

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd recognises the importance of outdoor play and experiences for all children. The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children, is safe and secure and children have access to the outdoors on a daily basis. We are committed to following good practice in relation to ensuring ratios are maintained when outside the service and all staff members are aware of which ratios will be maintained.

Principle

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 and the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework.

Introduction

Our outdoor play area, which all children have access to on a daily basis weather permitting, offer diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching age-appropriate experiences with lots of opportunity for play, movement, and sensory stimulation within a safe and secure supervised environment. We provide a range of natural, recycled, and open-ended materials outdoors as a stimulus for creative, imaginative, and problem-solving activities. The outdoor area allows for and promote certain risk considered appropriate for healthy development such as climbing, jumping, rolling, exploring and gardening. All risks are assessed according to our Risk Management Policy.

Our outdoor play area is directly accessible from the classroom and we encourage staff to use the outdoors on a daily basis. Most of the things that can be done inside can also be done outside, for example reading stories, taking part in pretend play, doing group art projects, and playing with sand or water.

Equality and inclusion – Our outdoor space can be accessed, utilized and enjoyed by children of all ages and abilities. We provide a safe and secure outdoor area with opportunities for appropriate challenge to facilitate the children's ability to learn about risk and increase their independence and self-management skills.

Dress Code

All staff and children attending the service must have appropriate outdoor clothing that allows them to access the outdoors in all weathers and keeps them comfortable, dry and protected. All parents are reminded regularly to dress their children in weather appropriate clothes as they are very likely to be going out regardless of the weather. For the younger children we recommend to parents to place an extra set of clothes in their bag. Children are always changed out of their wet clothes and the wet clothes are placed in a plastic bag and sent home with the child at the end of the day. Wet shoes can be placed on the radiators within the room to dry.

Procedures

The following procedures are put in place to help children and adults stay safe and enjoy the outside areas.

- An outdoor risk assessment should be carried out before children can access the outdoors. A general safety check is carried out daily to identify any hazards or broken equipment that need attention or removal.

- Staff / Child ratios **have to be maintained at all times**. No child is to be left unsupervised at any point. Best practice would indicate that the same ratios needed for indoor activities applies to outside activities.
- All staff and children should wear suitable clothing for the outdoors and the weather.
- In warmer weather all children and staff should wear sunscreen and a hat.
- Make sure all children have been to the toilet before going outside. In the event that a child needs to go to the toilet during outside play time, ensure staff ratios are maintained and that the child is supervised on their way to the toilet and also on the way back to the group.
- Roll call should take place before and after going outside and staff should ensure their register book is with them at all times.
- Support children's learning and development by encouraging free play and observing the interest of the children.
- Actively engage in children's play and learning.
- Assist children in removing outdoor clothing when coming back inside. Ensure wet clothes are removed and children are dressed in dry clothes.
- To develop an understanding of the importance of health and hygiene routines among the children a routine of hand washing is implemented when children come in from outdoors. Hand sanitisers are used to clean children's hands outdoors if children are consuming food in the outdoor area.
- Staff observe and support children's outdoor play, learning and experiences and in conjunction with the children, document some of these experiences to share with their families.
- Staff meetings are held each term where our outdoor curriculum and routines can be reviewed to ensure that the changing needs and interests of the children are being facilitated.

Outings outside the boundaries of the service are covered in our Outings policy.

Communication

All parents/guardians are informed of this policy on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the parent handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with staff members at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents in the Policy Folder located in the setting.

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the full policy and procedures at any time upon request. Parents/guardians and all relevant staff members will receive written notification of any updates to this policy.

This policy was adopted by **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** on:
Date: _____

Manager

co-Manager

Review Date: _____