

Abacus Nursery - Outdoor Play

EYFS: 1.3, 3.58

At Abacus Nursery we are committed to the importance of daily outdoor play and the physical development of all children regardless of their age and stage of development. Where possible and appropriate, we make outdoor activities accessible to children with learning difficulties and disabilities to ensure inclusive use of the outdoor area.

Outside play is an important part of Nursery life. It has an impact on a child's sense of well-being, helps in all aspects of a child's development and can often have an effect on a child's behaviour. It provides space for doing things in different ways and on a different scale. It gives children first-hand contact with the weather, the seasons and the natural world. Offers children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically alive.

We recognise that children need regular access to outdoor play in order to keep fit and healthy, develop their large and fine motor skills, experience learning in a natural environment and access sunlight in order to absorb vitamin D more effectively. We also refer to The Chief Medical Office guidance on physical activity.

The outdoor areas, both within the nursery grounds and in the local community have a wealth of experiences and resources which help children to develop in a variety of ways, including independence, exploration and investigative skills, risk taking and self-esteem, all of which support children to develop skills now and for the future.

Work has been carried out to make the best use of our outdoor space:-

- A purpose built stage can be used with dressing up clothes for children to let their imagination run wild....
- The large 'build-in' Sand tray allows a number of children to either play alongside each other or play together in this natural resource
- A 'built-in' mud kitchen can be easily accessed for those children enjoying the properties this resource can offer
- Undercover areas and large canopies protect children from harmful rays and when it's wet
- A large mount with climbing up and slide down allows children to expand their large scale coordination and take risks.
- A climbing frame
- A quiet corner area has been laid with Astro-turf to provide.....
- A large area with soft poor floor covering allows the children to run, ride bikes, climb, jump etc without the worry of hurting themselves if they fall down.
- Play house

One of the attached garages have been converted into our EAD room and along with storing lots of our craft materials it provides an area that can used for small group activity and messy play activities that don't have to be cleared away because the table is

needed for a meal time. A set of doors have been put in so this garage opened onto the garden and can provide safe free-flow play from the garden, ideal for any child who needs 'time out' from the outside environment and the play the garden offers. We also have a 'HYGGE' area with soft flooring and cushions where children can take themselves to relax, chill and mentally catch up with the day.

The other garage provides storage for a large range of outdoor resources:- An extensive range of sit-on toys to cater for all ages and abilities, smaller sand/water trays, A huge variety of small and large apparatus to provide a variety of learning opportunities in the garden. Buggies are also stored here, used when taking our very little children off the premises to enjoy and experience the wider environment and local community.

To ensure we meet the needs of every child and maximize the opportunities the outside space provides, planning for outside is included in our learning intent. A member of staff is responsible for creating a weekly garden plan. Paperwork is in place to ensure every area of the garden/area of learning is planned for, along with activities that develop/encourage choice, follow the children's current interests, allow children to take risks and push the boundaries. A quiet area/space to reflect, think and chat with a friend is always available. There is a balance of both adult-led and child-initiated opportunities to enable children to learn and practice new skills, knowledge and behaviours. By offering the same resource's over a week children have the opportunity to explore, practice their skills, gain confidence and secure their learning.

We provide a range of clothing to protect children in all types of weathers to ensure outside play can continue - all-in-one waterproof outfits for forest school, ponchos for staff and children when it's wet and sunhats for the sunny times.

Gates have been fitted across both parts of the front drive to create extra play areas. At the front of the Nursery the borders have been made into raised beds to allow planting to take place. The local park/play area is viewed as an extension of the Nursery garden and used whenever staff ratios allow. We obtain parental permission before any child leaves the nursery during the day. There is more information in the outings policy.

Our garden although ideal for every day play does not offer the opportunity to explore nature and the natural environment. To ensure the children at Abacus don't miss out on this important and valuable area of their learning we have linked up with our local care home (around the corner). They have very kindly given us a safe, secluded area of woodland which groups of our oldest children can visit weekly to experience Forest School. Permission to leave the premises and attend this five week course is requested from parents in advance.

We ensure all areas are safe and secure through close supervision and the use of robust risk assessments and safety checks (carried out each morning before the garden is used and then before each new use). Correct child/staff ratios are maintained at all times, both for the children outside and also for any who wish to stay in. Where possible and appropriate, we plan and encourage play that helps children understand and manage risks.

This type of play allows children to explore and find their own boundaries in a safe environment with supportive practitioners. Staff are informed of the importance of safety procedures and are trained appropriately to ensure these procedures are followed effectively.

Once outside, the children are encouraged to:

- Find their own outdoor clothing and do own fastenings
- Respect their environment
- Respect all outside play equipment
- Play responsibly
- Respect each other
- Explore the space available
- Share
- Enhance their maximum physical ability
- TO HAVE FUN!

Once outside staff clap to get the children's attention and stand still in readiness to listen to their direction i.e. its tidy up time etc.

At the end of the day all items will be stored securely.

On re-entering the Nursery the children :-

- Stand on a spot to be counted
- Respect each other by not pushing other children
- Wipe their feet
- Remove outdoor clothing and return to their correct peg.

We use this policy alongside the following policies to ensure the safety and welfare of children throughout their time outside:-

- Health and Safety
- Sun Care
- Caring for Babies and Toddlers
- Lost Child Policy
- Parents and Carers as Partners
- Safeguarding and Child Protection

www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-physical-activity-guidelines