** Outdoors Policy **

**Introduction**

At Maidenhill Nursery Class we aim to provide an environment that is safe and nurturing where children are encouraged to be active, healthy and free to explore at their own pace. Outdoor learning has a big part to play in helping children to progress within these wellbeing indicators.

**Aim** - Our aim is to provide outdoor learning in all weathers during the nursery session.

“The outdoor area of your setting offers so much to children at all times of the year and in all weathers. Inclement weather should never be a reason for restricting children to the inside environment.” (Featherstone, 2003)

**Objectives**

* To ensure that children are supervised at all times.
* To provide varied experiences that support inclusion and individual needs.
* To support children’s participation in decision making and actions affecting their outdoor play.
* To promote social skills such as sharing, turn taking, decision making, co-operation with others, negotiation and fairness.
* To encourage children to initiate and develop ideas for themselves.
* To provide opportunities for children to practice and build ideas, concepts and skills.
* To provide opportunities for children to practice their fine motor and gross motor skills.
* To enable children sufficient time and space to explore and play in the outdoor environment.

**Space to Grow**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to play. This is supported by the Scottish Government’s Play Strategy, which states that all children and young people should have space and time to play34. The Health and Care Standards state “*as a child I can direct my own play and activities in a way that I choose and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable to my age and stage, which stimulate natural curiosity, learning and creativity”.* In practice, this means that children need sufficient space to play, learn and develop in early learning and childcare settings. Health and Social Care Standards 1.8 state that children have the right to learn and play in an outdoor environment that enable them to explore nature.

**Free-Flow to Outdoors**

Children have free-flow access to outdoors through a child-friendly door that offers free access to outdoors at all times with the exception of lunchtimes. This encourages children’s independence and provides them with different opportunities and experiences. This links closely with the ‘Space to Grow’ document that identifies an indoor-outdoor setting as one that supports children’s quality of play and learning experiences in both indoors and out.

**Equipment**

Water Proof Trousers and Jackets are available at the ‘Wellie Boot Store’ area of the garden and children can access these freely during their nursery session. Parents are always encouraged and asked by staff to provide their children with indoor shoes like sandshoes, a change of clothes, underwear and wellington boots that they can leave at the nursery. During the nursery year some additional things need to be considered to make outdoor learning safe, comfortable and practical for the children.

*“All children and young people should enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.”*

* Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government (15)

**Safety and Security**

* A visual daily risk assessment of the outdoor play area will be conducted before the outdoor area is opened and the opening schedule should be completed when opening the outdoor areas.
* Staff must always maintain the recommended staff: child ratio at all times. Students or parent helpers cannot supervise children on their own without another member of staff.
* If any inappropriate or dangerous materials are found in the outdoor environment, this must be reported immediately to the Head teacher or his representative.
* When closing the outdoor area the outdoor closing schedule should be completed and the trolleys should be brought into the creative area.

**During Spring/Summer**

* Children should change into indoor shoes before nursery session.
* A letter is issued by staff reminding parents about the sun cream and sun hat procedure.
* Parents are asked to apply sun cream prior to session, however children that are in for a full day session should have sun cream reapplied by a member of staff after lunch and consent for staff to apply sun cream must be given by the parent.
* Parents are asked to bring sun hats to keep on pegs for the children.
* It is encouraged that children wear appropriate foot wear for outdoor play where they will be running and playing energetically.

**Autumn/Winter**

* Children should change into indoor shoes before nursery session.
* Weather appropriate clothing should be worn to nursery.
* Children should have hat, scarf and gloves on their pegs.
* Use of nursery waterproofs are also encouraged and children can access these on the outdoor trollies at the ‘Boot Store’ area of the garden.

**Monitoring and Review**

The DHT and SCDO will monitor this policy annually in August and updated as required.

Next review: August 2020

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