



Outdoor Play Policy

(drawn from Chelsea Open Air Outdoor Play Policy with input from the staff team at Lea Nursery School)

This policy is applicable to all regardless of gender, sexuality, religious belief or none, culture, ethnicity, ability or disability, individuals with protected characteristics and those with none; it does not determine to discriminate against any individual whilst ensuring the smooth operation of our school.

Approved by Headteacher:	Nikki Elsmore-Cary
Date:	Autumn 2020
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Introduction

Why have an outdoor play policy?

"Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to the processes of human development. It provides the mechanism for children to explore the world around them and the medium through which skills are developed and practised. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, intellectual and educational development and acquiring social and behavioural skills"

National Voluntary Council for Children's Play Charter

Lea Nursery Ethos

We believe that children learn through outdoor play, which complements and enhances their indoor learning.

For this reason, children are able to choose between playing inside and outside for most of the Nursery session.

We aim to:

- Promote good quality, challenging, safe and accessible play for all children.
- Provide well-planned engaging activities outside, similar but different to indoors.
- Provide an environment to extend and improve children's learning and well-being regardless of the weather.
- Make the most of an environment over which we have little control.
- Expand children's horizons of what learning can be experienced outside.
- Fulfil the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoors as well as indoors.

Learning, Teaching and Caring Opportunities

- Be independent.
- Be inventive and creative.
- Make their own choices and decisions
- Take risks and solve problems
- Learn and play in diverse groupings, which are not always controlled or supported by an adult.
- Develop individual interests and find own boundaries.
- Communicate, co-operate and negotiate with others.
- Experience a sense of adventure, excitement and fun.
- Develop fine and gross-motor skills
- Develop physical skills for supporting emotional well being.
- Develop an appreciation of things seen, touched, smelt and heard.
- Develop a sense of awe and wonder in the natural world.
- Experience the seasons in all their richness.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, for example life cycles
- Develop and extend cognitive skills (maths, science, geography, language, reasoning, logic) through active experience, discovery and practice.
- Engage in new experiences
- Revisit, repeat, re-live, recall, build-on and adapt previous experiences.
- Opportunities to experiment, observe, hypothesise, and draw conclusions.
- Experience quiet and secluded areas, for example, dens, tents

But as well as all this, there is something more... Something very, very special, which we delight in and value enormously about our garden. Something which we believe to be part of the very

essence of childhood. This is the world of imagination, fairy-tale, magic, pretend, enchantment, story... That whole exciting world of fantasy.

Other reasons we value outdoor play

We live in an age where there is an increased reliance on technology. Children as young as one are spending more time in front of screens, and less time playing and 'being active'. On average, children in the UK are less physically active than past generations, spending 24 hours/week in front of a TV, computer, or other screens. This resulting 'sedentary' behaviour has contributed to the rise in childhood obesity, which is of great concern in the UK. Childhood obesity not only affects a child physically, but also emotionally and mentally as it affects their self-esteem and confidence. The World Health Organisation says that children's health is being damaged as well as their brain development and social skills.

Research also shows that inactive children are likely to become inactive adults, and are more at risk of developing future long-term health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

Physical activity is known to provide benefit to children in the following ways:

- **Motor skills development** – Allows greater movement, flexibility and co-ordination
- **Physical development** - Improves bone and muscle strength
- **Brain development** – Enables learning, and can result in increased academic achievement.
- **Cognitive development** – Encourages concentration, co-operation and communication, enhancing memory and creativity.
- **Psychosocial health** –Improves self-confidence and contributes to a sense of belonging. Helps to build relationships, supporting learning social skills.
- **Immunity development** – Boosts the immune system.
- **Activity levels** – Improves energy levels and sleep
- **Cardiovascular health** - Builds a strong heart, reducing the risk of developing heart disease in later life.
- **Cardio-metabolic health** – Enables energy balance and blood sugar regulation.
- **Reduced adiposity** – Helps to reduce extra fats in the body, to help prevent obesity, and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Improved mental well-being** - Physical activity is a key, critical way to manage mental health well-being. Studies have shown that enforced sedentary behaviour has led to depressive feelings and low moods in healthy people within seven days.

The importance of physical activity for good health

It's no secret that some people blame winter air as the cause for colds and the flu. Although the viruses that cause flu and colds are more common in the winter months, the circulated air in closed environments is the main cause of children getting sick. Although going outside unprepared for the elements is unwise, viruses that are spread by other human beings and cause colds and the flu are more common indoors. The indoor circulation of germs and bacteria is much more harmful to children than playing outside. The more time you spend inside, the more you are exposed. In fresh, outdoor air, children do not have to rebreathe the germs of the group, and the chance for spreading infection is reduced. Getting chilly or wet doesn't cause you to get sick. But there are things that make you prone to come down with a cold. For example, you're more likely to catch one if you're extremely tired, under emotional distress, or have allergies with nose and throat symptoms.

In light of the current situation worldwide, certain benefits of physical activity may be specifically pertinent to the COVID-19 Pandemic. These benefits are:

- Physical activity strengthens the immune system and reduces inflammation therefore it could reduce the severity of infections. Studies have shown that children in rural areas or those who are active outside have the best overall health. Physical activity gives your

immune system a power surge for a full 24 hours. A stronger immune system leads to less illness and less use of antibiotics.

- Physical activity improves common chronic conditions that increase the risk for severe COVID-19 (i.e. Cardiovascular Disease, Diabetes).
- Physical activity is a great stress management tool by reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Physical activity helps bring cortisol levels in balance. Stress and distress (such as during a pandemic) creates an imbalance in cortisol levels and this negatively influences immune function and inflammation.

Remember: Hand washing is the single most effective way to reduce illness!

What are the recommended activity levels for Nursery aged children?

In 2010 the World Health Organisation did a review of the benefits of physical activity and the amount of activity recommended for health. In 2011 the chief medical officers of the 4 UK countries published new recommendations. The recommendations encouraged physical activity from birth onwards and is summarised below.

Physical activity involves movement of any intensity:

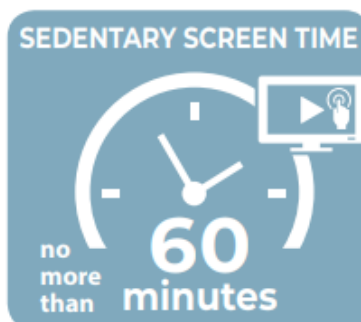
- **Infants not yet walking**
 - Floor based play and safe water-based play
 - Tummy time... enables crawling and rolling.... strengthens muscles
 - Reaching for and grasping objects... pushing... pulling... develops motor skills
 - Playing with others... builds social and emotional bonds
 - Limit time spent restrained in a pushchair, car seat or highchair
 - Limit time spent in walkers or baby bouncers... they restrict free movement
- **Children able to walk unaided**
 - Active for at least 180 minutes each day (3 hours) spread throughout the day
 - Activities can be of any intensity and can include; walking, running, skipping, using a climbing frame, chasing games, riding a bike...
 - Limit 'sedentary' time... sitting for long periods watching tv, using a computer or tablet,
 - Limit time spent in a pushchair or car seat

children 3–4 years of age should:

Spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, of which at least 60 minutes is moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day; more is better.



Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/strollers) or sit for extended periods of time. **Sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better.** When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.



Have 10–13 hours of good quality sleep, which may include a nap, with regular sleep and wake-up times.



Clothing for Outdoor Play

In the winter: Children should wear layers of lightweight clothing to stay warm. Because children's bodies can lose heat faster, young children and babies should be dressed in one more layer than an adult. During winter children are not allowed outside unless they are wearing a coat. Please make sure that your child's head and neck are covered. You also might like your child to wear a warm pair of gloves or mittens.

In the summer: Too much exposure to the sun can do a great deal of damage. Children and adults should wear clothing that protects them from sun damage, this includes wearing a hat. On very hot, sunny days children are not allowed outside unless they are wearing a hat. Children have access to drinking water both inside and outside. Sun cream should be applied before arriving at Nursery. Remember that children use climbing equipment and run in summer time too so please be aware that sandals and flip flops are not safe for running and climbing.

In the rain: If your child has a waterproof jacket and wellie boots please send him/her in wearing them. We also have wet weather gear and wellie boots at Nursery that children can wear. Please leave umbrellas at home. Umbrellas left on coat pegs often get touched/used/lost as other children play with them.

Policy into practice

- There must be three members of staff in the garden at all times, unless there are very few children outside (5 or less.)
- Adults will aim to teach the children care and respect for each other, plants, animals, wildlife and the environment.
- Children may move large or heavy objects, planks, boxes, or ladders when appropriate round the garden to make their own constructions. We show the children the best way to move these objects independently, or with a friend and encourage the children to ask us to help test their construction for safety.
- Adults will support children to assess and manage physical risks. What children are capable of physically depends on their age and physical ability.
- Children may use woodwork tools following our guidelines for woodwork, and gardening tools with adult supervision.
- Sand should stay in the sand pit, unless being specifically used elsewhere. Children should not be allowed to throw sand.
- Children are encouraged to wear Wellington boots and wet weather gear when the garden is wet and muddy.
- Any climbing construction put up by ourselves for the children must be tested for safety before the children use it.
- Adults will teach children safety rules when climbing. These safety rules include self-assessing risks such as when it is okay to climb with a toy in their hand and when it is not. Adults will monitor this for safety. Never to push, pull or hold onto their friends when climbing. Not to play in role-play shoes, long flowing dressing up clothes or coats like cloaks for safety reasons.
- Adults will provide children with the broad and balanced curriculum indoors and out.
- There will be designated areas for specific equipments for example, wheeled toys. Wheeled toys such as bikes are not allowed inside or under the sheltered area. Children will be taught to follow the directional arrows on the road.
- Where applicable, wheelchairs should be able to access all areas of the garden where possible.
- The wooden edge of the sandpit, raised plant beds, bike sheds and the bug hotel are not for climbing.
- Adults will aim to provide children with honestly appropriate answers to their questions about the world around them.
- Children can go barefoot when the weather is warmer. Socks and shoes will be stored safely.

- Small fires are supervised by a staff member constantly and have been properly risk assessed.
- Adults will make full use of prevailing weather conditions after risk assessing the circumstances.
- Children can walk/climb up the slide if there is no one at the top. Children need to be taught to wait at the top of the slide until it is safe to slide down.
- Children will be taught that it is not safe to play underneath or around swinging equipment. If necessary, a chalk line will be drawn to indicate the 'danger' zone.
- Adults will teach children that wet/icy ground can be slippery and they need to be aware of this, especially when playing on slopes such as the hill.
- On very warm summer days water play is provided, this includes playing in a paddling pool. When water is provided it should be continuously supervised by adults and the water should be changed regularly.
- If snack is eaten outside the same rules will be followed- children need to wash/sanitize their hands before eating and they need to sit down while eating.

Encouraging physical activity at home

- Parents/Carers are role models, please model physical activity as a lifestyle to your child. Please take your child outside as much as possible, especially if you live in a flat or don't have a garden.
- Involve children in household chores e.g. tidying up, gardening, sorting out washing, unpacking shopping.
- Encourage indoor and outdoor games and avoid having the TV on all the time.
- Go to the park or other outside spaces with the children... This is a lovely opportunity to meet up with friends.
- Please don't lift your child onto climbing equipment in the park, rather teach him/her how to climb up and climb down him/herself.
- Please don't keep children in high chairs unless they are eating.
- Enjoy playing music and dancing with your child.
- Avoid using the car for short trips.
- Walk the children to nursery/school if possible. Avoid using prams/buggies and encourage your child to ride his/her bike or scooter.

References

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