer months children will be allowed to remove their jumpers. If the sun is hot, Factor 50+ sunscreen will be provided.
- At the beginning of the summer months all parents will be informed to apply sunscreen to their child prior to drop off. They will then be provided with sunscreen within the service throughout the day.
- Equality and inclusion: Our outdoor spaces can be accessed, utilized and enjoyed by children of all ages and abilities. We provide a safe and secure outdoor area with opportunities for appropriate challenge to facilitate the children's ability to learn about risk and increase their self management skills. We closely monitor children's abilities and interests and provide access to spaces, materials, and equipment that safely stimulates development and learning.
- We carry out regular safety checks on the materials and play equipment in the garden to ensure they are fit for purpose. A risk assessment in relation to hazards identified on the premises, both indoors and outdoors, should be carried out weekly and documented.
- To develop an understanding of the importance of health and hygiene routines among the children are encouraged to the routine of washing their hands upon returning from outdoors.
- The indoor and outdoor play areas should provide opportunities for challenge to facilitate the children's ability to learn about risk and their own capabilities within safe limits.

Each garden is the responsibility of specific rooms of staff. Each designated garden has daily risk checks carried out and key areas of interest maintained by nominated rooms. They are as follows:

1. Hedge Garden - Room 17 Senior Nursery
2. Willow Tree Garden - Room 16 Preschool
3. Cobbled Stone Garden - Room 15
4. Astroturf Pitch and Track - Junior Nursery
5. Outdoor Classroom Garden - Room 11 & 14a Preschool



6. Wilderness Run - School Aged Childcare
7. Gathering Area before Astro Turf - Room 10 Senior Nursery

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Rees', written over a large, light blue, irregular shape that serves as a background for the signature.

Manager Signature:

Date: 22/07/2023