

Alverton Primary School

Outdoor Provision Policy

Review Date: Spring 2018

Next Review: Spring 2020

Responsibility: EYFS Leader

Rationale

At Alverton Primary School we believe that:

- All children have the right to experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors.
- Young children thrive and their minds and bodies develop best when they have free access to stimulating outdoor environments
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic adults are crucial to unlocking the potential of outdoors

Core Values for high quality outdoor experiences for young children

Young children should be outdoors as much as indoors and need a well-designed, well-organised, integrated indoor-outdoor environment. Outdoor provision is an essential part of the child's daily environment and life, not an option or an extra. Outdoor provision should be available alongside indoor provision and be planned for and experienced in a joined-up way, with each being given equal status and attention for their contribution to young children's well-being, health, stimulation and development.

Outdoor space must be considered a necessary part of an Early Years environment, be well thought through and well organised to maximise its value and usability by children and adults. Design and planning must support developmentally appropriate practice, being driven by children's interests and needs.

Learning through play is valued and given status in the Early Years.

Play is the means through which children find stimulation, well-being and happiness, and is the means through which they grow physically,

intellectually and emotionally. Play is the most important thing for children to do outside and the most relevant way of offering learning outdoors. A particular strength of outdoor provision is that it offers children many opportunities to experience the real world, have first-hand experiences, do real tasks and do what adults do, including being involved in the care of the outdoor space. Settings should make the most of this aspect, with connected play opportunities.

Outdoor provision must offer young children experiences which are relevant and have meaning.

Because of the freedom the outdoors offers to move on a large scale, to be active, noisy and messy and to use all their senses with their whole body, young children engage in the way they most need to in order to explore, make sense of life and express their feeling and ideas. All areas of learning must be offered through a wide range of holistic experiences, both active and calm, which make the most of what the outdoors has to offer.

Outdoor provision needs to be organised so that children are stimulated, yet able, to follow their own interests and needs through play-based activity, giving them independence, self-organisation, participation and empowerment. The adult role is crucial in achieving this effectively.

Adults are committed to making outdoor provision interesting, stimulating, safe and an integral part of children's learning experience at Alverton primary School.

Young children need practitioners who value and enjoy the outdoors themselves, see the potential and consequences it has for young children's well-being and development, and want to be outside with them. Attitude, understanding, commitment and positive thinking are important, as well as the skills to make the best use of what the outdoors has to offer and to effectively support child-led learning; the adult role outdoors must be as deeply considered as that indoors. Practitioners must be able to recognise, capture and share children's learning outdoors with parents and other people working with the child, so that they too become enthused. Cultural differences in attitude to the outdoors need to be understood and worked with sensitively to reach the best outcomes for children.

Outdoor provision is dynamic, flexible and versatile, where children can choose, create, change and be in charge of their play environment.

Outdoor provision will offer children a versatile, changeable and responsive environment for all types of play where they can manipulate, create, control and modify. This offers a huge sense of freedom, which is not readily available indoors. It also underpins the development of creativity and the dispositions for learning. The space itself as well as resources, layout, planning and routines all need to be versatile, open-ended and flexible to maximise their value to the child.

Outdoor Provision is an integral part of the Early Years setting and children are given free access to the outdoor area.

High quality play outdoors, where children are deeply involved, only emerges when they know they are not hurried. They need to have time to develop their use of spaces and resources and uninterrupted time to develop their play ideas, or to construct a place and then play in it or to get into problem solving on a large scale. They need to be able to return to projects again and again until 'finished' with them.

Slow learning is good learning, giving time for assimilation. When children can move between indoors and outside, their play or explorations develop further still. Young children also need time (and places) to daydream, look on or simply relax outside.

The outdoor environment will offer challenge and risk within a framework of security and safety.

Young children need to be able to set and meet their own challenges, become aware of their limits and push their abilities (at their own pace), be prepared to make mistakes, and experience the pleasure of feeling capable and competent. Challenge and its associated risk are vital for this. Young children also need to learn how to recognise and manage risk as life-skills, so as to become able to act safely, for themselves and others.

Safety of young children outdoors is paramount and a culture of 'risk assessment to enable' that permeates every aspect of outdoor provision is vital for all settings. (Please see risk assessments which set clear

expectation for the upkeep of the outdoor areas) Young children also need to feel secure, nurtured and valued outdoors. This includes clear behavioural boundaries (using rules to enable freedom), nurturing places and times outside and respect for how individual children prefer to play and learn.

Outdoor provision must support inclusion and meet the needs of individuals, offering a diverse range of play-based experiences. Young children should participate in decisions and actions affecting their outdoor play.

All children need full access to provision outdoors and it is important to know and meet the needs and interests of each child as an individual. Young children react differently to the spaces and experiences available or created so awareness and flexibility are key to the adult role. Observation and assessment (formative and summative), and intervention for particular support, must be carried out outside. While it is important to ensure the safety of all children, it is equally important to ensure all are sufficiently challenged.

Young children should take an active part in decisions and actions for outdoor provision, big and small. Their perspectives and views are critical and must be sought, and they can take an active role in setting up, clearing away and caring for the outdoor space.

Monitoring

Outdoor Provision will be monitored by the EYFS Leader.

This policy will be reviewed every two years as part of our annual review of Policies.