

# Outside Learning at Playgroup



## Why is being outside important?

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is the government's guidance document for early year's practitioners, says that settings must **'ensure that children have opportunities to be outside on a daily basis all year round'**. Here are some of the reasons why the provision of outdoor learning is so valuable:

- **Health and well being** – fresh air and open space allow children to be energetic and physical.
- **Active learners** – many children learn best when their experiences involve the freedom to move around a lot.

## Will children get ill by getting cold or wet or muddy?

*"At the heart of this consideration is your child's healthy development and effective, happy learning. Many children are physically unfit because they spend a lot of time sitting indoors, they have unhealthy, fatty diets and they are driven to places rather than walking, even short distances.*

*Obesity and early signs of potential heart disease are now common medical concerns among the under-fives.*

- **Thinking Big** – being outside means more space for activities to be done on a larger scale, such as huge paintings, building with big objects, or running around!
- **Change** – the outdoor environment is always changing with the weather and the seasons and is full of surprises that provide learning opportunities.
- **Multi-sensory space** – the outside space naturally offers an environment to stimulate all the senses.
- **Qualities and skills** – the kind of play that can happen outside allows the children to develop valuable qualities and skills and to grow as individuals

***Overprotecting children*** from all possible risks has led some of them to a lack of immunity to common ailments. ***Contrary to common opinion, children are much healthier playing outside on a cold day, wrapped up warmly, than they are sitting in a centrally heated room watching television.***

*Your child also needs to be active. Movement is vital for children's learning. There is a very strong link between the growth and development of the body and the brain."* **Nursery World, 2003**

## What are the qualities and skills that children develop when they are outside?

- Decision making
- Exploring
- Negotiating and turn taking
- Independence and resourcefulness
- Problem solving
- Creativity and initiative
- Care for the environment and other people
- How to take risks and how to stay safe
- Organisation
- Having a go
- Control and coordination



## What kinds of things do the children do outdoors?

*Playgroup has lots of resources for outdoor play. These can be used by the children in many different ways and provide the starting point for their learning experiences. Here are some of the things they do when they are outdoors:*

- **Den making** – using blankets and fabric, cushions, cardboard boxes, pop-up tents, leaves, sticks, branches.
- **Mixing and pouring** - using funnels, jugs, pots, spoons, water, food colouring, petals, leaves.
- **Big Painting** – using water and big brushes on the pavement or splattering coloured, runny paint on large sheets of paper against a wall or fence. Using scrubbing brushes, combs, sticks, plungers to make big marks.
- **Digging, fetching and carrying** – in the sand pit or a garden bed, using spades, wheel barrows, buckets or trucks.
- **Big Building** – making large constructions using tires, wooden planks, wooden blocks, cardboard boxes, milk crates.

- **Water play** – using pipes, funnels, jugs, bottles, watering cans, mixing with sand or soil.
- **Gardening** – using spades, trowels, forks, watering cans, seeds, watching things grow.
- **Doing the washing** – washing dolls clothes or fabric, hanging out the washing on washing lines with pegs.
- **Ride on vehicles** – cars, tricycles, scooters and trucks, learning to peddle, stop, go, turn and park.
- **Climbing and balancing** – climbing frame, ramps they have made with planks and crates.
- **Watching bugs and wildlife** – observing insects, making homes for them out of leaves, twigs and stones, making bird feeders, identifying birds.
- **Music making** – things sound different outside, making things to bang or shake, or wind chimes to hang up.
- **Reading and listening** – sitting in a quiet corner and looking at books, listening to a story or acting out stories.

## Risk taking and staying safe

'Risk taking' means lots of things. Using a hammer to bang in a nail, building a big construction that might topple over, or trying something for the first time, all involve a little bit of risk. This is an important part of a child's development. Being able to take a risk builds confidence, involves making decisions and provides opportunities to work together. Risk taking

relies on having a safe and secure environment with observant adults to support and extend young children. We help children to understand safe boundaries, know their personal limits, and help them to meet their own challenges. The outdoor space is the ideal place for these experiences

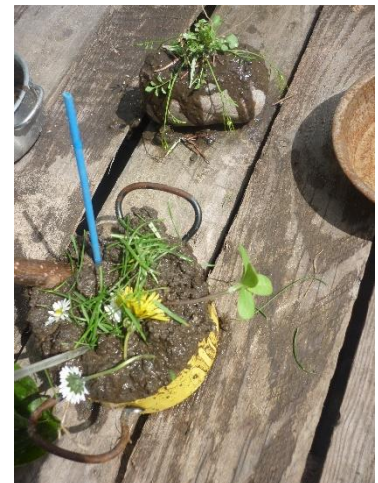


## Come and See!

- Be a parent helper for a session and observe us playing outside
- If you would like to help the children with some gardening or another outdoor project please let us know. We also have regular gardening maintenance days.
- We record your child's outdoor learning and achievements with photos and notes.

Ask your key person to see what your child has been doing.

- Now that you know what we get up to outside, don't forget to dress your child in clothing that can cope with being physical and getting messy!
- You might like to try out some of the activities we do when you are outside at home or in a park.



We hope you have found this leaflet useful. Please have a chat if you have any questions. The following websites and articles provided useful material for this leaflet:

[www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk), [www.teachingexpertise.com](http://www.teachingexpertise.com), [www.nationalstrategiesstandards.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.nationalstrategiesstandards.dcsf.gov.uk)

*Meeting the challenges of outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage*, by Jan White