

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY



Background information (taken from The Times, October 6th 2006):

Only by taking risks in a controlled environment can children learn how to judge risk, make mistakes, and move onto bigger challenges in adult life.

By allowing them to take risks, to express their physical needs through more than simply “letting off steam” and running about, we help overcome some of the problems that have been all over the media, as experts debate the effects of a sedentary, stressed, toxic childhood.

According to play experts, we are denying our own past when we prevent our children enjoying the level of risk-taking that was natural – and accepted – for anyone who grew up before the 1980s. Bernard Spiegel, principal of specialist consultancy Playlink, suggests that adults should go back into their own memories: “It is very important and not a minor piece of knowledge that we were all children. Ask people what they did as a child and the common thread is that people played unsupervised, climbed trees, made tents and hiding places.

Spiegel says “parents and carers who get too involved in play are also damaging kids’ rights to play independently”

It is well known that exercise is vital to aid the physical development of young children and to encourage them to continue a healthy lifestyle into their adult years.

At Little Explorers we encourage the children in our care to join in all sorts of different physical activities and provide a range of resources to make it fun and enjoyable.

Outside, we have a range of large outdoor equipment. Whilst this provides lots of opportunities for developing new physical skills and enjoyment, it also brings danger. Children need to learn about danger and risk taking, however in order to create a safe environment and to reduce the risk of possible accidents we have put the following procedures in place:

- All children will be supervised when outdoors by a responsible adult at all times
- If an adult cannot be outside with the children at all times, then the children will come in e.g. if a child needs medical attention and other adults are busy with other children/parents etc.
- Children will be taught the dangers of the equipment in a way that is suitable for their age and stage of development and understanding
- Children will be encouraged to take turns and share equipment
- The equipment will be checked for wear and tear/ damage regularly and withdrawn from use if faulty.
- Children will be encouraged to participate but will not be made to do any activity that they are uncomfortable with.

Forest School

We have a qualified Forest School Leader who runs our Forest School activities. We will spend large parts of our day outside. Children and staff must be dressed appropriately and be prepared to go outside in all weathers.

Campfires and use of tools and knives

We have qualified forest school leader, therefore we are able to offer a supervised and safe opportunity for your children to experience “real play”, which includes joining in with campfire activities and using a variety of tools and equipment. All children are supervised and supported appropriately, and therefore learn how to play safely.

We have put together the following procedure:

- All children will be fully supervised when joining in with campfire/tool activities at a lower adult:child ratio
- All children joining in with campfire activities must listen to and follow any instructions from the responsible adult (which will be given using language that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding), failure to do so may result in them no longer being permitted to join in that particular play activity for their own and others safety.

Staff action plan:

- Refer to camp fire/forest school risk assessment before the activity
- Have a ratio of 1 adult to 4 children and minimum of 2 members of staff
- Maintain a safe area at all times

If you have any concerns regarding your child's outdoor play, or the contents of this policy, please do speak to either your child's keyperson or a playleader.

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Policy reviewed Mat 2024

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