

EYFS Outdoor Play Policy

The Head undertakes a formal annual review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed: Dr Pamela Edmonds

Date reviewed: July 2025

Date of next review: July 2026

This policy supports the requirements of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework September 2025 and the Equality Act 2010.

At Parsons Green Prep we value outdoor play as an intrinsic part of the EYFS curriculum as outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. In many cases, the outdoor environment is far more practical and more effective for some learning experiences. It provides children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically. It also provides a rich context for the development of their language and encourages positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Outdoor learning is enhanced by an environment that is richly resourced with play materials that can be adapted and used in different ways. Parsons Green Prep has a dedicated outdoor play area and we operate a policy of providing an enabling environment – where children learn to use outside areas in various weather conditions.

The school ensures that all children have the opportunity to learn about their environment. They are able to experiment with natural resources, create a sense of wonder about the world around them and learn about looking after themselves and others.

During the daily free flow children can move freely between the indoor and outdoor area using the resources which best meet their needs. The aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the EYFS curriculum.

The EYFS are able to use the main playground during Pre-prep lunch playtime.

The outdoor environment

- Supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of well-being
- Gives children contact with the natural world and offers them experiences that are unique to outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons
- Helps children to understand and respect nature, the environment and the interdependence of humans, animals, plants, and lifecycles

- Supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness
- Can provide them with space, both upwards and outwards, and places to explore, experiment, discover, be active and healthy, and to develop their physical capabilities
- Learning through active movement
- Learn through sensory and physical experiences
- An opportunity to play safely and freely while they learn to assess risk and develop the skills to manage new situations
- Learning that flows seamlessly between indoors and outdoors makes the most efficient use of resources and builds on interests and enthusiasms

The outdoor area

The outdoor area is well laid out and provides for:

- challenging and exciting play (big construction, climbing equipment)
- safety through fences and gates around the playground
- role and small world play
- creative, art and design activities
- woodwork activities
- mark-making and writing
- enhancement of mathematical exploration
- sand/water/mud/messy play
- exploring natural materials such as leaves, sticks, etc
- coverage of all areas of learning

Planning outdoor play

The provision and planning for outdoor play, just as for indoor play, must reflect the diversity and richness of the experience and developing interests of the children.

Adults must consider the following points:

- The specific purpose of the outdoor play.
- Individual, cooperative and parallel play.
- Skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes to be acquired/developed by the children.
- Appropriate use of resources.
- Staff interaction, guidance and support.
- Balance/breadth of curriculum provision.
- Alteration, addition or removal of resources.
- Quality play.
- Planned outdoor activities should be covering the areas of learning and development within the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The Head of Pre-Prep (Lee Bradshaw) and the Reception teacher (Hannah Tomlinson) will coordinate the outdoor education programme for all children by managing and supporting colleagues in their

planning, preparation and practice, and by otherwise contributing to a stimulating learning environment.

Learning opportunities in the playground

There are many opportunities for the following areas of learning and development to be enhanced outdoors in varied and challenging ways:

In the three prime areas:

Communication and language

- Outdoors, children can hear and respond to a different range of sounds, beginning to recognise and distinguish between noises in the outdoor environment.
- The outdoors is a place where stories, songs and poems can be shared and enacted.
- The outdoors offers children opportunities for developing upper body and limb strength through physical activity and movement. These experiences will have a positive impact on the development of control and coordination of small muscles needed later for successful handwriting.

Physical development

- Outdoors, children can be physically active on a scale that is less possible indoors. This offers opportunities for purposeful movement over large areas, exploration of different levels, negotiation along pathways and around objects, and changes in direction and speed.
- Outdoors is a place where children can experience the effect of physical activity on their bodies, as their heart beats faster and they breathe more deeply after vigorous movement.
- The outdoors supports children's developing awareness of personal health and safety.
- The outdoors is a place where children can develop control and dexterity with tools and small equipment, for example through digging and gardening, or using bats and balls, hammers and nails and water and mud play equipment.

Personal, social and emotional development

- The outdoors is a place that children can get pleasure from being in, and where they can act on their strong impulse to investigate. They can be curious, inventive, and interested. They can concentrate and persevere at activities they have chosen. This in turn supports the development of positive attitudes towards new opportunities, challenges and responsibilities.
- Gardening and growing activities outdoors, as well as seasonal maintenance tasks, provide valuable ways for children to develop care and concern for living things and their immediate environment.
- Outdoors can provide a safe supervised place for children to explore new challenges, learn to manage risk and to cope with change and adversity.
- Social relationships can be developed in a space that offers scope for communication through action, movement and language. Shared enterprises can be undertaken and emerging problems can be discussed and resolved.
- Negotiating for equipment or turns offers children situations where they can learn to consider the needs of others.

- Outdoors supports children's confidence and self-esteem and develops independence as they make choices and select resources. It offers opportunities for personal independence as children learn to manage themselves in a different environment and in the putting on and taking off of outdoor clothes.

In the four specific areas:

Literacy

- Children can enjoy a wide variety of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials).
- Children will have opportunities to link sounds and letters with the aid of a range of outdoor activities.
- Mark-making opportunities outdoors can be as valuable as those that are planned indoors.

Mathematics

- Children can enjoy number rhymes and act out number games outdoors.
- Natural materials that are found outdoors, such as twigs, conkers and leaves, can be sorted and graded according to size or shape.
- Imaginative games offer opportunities for children to learn to correspond objects, for example, giving each teddy bear a leaf plate and conker cake for an outdoor picnic.
- The outdoors is a place where children are able to explore and develop understanding of mathematical language and concepts in real life situations, for example, deciding how many more umbrellas or Wellington boots are needed if another two children want to go out on a rainy day.
- Perceptions and theories about shape, space and measure can be tried and tested as children fill buckets with stones or create patterns with natural materials.

Understanding the world

- The outdoors is a place where children can explore and investigate a wide range of materials that cannot be found indoors.
- Children can have first-hand experience of nature through touching plants, smelling flowers, crawling on earth and watching the movements of insects, spiders or beetles.
- Children can note and record patterns in the natural and made environment, for example through photographing leaves or brickwork.
- The impact of wind, weather and seasons can be experienced directly and the effect on the environment noted.
- The cycle of plant growth and the seasonal changes outdoors give children context and meaning of the concept of time.
- Outdoors, children can work out how materials can be joined to achieve a pre-planned purpose, for example, creating a structure on which they can balance.
- The outdoors offers a meaningful context for using simple computing, for example a walkie-talkie to contact a friend hidden in the den, or a camera to photograph a spider's web, or a pattern of stones and leaves.
- Use of the outdoors widens children's sense of place as they move between indoors and outdoors, watch passing people or cars and note the features of their immediate and wider environment.

- The outdoors is a place for developing children's awareness of themselves and the important people in their lives, and for affirming and reflecting the events and traditions that contribute to children's growing awareness of their culture and society.

Expressive arts and design

- Whilst outdoors children can explore and respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, feel, touch and smell.
- The outdoors offers children opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through art, movement, role play and design and technology.
- Outdoors, children can experiment with materials and repeat patterns of play. They can apply existing knowledge to new situations and become questioning and inventive critical thinkers. They can explore and play with a wide range of different materials in two and three dimensions, and begin to make connections and see the relationships between events and objects.

Safety in the playground

- A thorough risk assessment is drawn up, which all staff must read and follow. A separate risk assessment is drawn up for the woodwork bench, which all staff must read and follow. These risk assessments are reviewed yearly.
- Every morning a teacher will complete a health and safety check when setting up the playground. Staff must look out for safety and remove any unknown/dangerous objects.
- Staff outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant at all times and never leave the playground for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- The normal adult to child ratio should be maintained in the playground.
- It is most important for staff to move around the playground constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised.
- At the end of the session the playground should be scanned carefully to ensure that no child is being left outside unsupervised.
- Hot drinks should not be taken into the playground.
- Water should be provided for all on hot days.
- Parents and students helping outdoors must never be left in charge of the playground.
- All equipment should be stored away sensibly and carefully, to allow for safe and easy access the next day. The woodwork materials and tools must be stored in a locked area overnight.
- If a child is injured he/she should be handed to a member of staff indoors as quickly as possible for treatment so that supervision of the outdoor is not interrupted. In the event that there are several members of staff in the playground, it would be safe for one of those adults to administer first aid to the child. Details of the accident must be written up as soon as possible in the playground accident book. The child's parent must be informed of the accident and treatment given.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully. Unfastened buckles or scarves which are too long can easily cause accidents, particularly on wheeled toys.
- Children should be dressed appropriately depending on the weather and should always wear sun hats and sun protection cream or lotion in the summer.

- If it is necessary for an adult to put toys away while children are still in the playground, there must always be at least one other member of staff supervising the remaining children.
- Children are encouraged to climb and balance independently and to be aware of the level of their own abilities. Adults to offer encouragement while being aware of their safety.
- Encourage children always to look jumping off apparatus; also encourage children to leave space between themselves and the child in front when climbing up/down apparatus.
- Whenever children carry equipment they should be taught how to do it and adults should be aware of the risks involved and minimise them to ensure safety.

Observation and assessment

Close observation is essential in order to assess children's ability, ensure appropriate planning and continuity for the outdoor curriculum. Observation outdoors will help to build up a holistic picture of individual children's development.