

Love God, love others

Let your light shine



**THE BLUE COAT CHURCH OF ENGLAND (AIDED) INFANT AND
JUNIOR SCHOOLS' FEDERATION**

**Early Years Foundation Stage
Outdoor Learning Policy**

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Rationale

At Blue Coat JI Federation we believe that all children have the right to experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors. Furthermore, children thrive and their minds and bodies develop best when they have access to stimulating outdoor environments for learning through play and real experiences.

We believe that if a child feels safe and stimulated, they will ask questions, volunteer ideas, set out to solve problems and take risks, without fear of making a mistake, leading to a depth of understanding. If the learning is meaningful to their lives, they will find it relevant, interesting and worth the effort of hard work and persistence, leading to sustained learning and progress over time. If they have choice and flexibility, they will set themselves ambitious personal goals, have fun working with their peers or independently and become adaptable in the face of challenges, leading to transferable skills and applications in a wide range of contexts.

Much research is available that indicates that being and playing outside is vital for children's physical health and development, emotional wellbeing and promotes cognitive development and achievement. When outdoors, children have the freedom to explore and develop their physical boundaries, to take risks and to discover the real world with all their senses. This can have huge positive effects on a child's self-esteem and confidence. Outside can be liberating; children have room to be active, noisy, messy and work on a large scale. Outside is dynamic; you cannot predict what might happen, and as such it provides opportunities to experience and develop emotions, what they feel like and how to deal with them.

Aims

We believe that the outdoor environment is a rich, dynamic and natural space for learning and development in children of all ages. Its value as an essential learning resource has been recognised by many pieces of research and within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), particularly within the principle of 'Enabling Environments'.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- The outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being, engagement and helps all aspects of children's development, including physical, emotional and social
- Playing, learning and exploring outdoors all offer opportunities for children (and adults) to engage, solve problems and do things in different ways
- The outdoors environments offer a chance to experience learning on a different scale in comparison to being indoors
- Being outdoors gives children first-hand, formative contact with the weather, seasons and the natural world.
- The outdoor environment is liberating and can offer children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.
- The outdoor environment usually offers more freedom and space to move, and inspires different movement from that indoors. This is vital for young children to develop their coordination, build muscle mass and experiment with moving their bodies.
- Every child has a right to daily outdoor learning and as much value should be placed on the outdoor environment as inside.

Definitions

The outdoor environment is defined as being the area outside of the classroom, an extension of the indoor provision:

The outdoor environment is where children can come into contact with the ever changing systems of nature and the four elements. It is the dynamic world of living and non-living things that endlessly interact through time and space. The seasonal changes and differing weather conditions provide children with a sense of time and place and offer endless investigation possibilities. Research suggests that if children do not have significant contact with the natural world in their early years then they can become afraid of it, disconnected from it.

Systems and Procedures

Within the EYFS document 'Effective Practice: Outdoor Learning' the key principles and systems of outdoor learning are outlined as follows:

- The outdoor environment has unique characteristics and features.
- Outdoor learning has equal value to indoor learning.
- Outdoor learning has a positive impact on children's well-being and development.
- Children need the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning.
- Outdoor learning is enhanced by an environment that is richly resourced with play materials that can be adapted and used in different ways.
- An approach to outdoor learning that considers experiences rather than equipment places children at the centre of the provision being made.
- 'Children can learn to make decisions, solve problems and grow in confidence in their own abilities outdoors and they need plenty of time to investigate their outdoor environment purposefully. They will make predictions about what may happen based on their previous play experiences and test out these ideas and theories.' (EYFS Outdoors 2007)

The Early Years team apply the above principles and procedures when planning outdoor learning activities for the children. Each school day must provide the children with equal indoor outdoor access and freedom to choose outdoors if they wish, according to the principles of the EYFS framework. Gross motor learning and physical activity are ongoing outside, however an additional curricular provision is put in place. Each week, the learning is planned around the learning topics and through observation and assessment of children's interests and needs. This opportunity allows for children to master skills by applying them in a range of contexts and for staff to assess the children's understanding and mastery across the curriculum of specific knowledge and skills. Teaching staff must ensure that assessment is ongoing and sharply focused on how well the children are mastering skills and knowledge most likely to be introduced firstly in the classroom.

Roles & Responsibilities

Children need the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning. Young children need all of the adults around them to value and enjoy the outdoors themselves in order to feel safe and secure outside. Attitude, understanding and positive thinking is important, as well as skills to use the outdoor space to make the most of what the space has to offer. Adults are role models for children and need to display qualities that we would like young children to develop; enquiry, motivation, willingness to try and a positive attitude. The role of the adult outside should be much the same as the role of the adult inside; to scaffold learning, observe and record. Children should be encouraged to make their own choices and lead their own learning with appropriate support from an understanding adult. Through observation, adults should have a deep understanding of how individual children learn best, their interests and personal motivations and are therefore able to offer appropriate individualised support to them.

All staff are responsible for setting up and clearing away equipment and must all be aware of the children's safety. A security and safety check of the outdoor play area must be completed before children go out.

Resources

Our varied resources aim to cover all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Curriculum. To maintain a high standard, these resources will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure high quality, purposeful learning is available at all times.

Inclusion

The outdoors curriculum of shared and physical activities is an important part of a child's overall development. At Blue Coat JI Federation we are committed to providing for each child, whatever their individual and/or special need, the opportunity to access all areas of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. We adapt the facilities and learning opportunities whenever possible, to enable all children to use them. We aim for our outdoor spaces to be accessible for wheelchair users.

Health and Safety

All staff will support children in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. It is important to ensure that the outdoor environment offers challenges and teaches the children how to be safe and aware of others. Outdoor learning opportunities will be grasped when available and teachers will assess risk. Risk Assessments will be carried out where appropriate. School Health and Safety Policy will be followed.