

Dunlop Early Childhood Centre

Playing and Learning Outdoors Policy



Introduction

When children play and learn outdoors, they are exercising their growing intellectual and emotional muscles, as well as their physical ones. They are developing the power to think, to feel, to do, to see and to understand in the natural environment. The children are imagining, puzzling, wondering, exploring and using what is around them.

At Dunlop ECC we believe that:

- Playing and learning outdoors is central to young children's learning.
- Indoors and outdoors should be viewed as one combined and integrated environment, where learning across all curricular areas can take place.
- The outdoors is both a teaching and learning environment, where staff interact with children to extend their knowledge, skills and concepts.
- Outdoor design and layout is given careful consideration to make the best use of space and resources.
- Children should be given a wide range of open-ended equipment and environments for them to explore and make sense of.
- Children are able to control, change and modify the outside environment relating to their creative thinking.
- The outdoors should be viewed as a classroom, where children are provided with opportunity to capitalise on effective styles of learning – playing, movement and sensory experiences.

At Dunlop ECC, we develop many areas of the curriculum through Playing and Learning Outdoors.

Developing Health and Well Being: Personal, Mental, Social and Emotional Learning Through Playing and Learning Outdoors

- The resources and experiences provided outside allow opportunities for children to develop co-operation and to further build relationships with staff and other children.
- Children are encouraged to work together, take turns and help each other.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for the resources in the outside area. They are able to set up the areas and tidy resources away.
- The organisation and management of the outdoors area supports children in initiating and developing their own ideas and interests.
- Children are encouraged to develop a sense of wonder about living things and natural phenomena.
- Children develop their understanding and show respect for living things.
- The resources and experiences outside provide opportunities for children to act out their feelings.

Developing Language and Literacy Through Playing and Learning Outdoors

- There is a good range of stimulating first-hand experiences for children and adults to talk about.
- There are places for children to talk with each other and further develop talking and listening skills.
- Reading and writing is incorporated into activities and experiences. They are relevant and meaningful to children's interests and patterns of learning.
- Children are encouraged to use the written word or write for a range of purposes, eg labels and signs.
- Non-fiction books are a stimulus for investigations outdoors.
- Stories are told/read/re-enacted outside.
- Children are encouraged to express their ideas, interests through role play.

Developing Numeracy and Mathematical Learning Through Playing and Learning Outdoors

- Children are encouraged to explore patterns, shape, measurement and numbers in the natural and made world. There are resources to support this range of learning.
- The available resources enable children to solve mathematical problems.
- Dunlop ECC staff encourage children to develop and use their mathematical language.
- The range of equipment and resources enables children to work on developing their numerical and mathematical understanding.
- Children are encouraged to play numerical and mathematical games and associated language.
- Numbers and mathematical concepts are incorporated into children's play and language.
- Children are encouraged to write numbers or record mathematical ideas in relevant and appropriate ways.

Developing Physical Wellbeing Through Playing and Learning Outdoors

- The planning of equipment in the outdoor classroom takes into account all stages of children's physical development.
- There is a good range of equipment to develop children's co-ordination and motor control skills.
- The resources and equipment encourage a variety of ways of using the body.
- The children are presented with challenges that enable them to discover what they are able to do whilst learning about the limitations of their bodies.
- Children are able to experience a variety of different sized materials and use them in a variety of ways.
- Children are encouraged to use their bodies imaginatively e.g. dance, music and movement.
- Dunlop ECC staff ensure that boys and girls have equal access to all areas of physical learning.

Developing Knowledge and Understanding of the World Through Playing and Learning Outdoors

- Children are encouraged to observe and express their ideas about thinking about the natural world.
- Children are encouraged to explore the physical environment and are able to solve problems in their own way.
- Changes in the weather/seasons are used to stimulate investigative work.
- There is a good range of natural and man-made materials for children and adults to talk about and explore.
- There is a sufficient range of resources to develop children's interest in movement. Children are able to use a range of natural and made materials to design, make and build.
- The outside area provides children with opportunities to play out their life experiences and to develop imaginative play.
- Dunlop ECC staff support and develop children's imaginative play related to life experiences.
- Dunlop ECC staff ensure that all children have access to a wide range of resources and experiences.

Developing Creative Learning Through Play and Learning Outdoors

- Children are encouraged to represent their ideas imaginatively.
- There are a range of materials so the children can create 2D and 3D images.
- Children are encouraged to explore colour, shape and texture within natural materials.
- Dunlop ECC staff plan for music, movement, dance, singing and drama to take place in the outside area.
- Children have the opportunity to experience a large range of textures and different materials.
- Opportunities are provided for children to develop large-scale work.
- Dunlop ECC staff provide appropriate resources to support large-scale mark making.