

**First Friends**

**Garden and Outdoor Play Policy**

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**Principles:**

First Friends recognises that outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child’s development. Outdoor play can provide children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually. Emotionally, socially and physically. In doing so, it provides a rich context for the development of their language and encourages positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Outdoor play should be an integral part of the Early Years provision. At First Friends, the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating learning environment for children to explore all areas of the EYFS curriculum. Close observation of the children and outdoor space is essential to assess children’s strengths and difficulties and to ensure appropriate planning and continuity for the outdoor curriculum.

The provision and planning for the outdoor play, as it is with indoor play, must reflect the diversity and richness of the experience and developing interests of the children. First Friends recognise that some opportunities for learning can only happen when outdoors, for example; experiencing the changes in weather, exploring bugs and constructing large-scale constructions using a wide range of bigger resources. These activities motivate children’s mental and physical engagement far greater and can only be done outside.

First Friends is highly committed to providing a language rich environment and promoting the SLC needs of all the children. Research and training has taught us that there is a strong connection between outdoor play and a child’s ability to learn SLC skills. Therefore, we understand the importance of both outdoor play, and how both outdoor play and a child’s SLC development go hand in hand. We aim to reflect this knowledge in our everyday practice to show the important positive impact both outdoor play and SLC has on all areas of learning.

First Friends have 2 trained EmCo’s on site. (Every child a mover co-ordinators) This ensures all staff are highly committed and capable of accessing, monitoring and supporting all areas of children’s Physical development. Staff are trained to support all 7 senses of child’s physical development including their vestibular balance and proprioception awareness. Staff are highly committed at providing challenging activities to encourage these skills and know how to support families when children need additional support or interventions. First Friends ensures there are resources, equipment and experiences which reflect sensory play, gross/fine motor and health and self-care development every session both indoors and outdoors.

**Aims and objectives:**

* To enhance the children’s appreciation of the natural world and to extend their learning experiences.
* To provide a healthy environment in which children can learn and develop.
* To provide circle time activities in the outdoor area when weather permits, providing children with a different environment to express their feelings and thoughts.
* To allow children to access activities that promote appropriate areas of learning from the room and garden planning. Room leaders must ensure that staff provide and carry out activities, encouraging children to participate and supervise where appropriate.
* Spaces in the outdoor area need to be defined so that children are made aware of what activities are taking place, and what areas are “FAST” areas. This will encourage children to try different things rather than default to mainly running around or playing on the bikes and scooters.
* To implement free flow for the Butterflies’ room throughout the day which allows the children to play in an open environment.
* For the Ladybirds children to access outdoor play at regular intervals, at least twice a day and must be accessed at least once during both the AM and PM sessions.
* For there to be a specific learning space set up and maintained for the under one-year olds, with a focus on sensory and physical development.
* To allow the children to experience different seasons, to enjoy the fresh air.
* To stimulate brain activity by using all the senses, including vestibular and proprioception awareness and improve all motor skills, including fine and gross motor on a larger scale.
* To allow all children to enjoy the garden area, particularly those who may not have access to an outdoor area at home. This is to ensure children have exposure to a variety of experiences, helping to support good SLC skills.
* Each garden area should reflect the curriculum for observations, the EYFS focussed and spontaneous observations should be carried out by staff daily.
* Staff will specifically highlight outdoor activities on their planning, ensuring that they are developmentally appropriate to the child’s age and stage of development.
* Activities must be inclusive, or adapted where possible to suit any children’s additional needs.
* Staff are to interact with children always at a child’s level, supporting and encouraging their learning opportunities, staff must not stand around and chat with others, this is unacceptable.

**Health and Safety:**

* Any new pieces of equipment will have a risk assessment carried out.
* At the start of each session a member of staff will be responsible for the Health and Safety checks. These risk assessments must be carried out before children enter the garden area. Any items which pose a risk to children should be removed prior to the children accessing the area.
* At the end of the day all resources must be cleared away and stored appropriately, to allow for safe and easy removal the following day.
* Resources must be accessible for children to access independently.
* Staff will encourage children to take part in risk taking activities with good supervision, children should be encouraged to use the climbing equipment, and if under three years of age should be fully supervised always.
* Staff not involved in free flow outdoor play (Ladybirds) will ensure that they monitor the number of children in the garden. When coming in from the garden staff will do a head count to ensure that children are not left outside unattended.
* Staff involved in free flow outdoor play (Butterflies) will carry out regular head counts throughout the session, and will carry out a final head count before ending the free flow session to ensure that children are not left outside unattended.
* When any outdoor session is finished the last staff member outside from each room must check all known areas where children can conceal themselves such as the train, the doll’s house or the CFS spaces. If you cannot do this yourself ask a member of management.
* Sun cream should be applied 10-15 minutes before children are taken into the garden, and should be reapplied frequently when accessing outdoor play. In excessively hot weather or after playing in the water, sun cream should be reapplied at more regular intervals. Sun cream application advise should be followed as recommended on the bottle.
* Staff must provide shaded areas of play for the children, ensuring to use the awnings if deemed necessary.
* Staff must provide plenty of fresh drinking water for the children, encouraging them to drink at regular intervals, this also applies to staff and adults.
* Sun hats should be provided by parents for each child and children should be encouraged not to share their hat with others. There are a small number of hats kept on site to ensure all children always wear a sun hat during outdoor play. For exceptional circumstance only, parents may be asked to sign parental responsibility if a child will not keep a hat on due to a SEN disability. These children will be encouraged to play under the awnings and in shaded areas.
* Staff and adults should also wear sun cream, sun hats or sunglasses as appropriate.
* During wet weather children should wear appropriate clothing such as waterproofs, wellington boots, hats, scarves and gloves.
* In the event of a fire alarm going off staff are not to go back into the building, they must begin the evacuation process via the side gate and follow the evacuation procedure, co-ordinating with other staff.

**Staffing and ratios:**

* The outdoor ratio adheres to the ratio policy within the nursery when feasible. Ratios may be flexible through certain parts of the routine, such as nappy changes or toileting runs as they may need to leave the area to supervise the children. This is assessed by staff and if deemed unsafe management must be called for support. All staff must stay vigilant and seek support when needed. Staff are also encouraged to support each other regardless of which room they work in.
* Every staff member must stay vigilant and ensure that children are safe and free from harm.
* Ladybirds staff need to supervise children coming down from upstairs. Staff are to bring no more than three children down the stairs at any one time, and must follow the stairs policy.

**General garden procedures:**

* All garden resources should be cleaned with Milton on a regular basis.
* All resources must be put away at the end of the day including bikes and scooters etc.
* The sand pit must be covered at the end of every session.
* Ensure side gate is locked always.
* Ensure any areas of the garden that are highlighted as needing attention are reported to management, and added to the maintenance plan with a clear description with what needs doing.
* If there is a maintenance issue that could be a hazard it must be reported to management immediately, ensuring that the area is closed off from the children. All other staff must be informed to ensure that they can avoid the hazard and outdoor activities are not delayed.
* Ensure the mud kitchen is covered at the end of every session.
* Please check for wasp and ant’s nests.

**Mud kitchen:**

* Children are to have free flow access to the mud kitchen as often as possible, ensuring staff are flexible with moving around the garden area to ensure all play areas are visible always.
* Waterproofs and wellington boots are available for children to wear if necessary.
* Mud kitchen resources must be cleaned regularly using Milton.
* The mud kitchen must be covered at the end of every session.
* The mud area must be regularly raked through to ensure that no foreign objects are hidden in the soil.
* Water must be provided in the mud kitchen every session to ensure that children can fully explore the area.