**Whalsay Early Learning and Childcare**

**Outdoor Play Policy**

**Rationale**

***Playing outdoors enhances learning and is fundamental for children and young people to thrive in health, wellbeing and development.***

Scotland’s Outdoor Play and Learning Coalition Position Statement

*Why is outdoor play so important?*

Children learn and experience many things in an outdoor environment and they can flourish when playing outdoors in all weathers. Being outdoors not only helps children to establish an active and healthy lifestyle, it offers them unique opportunities to develop and learn in ways that are very different to playing inside.

Our aspiration at Whalsay ELC is to encourage free-flow play between indoors and outdoors to meet the needs and benefit our pupils in numerous ways including:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Benefit** | **Links to ELC Values** |
| Improve physical health and encourage the pupils to have a healthy and active lifestyle  Provide space and more freedom to run, climb, jump, throw, explore, dig, invent and discover | Health |
| Promotes mental, social and emotional wellbeing   * Increased resilience * Ability to manage risks * Increased self-esteem and confidence | Health  Responsibility |
| Enhances child development   * Boosts creativity, imagination, understanding, interpersonal skills and empathy | Creativity |
| Connects children with their local area and community  Engages all senses and makes the most of the learning opportunities different weather brings | Belonging  Enjoy Life |
| Improves learning for sustainability and the importance of understanding, enjoying and protecting our natural world | Responsibility |
| **It is fun!** | Enjoy Life  Health |

**Aims of Outdoor Play**

* To promote a safe, purposeful and positive atmosphere where children have routine access to a stimulating outdoor play area
* To have freedom of choice to move between the indoor and outdoor environments, whenever practical and safe
* To continue to develop our outdoor space to ensure children have access to a range of high-quality outdoor play and learning opportunities throughout the year
* To plan and resource our outdoor areas to support learning and development and meet pupils’ needs
* To give children time and space to explore, take risks and become independent

**Key Outdoor Areas within Whalsay ELC Grounds**

*(work is in progress on defining the key areas more and organising the resources – March 2021)*

* Peerie House
* Mud Kitchen
* Sand Pit
* Water Tray
* Planting areas
* Construction Area (in progress)
* Boat
* Concrete area with slope for ride on cars/bikes
* Grass areas

Other Outdoor Areas Visited Regularly

* Playpark
* School Adventure Playpark
* Secondary School Grounds – polycrub
* Wild Garden

Through accessing our key outdoor areas, **we aim for our children to**:

* Participate in a wide range of activities that will support a healthy lifestyle
* Develop the skills to access and manage risk
* Experience personal achievement and build confidence and self-esteem
* Explore and make choices
* Develop physical skills (gross and fine motor, co-ordination, balance, body awareness) through movement and energetic play
* Become independent with dressing themselves for playing outside
* Explore different surfaces, different levels and natural features outdoors

**Planning for Outdoor Play**

Our ELC staff will consider the following:

* Safety
* Resourcing the area to offer challenge and exciting play activities
* Use of space
* Supervision
* Meeting children’s individual needs
* Continuation of indoor activities and encouraging free-flow play
* Ensuring a balance between child-led, adult-led and adult-initiated activities whilst being responsive to the children’s interests and enthusiasm.
* Encourage and support children to develop problem solving skills needed to self-select clothing and footwear and dress themselves.
* Continual evaluation of the outdoor environment and outdoor play

**Roles and Responsibilities**

* ELC Staff will observe children playing recording significant observations where appropriate and interacting to enhance the learning experience
* Observations will be shared and discussed between all adults to inform future planning and support assessment procedures
* One staff member will have responsibility for planning and resourcing an area, documenting the learning in the relevant floorbook and sharing learning with the rest of the staff team
* The ELC teacher will support the staff member in resourcing the area and meeting the pupils’ learning needs across the key curricular areas
* Staff and children will be equipped with appropriate clothing and footwear to ensure comfort and protection no matter the weather.
* Relevant risk benefit assessments will be completed and updated as necessary

**Parental Support**

* Parental support has been invaluable in helping resource the outside area
* Once COVID restrictions ease, parents will be invited to develop the outdoor area and support with areas i.e. gardening
* If your child is unwell, please keep them at home as if they are attending the ELC. As we have free flow between indoors and outdoors, children will not be discouraged from accessing the outdoors if they wish. Parents are responsible for providing hats/scarves/gloves and warm under layers.

**Weather**

* The outside area will only be closed when it is unsafe for pupils to access
* Outdoor suits and rubber boots are available for each pupil to keep them warm and dry
* Parents are responsible for putting sun cream on their child before attending ELC on hot, sunny day