



## Outdoor Play Policy

St. Teresa's Nursery School is fully committed to the value of outdoor play opportunities, whatever the weather. Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. Outdoor play can provide 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 early years' provision. At St. Teresa's Nursery School the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the Pre-School curriculum. Close observation is essential in order to assess 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 Area

The outdoor area is well laid out and offers specific provision for the six areas of learning. The outdoor environment also provides for:

- challenging and exciting play.
- safety.
- grassed, hard and safety surfaced areas.
- shady areas.
- growing/digging areas - garden soil, compost, tubs, vegetable and flower beds. planting tubs – gardening for different seasons, sowing seeds, harvesting vegetables, providing opportunities for environmental science, caring and responsibility.
- exploring area with trees, shrubs to attract insects, bark and log piles to provide opportunities for finding mini-beasts.
- a covered sand house which protects the sand from animals and is roofed
- quiet, reflective areas and busy, moving play areas.
- developing exploration and imagination.
- opportunities for large scale experiences.

## **Planning Outdoor Play**

Adults must consider the following points

- the specific purpose of the outdoor play.
- individual, co-operative and parallel play.
- skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes to be acquired/developed by the children.
- appropriate use of resources.
- staff interaction, guidance and support.
- balance/breadth of curriculum provision.
- alteration, addition or removal of resources.
- quality play.

To ensure balance and breadth of provision, when planning for outdoor learning adults should think carefully about what the provision should include and why. They need to have clear goals for children's learning, at the same time they need to be responsive to children's enthusiasm and their interests. Within the planning there should be flexibility to meet individual children's needs as they arise during the session. Resources should be available to enhance and extend their play. Staff will make notes of achievements (through observation) to record in the children's individual profiles.

## **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:

- 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.
- being aware of safety issues.
- being 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.

In these ways, adults are making positive contributions to the children's play and creating challenging situations for children to experience.

## **Learning Opportunities in the Outdoors**

There are many opportunities for the six key learning areas (as outlined in the Pre-School curriculum guidance) to be enhanced outdoors, in varied and challenging ways:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Language Development
3. Early Mathematical Experiences
4. World Around Us
5. Physical Development and Movement
6. The Arts

### **Personal Social and Emotional Development**

For children to develop personally, socially and emotionally, many experiences are necessary. The outdoor area can contribute immensely to development in this area.

#### Dispositions and attitudes

- space to play, following their own interests, for extended periods of time e.g. making an obstacle course for others to use
- freedom to use a wide variety of large equipment e.g. climbing frame/slide

#### Self-confidence and self-esteem

- children plant own vegetables/flowers plants and take care of them
- take equipment to shed at end of free play session/finding ways to move heavy equipment
- listen to the birds singing
- opportunity to develop an awareness of nature
- reflecting/a chance to be thoughtful

#### Making relationships

- can choose to work/play with a variety of children/adults in the Nursery from any group
- freedom of movement between outdoor areas for all children at the same time enables children to build a variety of friendships

#### Behaviour and self-control

- share tricycles/scooters with others
- take care of growing plants - watering them in the dry weather

#### Self-care

- wash hands independently after gardening
- put on wellies to play in sand house or mud kitchen
- change wet clothes if necessary gardening, car wash etc.

#### A sense of community

- opportunity to talk about real life experiences in the garden e.g. gardening at home, trips to the shop with their families
- observe events in the immediate area e.g. sound of a police car, ambulance passing aeroplanes overhead

## Language Development

Children are able to try out a lot of the pre-writing skills in the outdoor area, by building up first their gross and then their fine motor skills. Opportunities for large scale drawings are numerous e.g. chalking on ground and boards, using water and brush, and painting on a large scale. Children can retell familiar stories, and take part as one of the characters. They can enrich their vocabulary by listening to others and by exploring, investigating and interacting with peers and adults.

#### Language for Communication and Thinking

- Children talking together in co-operative play situations e.g. on the climbing frames, when making play dens.
- Adult/child conversations where adult may extend or introduce new vocabulary.
- Children negotiating for turns or objects e.g. "Can I come in the mud kitchen with you?"
- Children recalling particular processes and events they experienced during the session e.g. "I played with Sorcha. We used the hats and bags to be mums."
- Children listening to and solving problems with language support as necessary e.g. "I'll get the sand-timer to have a go on the bike."
- Inviting others to join in collaborative games e.g. "Let's play Goldilocks together."
- Describing particular objects or natural phenomena e.g. "It's soft, it's crawling quickly to me."
- Talking about activities they are engaged in e.g. water, sound, wheeled toys, and using appropriate vocabulary e.g. prepositions and speed adverbs.
- In all practical activities the adult needs to give children the time and space to describe what they are doing and what is happening and to use opportunities for recalling, questioning, prediction, estimating and discussing cause and effect.
- Children using non-verbal communication, particularly body gestures, facial expressions and glancing at things in order to communicate and respond to events and other people.
- Learning nouns and adjectives around objects e.g. the one-minute sand-timer.
- Listening to natural and man made sounds e.g. thunder, chime bars.

- Listening to instructions, conversations and explanations.
- Listening to rhymes, poems, songs and chants.

### Reading

- Looking at books e.g. sitting on the cushions with a book, 'reading' to a friend
- Environmental print e.g. car park signage
- Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities e.g. traditional rhymes and simple poems.
- Chalk mark making
- Decoding visual information to complete puzzles e.g. looking at shape carefully
- Following road systems e.g. pathway and road signs
- Reading maps to find the treasure marked with an X!
- Enjoying themed books in the outdoor 'pods'

### Writing

- Imitating adults by 'jotting down notes' e.g. using a notebook and pencil to scribble and draw
- Making lists or maps
- With a clipboard and pencil, moving around the outdoor areas
- On the large Scribble Board
- On the ground using giant chalks
- Chalking on the blackboards in the Sensory Garden

## Early Mathematical Experiences

A carefully planned outdoor provision offers children opportunities to experience mathematical activities which extend/contrast with those provided indoors and so extend the scope of the curriculum.

Children should have opportunities to experience:-

- mathematical language measurement including weight
- sorting and matching number
- classifying and sequencing
- spatial/positional awareness estimation
- directions problem solving
- time

Mathematical Language should be encouraged when appropriate. Opportunities could include discussion, questioning, predicting, estimating through working with materials and observation. Songs, rhymes and 'playground' games are a rich context in which to build a child's language and vocabulary, in addition to those areas of development.

Numbers for Labels and for Counting

- Counting buckets in the sand and matching the wellies to the correct number
- Ordering first, second and third with cars, skittles, tubes in the sand
- Cooking in the Mud Kitchen e.g. 1 : 1 correspondence with bun tins
- Picnics
- Laying the table in the house
- Tallying when knocking skittles over, throwing bean bags into buckets at the obstacle course
- Reading numbers on objects – prams, cars
- Writing numbers on the path with big chalks

### Calculating

- how many more? e.g. laying the table in the house, flowers in shop
- buckets in the sand, spades and tools
- counting cars - how many? are they the same?
- tidy-up time - solving problems, are all the lanyards there?
- ordering numbered skittles
- playing magnetic fishing games - adding dots on fish, comparing one with another
- lining up cars - more than, less than

### Shape, Space and Measure

- house play (dolls' bedding, laying tables, sorting cutlery, cups and saucers)
- block play (large and small)
- throwing coloured beanbags into buckets
- sorting seeds by colour, shape and size
- making collections of natural objects
- making patterns with natural objects
- sequencing found natural objects
- obstacle courses (hoops, tunnels, boxes, barrels, planks and logs) giving opportunities for positional language e.g. high/low, under/over, through, along, upside-down, in/out
- setting up the train track
- assorted puzzles
- volume and capacity in sandhouse and mud kitchen
- scarves/ fabrics/ bubbles on windy days
- weaving
- using tape measures in the Building Site
- sand timers
- noticing how long plants/seeds take to grow
- changes to garden
- seasonal change
- use of speed on/in wheeled toys

## **The World Around Us**

In this area children are given opportunities to make sense of their world. The outdoor area provides many opportunities for real experiences including exploring the weather, the natural environment and building on a large scale. Children should have opportunities to develop the following knowledge/skills:

### **Exploration and investigation**

- noticing different weather conditions and impact of the weather on them
- noticing the plants in the garden/taking care of them
- planting seeds and bulbs
- exploring mini-beasts
- exploring different speeds of cars

### **Designing and Making Skills**

- a variety of constructional toys
- large blocks
- a variety of large equipment e.g. planks, crates
- wet sand
- woodwork bench and tools
- den making equipment

### **Information and communication technology**

- highlight technology in the local environment e.g. pedestrian crossings
- telephones in the house
- metal detectors in the sand house

### **A sense of time**

- notice changes in the garden through the seasons
- talk about when different things happen in the garden e.g. planting vegetables, raking leaves,

### **A sense of place**

- talk about different parts of the nursery outdoor space e.g. Sensory Garden, Side garden/tunnels and Playground

### **Cultures and beliefs**

- role play resources from a variety of cultures

## **Physical Development**

Daily opportunities are planned to develop children's gross and fine motor skills. Nursery also follows the Fundamental Movement Skills programme when planning for the outdoor obstacle course. Some examples of appropriate activities are as follows:

Movement with confidence, imagination and in safety

- Carrying house equipment to set up in a different location
- Playing musical instruments in a moving band

With control and co-ordination

- Riding scooters and tricycles, prams and pushchairs
- Large scale painting and drawing
- Climbing the playground equipment

Travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment

- Obstacle course constructed with planks, crates, wooden steps and boxes
- Large fixed climbing frame

Sense of Space

- Movement/dance
- Running around garden area, swinging from climbing frame
- Building and climbing inside dens and hidey holes

Health and Bodily Awareness

Adults communicating and explaining, describing and feeding back to children as they access health promoting activities in the nursery environment:

- Healthy eating (role play)
- Vegetable gardening
- Noticing breathlessness, increased heat and perspiration after exercise
- Noticing tiredness in body, legs and arms, feet and fingers after exercise

Using Equipment

- Aiming beanbags into buckets and large ball into basketball net
- Bat and ball games, throwing/catching balls, kicking balls into football net
- Range of gardening tools
- Painting with water and paint, large chalking
- Skittles

Using Tools and Equipment

- Woodworking, joining and cutting tools, kitchen utensils in mud kitchen
- Using brooms, scrubbing brushes and dustpan and brush

## **The Arts**

### Exploring Media and Materials

- looking at colours of leaves and flowers
- building obstacle courses, towers, bridges, sculptures
- describing texture of grass, wood, sand, soil, worms, snails, snow ice
- mixing sand and water
- playing with cardboard boxes
- large scale painting, weaving, chalking

### Music

- playing a wide variety of musical instruments
- singing songs i.e. songs inspired by the things outdoors like worms, snails, the weather, plants and trees
- playing ring games
- making up dances to music made by children on the instruments
- marching and being in a band

### Imagination

- large scale painting in 2D and 3D
- drawing with large chalks/pastels
- mark making with large paint brushes and rollers
- pattern making with found objects
- designing and building dens, sand castles, sculptures, collages, weaving,
- obstacle course, props for role play (boats, rockets, helicopters)
- large block building
- barbecues and picnics
- dens
- dressing up
- builders and workmen in Building Site

### Responding to Experiences, and Expressing and Communicating Ideas

- noticing weather, vegetable garden. minibeasts
- smelling herbs
- listening to bird song, sirens
- making maps
- painting from observation
- drawing on chalkboard

## Health and Safety

- When setting out the equipment each day staff must complete a daily Risk Assessment Checklist (See Appendix 1) and throughout the session, they must continue to be vigilant.
- Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care and never leave the play area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- 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. Children should be counted in and out of the outdoor play sessions.
- Hot drinks should not be taken into the outdoor areas.
- 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 next day. All items should be clean and fit for use.
- If a child is injured he/she should be taken indoors for treatment quickly as possible if necessary; if possible the child should be treated with the portable first aid kit outdoors. Both child and staff member should remain within sight of another member of staff while treatment takes place. Details of the accident must be written up as soon as possible in the first aid book. The child's parent/carer must be informed of the accident and treatment and they must sign the first aid book.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully e.g. unfastened shoelaces and buckles, scarves and ties on anoraks which are too long can easily cause accidents, particularly on wheeled toys and climbing equipment.
- Wheeled toys should only be used in the playground.
- Encourage children always to 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 crossing planks or climbing up/down apparatus.
- When children are climbing on climbing frames, staff must be continually aware of any risks (e.g. objects left underneath).
- Whenever children carry equipment (clearing away or carrying planks etc.) they should be taught how to do it and adults should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.

## Monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be reviewed and monitored in line with the school's policy review schedule.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Staff Member** \_\_\_\_\_ **Outdoor Area** .....

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

- Use this safety checklist to examine and report on the safety of the outdoor area each day.

**Tick/ Cross**

|   | M | Tu | W | Th | Fri |
|---|---|----|---|----|-----|
| Is the area free from litter?                                 |   |    |   |    |     |
| Is the area free from glass?                                  |   |    |   |    |     |
| Is all equipment in good working order?                       |   |    |   |    |     |
| Is all equipment safe and clean to use?                       |   |    |   |    |     |
| Has all equipment been stored correctly?                      |   |    |   |    |     |
| Are all exits free from obstructions?                         |   |    |   |    |     |
| All storage units sturdy and secure?                          |   |    |   |    |     |
| Gate closes properly?   |   |    |   |    |     |
| Gate lock working effectively?                                |   |    |   |    |     |
| Surface safe, undamaged and free from trip hazards?           |   |    |   |    |     |
| Entrance free from obstructions?                              |   |    |   |    |     |
| Is the site free from hygiene hazards eg dog faeces, needles? |   |    |   |    |     |

**Report any daily issues to the Principal.**

**Thank you for ensuring that this area is safe from hazards.**