

N GUIDE TO:

# Outdoor play and learning

We know that being outdoors is vital for children's health and wellbeing. It boosts physical activity and promotes happiness, providing everything your child needs to develop into a happy, active, creative and healthy individual.

The outdoors lends itself to learning on a larger scale and with a stronger focus on natural materials.

Today, where we are bombarded with technology, screens, and electronic devices, as well as the nature of increasingly urban spaces, children are getting fewer opportunities than ever before to spend long periods of time outdoors. It is therefore a key part of the children's cultural capital to maximise the chance to play and learn outside.

Outdoor learning is a core part of our N Curriculum, and children get to spend time outdoors every day either in the nursery garden or within the local community. When our children experience the outdoors (whether in the nursery garden or local outdoor spaces), the focus for their learning will be:

### **1. Taking positive risks**

Children often live in a risk-averse world, and we think that giving them the opportunities to consider risks (and how they can safely tackle them) not only results in wonderful learning opportunities but also increased levels of confidence, independence, and engagement. During outdoor learning, the children will get the chance to climb, run, and use real-life tools with supervision.

### **2. Having a love, respect, and appreciation for nature**

The reason behind our creation of the environmentalism curriculum is to help children learn about the wonderful world around them and how they can respect and protect it.

Hunting for bugs and insects, classifying trees, growing vegetables, tending to plants, and observing birds, butterflies, and other wildlife are all opportunities for engaging children with their natural environment.

### **3. Being physically fit and active**

Young children need at least three hours per day of physical activity to stay fit and healthy, with at least one hour of this being of a moderate-vigorous intensity. Studies also show the positive impact of outdoor exercise on mental health and well-being, so a large component of our physical activity and physical health curriculum is delivered outside. Using bikes, trikes, and scooters; climbing frames; running and chasing games; bats and balls will all contribute to developing children who love to exercise and be active.

### **4. Being imaginative and curious**

This is not exclusive to outdoor learning, as plenty of imaginative and creative learning happens inside, but for many children, the freedom that comes with larger, open space prompts new ways of expressing themselves. What better place to pretend to be a superhero, make mud pies, or build an aeroplane in the garden, where there is space to run, jump, and hide, and larger materials to construct with?

## **Benefits of outdoor learning**

Being in an outdoor environment has a positive impact on all areas of children's learning.

Through achievable challenges, the children grow more confident and independent. They get stronger and healthier through daily exercise and being exposed to the different seasons. Using all their senses, children explore, investigate, ask questions, and find solutions.

### **Activities in the outdoors**

Depending on the children's interests, activities can involve:

- Messy play – making mud pies, digging channels for water, finding worms
- Getting to know flora and fauna
- 'Mini beast' hunts
- Building huts
- Working with tools
- Running and chasing games