

A Guide To Outdoor Play at Willaston Pre-school

Outdoor play is really important at Willaston Pre-school. Research shows that some children are more comfortable in outdoor spaces with more freedom to run and explore and this enables them to learn and develop as much if not more than if they were confined indoors. In fact a well- resourced outdoor area can provide as many if not more learning opportunities than any indoor classroom. Outdoor play not only provides fresh air and exercise which are vital for our health and well-being but also a more natural sensory environment. We enjoy outdoor play throughout the year, so please help us by ensuring that the children come suitably clothed, we do have a range of waterproofs and wellies for messy play activities.

We have been fortunate over the last few years to have obtained funding to provide children with a wealth of different resources and some of our staff have attended training in outdoor learning, which included the provision of equipment from play specialists e.g 'Early Excellence' such as den making equipment; large construction equipment such as crates, ropes and materials for designing and building; and water play equipment. Some of this equipment helps children to become aware of levels of risk and to develop their ability to 'risk assess' for themselves with support, rather than removing all risk for them, which we feel are important life skills.

Below is a short description of how we use our outdoor space and how it links in with the effective teaching and learning guidance from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).



Three Characteristics of effective teaching and learning

- Playing and Exploring – children investigate and experience and 'have a go';
- Active learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements;
- Creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The revised Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) specifies seven areas of learning, which have been split into three prime areas; communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional (which are the forerunners to all other areas of learning) and four specific areas of learning; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design.

Communication and language – Children talk about what they are doing and what they can see. Building dens and making confined spaces has been shown to encourage language skills.

Physical development – By their very nature outdoor spaces provide excellent opportunities for physical exercise and to develop those gross motor skills to improve balance and co-ordination. We have a range of large and small PE equipment to develop these skills.

Personal, Social and emotional development – Developing social skills by playing together and sharing resources.

Literacy – We have black board areas to encourage mark making as well as writing belts. Children also use water and paint brushes to develop the arm and hand muscles essential for drawing and writing.

Mathematics – Children are learning about weight and measure when filling water containers, they are using shapes and problem solving when using the crates to build and balance.

Understanding the world – Children can observe the seasonal changes; plant flower and vegetable seeds and watch them grow; look for mini-beasts; observe the effects of wind, water, ice etc.

Expressive arts and design – Creating dens and other constructions develops design and technology skills; children have access to musical instruments outdoors and can collect natural resources to make collages.