Introduction

Outdoor play is an essential part of our Early Years curriculum and is crucial to our children's health, development and wellbeing. We recognize that outdoor learning promotes development in the prime areas (PSED, Communication and Language, and Physical Development), and encourages the development of the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'. We believe that it is vital for our children to have access to the outdoors on a daily basis in order to explore, observe, problem solve and investigate. Activities, interactions and resources provide a range of opportunities for children to learn about the natural world around them. Our children have first-hand experiences of weather, seasons and natural life, which offers endless investigation possibilities and enthuses intellectual curiosity.

Principles and Aims

- Provide access to a well-designed, well-organised outdoor learning environment that is simultaneously available with the indoors.
- Ensure outdoor play is child-led.
- Provide high quality adult interactions with children through sustained shared thinking.
- Create an outdoor environment that complements and extends learning that takes place indoors.
- Create an environment that offers challenge and risk, within a framework of safety and security. It teaches our children how to be safe and to be aware of others.
- Organise outdoor provision so that it is accessible for all children. It offers a range of multi-sensory play-based experiences.
- Embed outdoor learning in our EYFS curriculum to enrich the experiences of our children.

Teaching and Learning

In both Nursery and Reception, our children can go into the outdoor environment daily, in all weathers, through a free-flow approach. The only times the outdoor environment is unavailable is during adult-led focus activities, and if the environment or the weather is unsafe for our children.

Outdoor provision is planned and organised in a similar way to indoor provision; using a continuous and enhanced provision approach. The outdoor environment is separated into designated areas; these are set up the same each day. They are simple, tidy and organised so our children can access resources independently and tidy them away. Each area can be enhanced to support interests, themes and topics.

The outdoor environment has unique characteristics that cannot be offered indoors. It offers our children the space to move around freely due to the available space and size. The environment provides opportunities to develop gross motor skills as there is a range of large-scale equipment such as; crates and guttering. Outdoors also allows our children to observe weather conditions, seasonal changes, living things and their habitats. The resources help our children learn to share, take turns, engage in cooperative play and develop their imagination.

Resources

A variety of high-quality resources aim to cover all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Curriculum. To maintain a high standard, these resources are continually monitored and reviewed to ensure purposeful learning is taking place at all times.

Tidying and Maintaining the Environment

At the end of each outdoor session, the outdoor environment will be checked to ensure no children are left outside unsupervised.

Children are involved in tidying up and maintaining the environment. To commence 'tidy up time', a bell is rung and instructions are given to tidy up. Adults remind children how resources should be put away and consistently model this.

Resources that can be damaged by the weather, such as books and small world resources, are stored safely

in the sheds and locked away until the following day. Children are not to carry any heavy equipment.

To maintain the environment, children are given the responsibility of watering the turf and plants with the hose pipe each day. They also remove any litter and sweep the concrete area daily where necessary.

Adults

The role of the adult is essential. Adults effectively model, support and challenge our children in each area of provision. This ensures they make good progress across all areas within the EYFS framework. Adults are responsible for ensuring an enabling environment is provided, where there are opportunities for the Characteristics of Effective Learning to be developed. All adults within the EYFS ensure play is meaningful, and will intervene where necessary to direct and support play. Adults will ensure there is the necessary adult: child ratio at all times, and will make sure the outdoor environment is a safe and stimulating learning space. Adults will interact effectively with the children, engage in conversations, follow the lead of the children as much as possible, and model how to effectively make use of each area of provision in the outdoor environment. Adults are responsible for making sure that children are appropriately dressed for the weather, and ensuring children are tidying away resources safely.

EYFS staff work collaboratively together to share ideas, knowledge and expertise. Weekly EYFS meetings take place, which give all adults the opportunity to share and discuss planning, policies, etc. A staffing rota has been created to ensure all adults have the opportunity to interact with the children outdoors.

Health and Safety

All adults within the EYFS are responsible for carrying out a daily check to ensure the environment is safe for our children. Weather conditions are considered. Any adjustments will be communicated to all EYFS staff. At times, reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure the health and safety of all adults and children, e.g., being dressed appropriately in certain weather conditions. All adults are responsible for ensuring the adequate adult: child ratio is adhered to at all times. Parents are informed and encouraged to provide the necessary resources to stay safe when outdoors, e.g., a waterproof coat, gloves, sun screen. School rules are the same outdoors and indoors, and children are consistently reminded of these. A risk assessment has been completed for the outdoor environment, and will be reviewed each year.

Younger Siblings and Children Using the Resources Before and After School

Siblings have not been taught how to use the resources safely. No permission is given to siblings playing in the outdoor environment. Parents are informed and reminded not to allow children to play in the outdoor environment, and signs are displayed.

The gate to access the environment will be locked as our children leave and will remain so until doors to the classroom open for morning registration. An adult will stand at the gate to monitor children coming into the environment on a morning.

Inclusion

At Common Road Infant and Nursery School, we are committed to ensuring the outdoor environment meets the needs of all children, offering a range of play-based experiences. Whatever their individual and/or special need, they have the opportunity to take part in shared and physical activities outdoors. We adapt the environment wherever possible, to enable all children to use it. We actively seek to remove any barriers to learning. We aim for our outdoor environment to be accessible for wheelchair users.