

Pleasant Street Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Outdoor Play Policy



September 2024

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Framework 2021 (3.59) states that:

“Providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions). Providers must follow their legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (for example, the provisions on reasonable adjustments)”.

Aims

At Pleasant Street Primary School within our Early Years Foundation Stage we aim to provide children with opportunities for outdoor play that promotes the development of confidence, coordination, well being and strength. Within our Outdoor play Forest School is incorporated into the children’s learning and development.

We encourage our children during Outdoor play to:

- Develop personal and social skills
- Work through practical problems and challenges
- Use tools to create build or manage
- Discover how they learn best
- Pursue knowledge that interests them
- Learn how to manage failures
- Build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- Develop practical skills
- Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- Regularly experience achievement and success
- Reflect on learning and experiences
- Develop their language and communication skills
- Improve physical motor skills
- Become more motivated
- Improve their concentration skills

Objectives

At Pleasant Street Primary School, we aim to:

- To provide a safe and supportive outdoor environment which encourages children to participate in physical activities providing adventure, personal challenge and enjoyment
- To promote social skills such as sharing, turn taking, decision making, cooperation with others, negotiation and fairness
- To offer children outdoor play on a daily basis
- To provide a balanced programme of learning experiences

EYFS policy for implementation

The EYFS will provide a planned programme of outdoor play activities supporting children's cognitive, emotional, physical and social needs. Emphasis will be placed on using the outdoor environment as a valuable resource to stimulate and challenge the children as they play and learn. There will be opportunities for the children to enjoy fresh air and develop awareness of seasonal weather changes. In addition, promoting the physical activity guidelines for children under 5 by the NHS.

The freedom and space of the outdoor environment will afford opportunities for:

- Imaginative play
- Development of spatial awareness
- Building skills of control and co-ordination within gross and fine motor activities
- Becoming aware of personal safety and the safety of others
- Learning to co-operate with others in active play, games and in social play
- Taking time to sit and observe others at play

The EYFS team will consider how best to encourage and support more timid children towards gaining confidence to participate. By observing the children at play they will also work to develop strategies for channelling the energies of more boisterous children. The outdoor play activities and experiences will be delivered through a planned programme of activities some of which will be theme-linked. Appropriate resources will be provided and these will be identified in short-term planning e.g. Weekly plans.

Effective practice includes consideration of:

- Safety and security
- Range of activities
- Resources
- Storage
- Staffing
- Information to parents

Safety and security

Our caretaker assesses our outdoor garden daily (whether school is in or out of session) and checks all risks within. This is an additional safeguard to ensure that our areas are fit for purpose whenever any children enter. We have found that this is an effective way of maintaining, monitoring and reporting any problems. A daily risk assessment of the outdoor play area will be conducted before children go out to play (Appendix 1).

This will include checking for:

- Damage to fences & gates
- Vandalism
- Hazards such as broken glass, mud, discarded items
- Cracks, holes or other damage to play area surface
- Broken or raised drain covers
- Daily checking of any fixed equipment

The role of the adult outdoors is to:

- Provide planning and resources for a challenging outdoor area that is integral with overall planning and identifies practitioners to support lead activities
- Set up and store equipment safely
- Observe key children/focus children and plan appropriately
- Be an active role model interacting and supporting children's learning and planned play
- Provide varied opportunities for supporting and encouraging children to explore and extend their experiences
- Extend and develop children's language and communication in their play
- Consult and involve children in planning
- Support our colleagues
- Ensure appropriate ratios are maintained
- Wear appropriate clothing and advise parents and carers on clothing suitable for outdoor learning

Arrangements

Children will be offered the opportunity for outdoor play daily at regular times throughout the school day. Waterproof clothing is provided by the school. Children are supervised returning indoors to use the toilets; this will be done via communication with staff remaining within the indoor environment during free flow play. There is prompt access to the first aid box.

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas. During Outdoor Play there will be an opportunity to experience a range of Forest School activities including:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying wildlife
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Cooking on an open fire
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities
- Digging and planting
- Planting things to observe
- Planting things to eat for snack e.g. carrots, lettuce, strawberries

- Investigation area in Eco classroom e.g. large magnets, large magnifying cubes.
- Feeding the birds
- Observing birds, butterflies, mini-beasts.
- A designated area for messy play – mud kitchen
- Water and water ‘painting’ with brushes or rollers.
- Chalking (Wet or dry)
- Large size floor jigsaws e.g. Wooden or foam, large books, pens, pads
- Large construction e.g. Community Playthings large blocks, tyres, traffic cones
- Obstacle courses made using a variety of EYFS outdoor equipment
- Role play e.g. Theme-linked role play
- Skipping, running, throwing & catching games
- Experiencing and utilising school grounds e.g. story chair, sensory garden etc
- Camp fire
- Water hose

Code of Conduct:

Lighting a fire

When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a permanent fire pit circle. (Appendix 2 Fire risk assessment)

At the Fire Circle

An open fire will be lit within a fire circle. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There may be no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. Children are taught if they wish to move around the fire to a new stool they must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit. (Appendix 2 Fire assessments)

Using Tools

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. (See tool use guides and risk assessments)

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm’s length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.

Picking up and playing with stones

Stones may be picked up and transported. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

Digging

Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using lolly pop sticks, fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made. There is a dedicated area within a planted section to promote physical and explorative opportunities.

Collecting wood

Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

Rope and String Use

We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

Carrying and Transporting Materials

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.

We work on the principle that **“there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”**. On sunny days, sun hats are provided by the school for protection. Parents are advised to apply sunscreen before children attend the EYFS or to apply when they arrive (school has supply of sunscreen in case a parent forgets). In addition, the EYFS has a stock of spare clothing, hats and gloves for colder months.

Resources:

- Sun hats, woollen hats, gloves
- Waterproof clothing
- Provision of shade (canopy)
- Fixed equipment e.g. Pebble dry river, climbing frame
- Fire Pit
- Tyres
- Climbing blocks (Large community playthings)
- Story chair and benches
- Den building posts and materials to create dens
- Gardening equipment
- Forest school tools e.g. potato peelers for whittling sticks
- Balance bikes

- Small and large parachute
- Swinging hammock
- Tuft spots
- Mud kitchen resources

Safety

- EYFS team to be clear about issues of safety and supervision, Risk Assessment shared with all staff.
- Adult on outdoor / indoor duty must be a qualified member of the team
- Students on nursery placement visits cannot be left in charge and must work under the direct supervision of a qualified staff member
- Responsibility for carrying out the daily safety checks lies with the member of staff responsible for that area that day. Children must not access the outdoor area until the EYFS team know that it is hazard free
- The EYFS team are responsible for setting out the portable equipment and ensuring that it is safely returned to the storage points at the end of the school day.

Information for parents

Parents need to know that the children will be using the outdoor play area as an 'outdoor classroom' and across all seasons of the year. Co-operation is required to ensure that jackets, hats & footwear are weather appropriate. Families are informed through discussion at induction meetings. Parents can observe their child's play within the outdoors on the school and class blogs and display within the learning environment.

Planning, recording and assessment

Curriculum planning takes place on a medium-term and short-term basis. The curriculum planning format identifies the focus areas for the planned learning experiences for Outdoor Play to be delivered and assessed across each term. Weekly plans identify specific activities, which aim to deliver appropriate learning experiences. The EYFS team select and set out appropriate resources to support learning. Photographic evidence will be kept showing the range of outdoor play activities on offer across the school year. Where appropriate copies of these may be uploaded on See Saw (pupils learning journeys) named and dated by staff.

N. Nichols

Review date: September 2025

References and Legislation:

Benefits of outdoor play

<https://www.pacey.org.uk/SSTMicosite/media/Website-Files-SST/SST%20fact%20sheets/PACEYSST-Outdoor-Play-Parent-Factsheet.pdf>

NHS Physical activity guidelines for children and young people

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Documents/children-under-5-walking.pdf>

Statutory framework for EYFS (2021)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework - March 2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)

Outdoor Play Policy

(Appendix 1)

Outdoor Play Equipment - Daily Check Sheet

Visual check of all fixed equipment and play area is necessary. Please tick the appropriate box if equipment / area is satisfactory. If a minor repair was carried out to make the equipment or area safe please note the action taken. (E.g. broken glass removed, drain cover replaced.) If a repair cannot be made please note the defect. Notify the EYFS staff that the outdoor play area cannot be used. Notify the head teacher of the repair required.

Date:	Location:	Staff:
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Hazard Checklist	Checked	Action Taken:
Fallen branches Slippery areas, paths Broken glass/ needles Vandalism/ intruders Weather effects Standing water Fire Zone Tool Area Fencing Gate Fixed Equipment e.g. Climbing frame Tyres, blocks Water River Story chair, benches Den building posts Other hazards identified:		

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