



EYFS Outdoor Policy St Mary's and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academies

*"Many Hearts Accord – We Grow and Learn Together
to build the Kingdom of God.
(School Mission Statement)*



Introduction

Active learning experiences out of doors are essential for young children as it promotes physical growth and development, health and fitness, personal and emotional wellbeing, self-esteem and socialisation in a freer context, real life experiences and curriculum access and equality.

"Children learn by moving, and movement needs space. Only through ready access to the outdoors and stimulating outdoor provision can a child's physical development, personal, social and emotional wellbeing and learning across the curriculum to flourish."

Marjorie Ouvry, 2001

Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A unique child.** We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.
- **Positive relationships.** We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.
- **Enabling environments with teaching and support from adults.** We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

· **Learning and development.** The Foundation Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The unit is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St. Mary's and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academies we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the foundation stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

Outdoor learning is an integral part of the play and learning provision for EYFS. Children will be allowed daily access to the outdoor environment for both continuous provision and focussed activities. Planning recognises that the outdoor classroom is an area to provide different opportunities on a larger scale.

The outdoor learning environment should be set up daily as a stimulating and inviting space, which supports learning across all areas of learning both Prime and Specific. Areas included are sand, water, digging, number, role play, mark making, art, large physical and climbing and balancing.

Children and staff are required to provide suitable clothing and footwear so that the outdoors can be accessed in all weathers. This must include wellies, suitable coats and spare clothes. Parents are asked to provide wellies at the beginning of the year. Children who become wet or muddy must change their clothes when they go inside.

Daily visual risk assessments are carried out to ensure the area and equipment are safe, this includes checking equipment, checking for litter and animal faeces and that the gates are securely locked / closed. Any issues are reported immediately to the teacher in charge and/or the site supervisor.

Children have as much access to outdoors as the setting can provide, to allow this two members of staff are often outside.

Staff will facilitate and extend play during outdoor provision, not stand back and watch unless carrying out an observation. Children's interest should be followed and the practitioner should support this.

In the event of a fire or the fire alarm sounding, children will stop what they are doing immediately. They will then line up, exit the playground and be escorted to the assembly point by the staff member to meet the rest of the class.

Aims of the EYFS Outside

In the outdoors we aim;

- To provide opportunities for all children to access a well-planned outdoor environment and to meet their needs and interests through a range of resources and experiences.
- To provide equipment, which not only develops physical skills, but also skills across the whole curriculum.
- To create a stimulating outdoor environment in which children can feel safe, secure and confident to use the activities.
- To develop or change activities to further stimulate the children.
- To make good use of outdoor space so that children are enabled to learn by working on a larger, more active scale than is possible indoors.
- To provide opportunities to work independently and collaboratively with enthusiasm and perseverance.
- To support the children's learning in the outdoors by sharing in their experiences and interests.
- To provide appropriate adult intervention to help the children make progress in their learning and to develop and enhance the children's learning through play.
- For children to be appropriately dressed to access the outdoor areas and activities in most types of weather.
- To provide the opportunity for children to develop their gross motor skills and their general health and fitness in the outdoor environment.
- To promote social and emotional development and negotiating skills through talking with friends and sharing in their outdoor play.

- To provide outdoor learning experiences which complement and extend indoor provision.
- To ensure health and safety at all time e.g. area is supervised, equipment is checked regularly, parents are kept informed of issues e.g. sun awareness, suitable clothing.

Seven Key Features of Effective Practice

1. The best for every child

All children deserve to have an equal chance of success and high quality early education is good for all children. Active learning experiences out of doors are essential for young children as it promotes physical growth and development, health and fitness, personal and emotional well-being, self-esteem and socialisation in a freer context, real life experiences and curriculum access and equality. At St Mary's and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academies we acknowledge that some of our children have limited use of outdoor space. We will ensure that children have 'free flow' access to outdoor provision where children are encouraged to be physical and move freely on a large scale.

2. High Quality Care

Children's experiences are always central to our practice. Effective and skilled staff will ensure that planned, or unplanned, outdoor activities are safe, yet challenging, where children feel safe and can explore their surroundings with their peers. Daily risk assessments ensure that the outdoor space is safe to use and free from any animal faeces or litter.

3. The Curriculum

We want all of our children to be confident and independent learners who engage well in learning experiences. The outdoor learning environment lends itself to promote children's physical and language development. However, other areas of learning will also be planned for. For instance, Expressive arts and design within the outdoor role play areas and Knowledge and Understanding of the World when planting or making bird feeders. Outside children can take part in child led play, adult supported play and play which has been specifically planned for. Children in the nursery will master skills such as being able to ride a tricycle whilst negotiating space successfully, whilst children in reception will master skills such as being able to ride scooters and bikes. During the year, the children will experience a **Forest School Curriculum**. Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic

growth. The forest school curriculum supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

4. Helping Children Learn

A well planned learning environment, both inside and outside, is imperative to children's learning and development. At St Mary's and our Lady of Grace practitioners are skilled in planning and delivering a curriculum which will ensure that children will develop and learn new skills and to be curious about the world in which they live. Staff will help children learn and develop through scaffolding, modelling, sensitive guiding and encouragement, commenting and sustained shared thinking. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

5. Assessment

Adults will use observations and discussions with children to find out about what they can do and what their next steps in learning are. As the outdoor learning environment allows children to 'play freely' staff will get a more accurate assessment on what children can do independently.

6. Self-Regulation and Executive Function

Many types of play require children to take on a 'can do' attitude - to have a go and learn through trial, error and experimentation. When playing outside children will create challenges for themselves to solve (such as an obstacle course using the large construction kits), building their metacognitive powers as they think about what they are doing and how they can solve problems they encounter. Self-regulation describes the ability to have conscious control over behaviours and actions in response to the situations we find ourselves in. Before children can self-regulate they will first need the support and encouragement of staff in order to build control over their impulses. This process is known as co-regulation. Staff will sensitively encourage and guide children to master new skills, help children to understand their emotional state, support children in using self-calming techniques, working alongside the child and know when to intervene. The outdoor opportunities we provide at St Mary's and Our Lady of Grace will enable our children to:

- Share resources, for example, working together in the role play or construction areas
- Wait and take their turn, for example, waiting their turn to use the

wheeled toys or monkey bars

- Make friends and be friendly
- Be kind to others
- Co-operate with others
- To be polite and to have good manners

7. Partnership with Parents

The use of 'Evidence Me' allows both home and school settings to share children's learning experiences. Many of these experiences will be outdoor experiences, such as, parents sharing their child learning to ride a bike without stabilisers and going on an autumn walk. '100 things to do before you are 6' is shared with parents, most of the activities are outdoor. The weekly newsletter includes 1 activity a week from the '100 things to do before you are 6' to encourage outdoor play and other opportunities.

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This policy will be reviewed on: September 2027

Signed _____ Chair of School Committee