Outdoor Play Policy

Academic year 2026/27 | Reviewed at least annually

Statement of Intent

At The Wendy House, we recognise outdoor play as an important part of children's learning, development, health and wellbeing.

Children will be given regular opportunities to access outdoor play throughout the year and experience the outdoors in a range of appropriate weather conditions.

We believe outdoor play provides valuable opportunities for children to explore, investigate, develop physical skills, take appropriate risks, build confidence and learn about the natural world.

Our Aims

We aim to:

- provide regular opportunities for outdoor play;
- support children's physical development, health and wellbeing;
- provide opportunities for exploration and investigation;
- enable children to experience different seasons and weather conditions;
- provide appropriate challenge and opportunities for managed risk-taking;
- encourage confidence and independence;
- support children's understanding of the natural world;
- provide inclusive outdoor experiences for all children; and
- ensure outdoor play is appropriately supervised and risk assessed.

Outdoor Play Throughout the Year

Outdoor play is available throughout the year where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Children may play outside in:

- sunshine;
- cold weather;
- light rain;
- wind;
- damp conditions; and
- other suitable weather conditions.

Parents/carers are therefore asked to ensure children attend preschool with clothing suitable for the weather.

If a child is well enough to attend preschool, they will normally be expected to participate in both indoor and outdoor experiences.

Where a child has a medical condition or individual need affecting outdoor play, parents/carers should discuss this with the Manager so appropriate arrangements can be considered.

Appropriate Clothing

Parents/carers are asked to provide suitable clothing for outdoor play.

Depending on the weather, this may include:

- a suitable coat;
- waterproof clothing where appropriate;
- named Wellington boots;
- suitable footwear;
- sun hat;
- warm hat and gloves; and
- spare clothing where appropriate.

Children will be encouraged and supported to develop independence in putting on and removing outdoor clothing according to their age and stage of development.

Clothing and footwear should be clearly named wherever possible.

Wellington Boots

Families are encouraged to provide named Wellington boots so that children can access a wider range of outdoor experiences during wet or muddy conditions.

Where appropriate, children will be encouraged to change into and out of their Wellington boots independently, with adult support available where required.

Any boots left at the setting are stored appropriately; however, as The Wendy House operates from shared premises, we cannot accept responsibility for personal belongings left at the premises outside our operating arrangements.

Sun Safety

During warmer weather, we will take reasonable steps to protect children from excessive sun exposure and heat.

The Wendy House does not apply or reapply sunscreen to children.

Parents/carers are responsible for applying suitable sunscreen to their child **before they arrive at preschool**. We recommend a high-factor, broad-spectrum sunscreen suitable for children.

Parents/carers should ensure that the sunscreen used provides appropriate protection for the duration of their child's session, as staff will not apply or reapply sunscreen during the day.

Children should bring a **named sun hat** and wear suitable clothing that provides appropriate protection from the sun.

Where possible, outdoor play will make use of shaded areas during hot weather.

Children will have access to drinking water throughout the session and will be encouraged to drink regularly.

During periods of particularly hot or sunny weather, staff will consider the temperature, strength of the sun, availability of shade and children's individual needs. Outdoor activities may be adapted, shortened or moved to shaded areas where necessary.

During periods of particularly hot weather, staff will consider:

- temperature;
- strength of the sun;
- availability of shade;
- children's individual needs;
- hydration;
- type and intensity of physical activity; and
- the length of time children spend in direct sunlight.

Outdoor activities may be adapted, shortened or moved to shaded areas where appropriate.

Cold, Wet and Extreme Weather

Outdoor play will not automatically stop because the weather is cold or wet.

However, access may be restricted where weather or environmental conditions make outdoor play unsafe or unsuitable.

This may include:

- extreme heat;
- storms;
- high winds;
- lightning;
- ice;
- snow or severe cold;
- flooding;

- unsafe surfaces; or
- other hazardous conditions.

Where appropriate, outdoor play may be restricted to safer areas such as undercover or paved spaces.

Decisions will be based on children's safety and wellbeing rather than weather alone.

Free-Flow Play

Where staffing, weather and safety arrangements allow, children will be encouraged to move between indoor and outdoor areas.

Free-flow play allows children to make choices about where and how they play and supports independence.

Staff deployment will ensure appropriate supervision of both indoor and outdoor areas.

Supervision

Children will be appropriately supervised during outdoor play.

Staff will:

- remain vigilant;
- position themselves appropriately;
- maintain awareness of children's whereabouts;
- monitor entrances and exits;
- communicate effectively with colleagues;
- maintain required staff-to-child ratios; and
- respond promptly where children require support.

Headcounts may be used where appropriate, particularly when children move between different areas.

Outdoor Safety Checks

The outdoor area will be checked before or during use as appropriate.

Staff will consider potential hazards including:

- damaged equipment;
- broken glass or sharp objects;
- animal waste;
- unsafe surfaces;
- standing water;
- weather-related hazards;

- gates and boundaries;
- inappropriate items left by other users of the premises; and
- other hazards that may affect children's safety.

Hazards will be removed, made safe or the affected area restricted before children use it.

Risk and Challenge

We recognise that children benefit from opportunities to experience appropriate challenge and learn to assess risk.

Our aim is not to remove all risk from children's play.

Staff will balance children's need for challenge and exploration with their responsibility to protect children from unacceptable risk of harm.

Children may be encouraged to:

- climb;
- balance;
- run;
- jump;
- explore different surfaces;
- use appropriate tools or equipment;
- solve physical problems; and
- test their own abilities.

Staff will provide support appropriate to children's age, development, confidence and individual needs.

Outdoor Equipment

Outdoor equipment will be selected and used appropriately for the age and development of the children.

Equipment will be checked regularly and removed from use where it is damaged or unsafe.

Children will be supported to use equipment safely while still being encouraged to develop confidence and independence.

Water Play

Where water play is provided outdoors, it will be appropriately supervised.

Water containers will be managed safely and emptied or secured appropriately after use.

Staff will consider hygiene, slipping hazards and the age and needs of the children when providing water play.

Plants and Natural Materials

Children will be encouraged to explore nature and natural materials as part of outdoor learning.

Staff will consider potential hazards associated with:

- plants;
- berries;
- fungi;
- insects;
- soil;
- sticks;
- stones; and
- other natural materials.

Children will be supported to explore safely rather than unnecessarily prevented from engaging with the natural environment.

SEND and Inclusion

Outdoor play will be inclusive and accessible to children wherever reasonably possible.

Where a child has SEND, a disability, medical need or other individual requirement, we will consider appropriate adjustments.

This may include adapting:

- activities;
- equipment;
- access;
- adult support;
- communication;
- the environment; or
- the length or type of outdoor experience.

We will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals where necessary.

Learning and Development

Outdoor play is an important part of our curriculum and may support all areas of children's learning and development.

Children will have opportunities to:

- develop gross motor skills;
- investigate the natural world;
- communicate and cooperate with others;
- develop imagination;
- solve problems;
- build confidence;
- develop independence;
- experience sensory play;
- learn about seasons and weather; and
- develop respect for the environment.

Outdoor play will include both child-led experiences and appropriate adult-supported opportunities.

Accidents and First Aid

Accidents occurring outdoors will be managed in accordance with our **First Aid and Accident Procedures**.

Appropriate first-aid provision will be accessible during outdoor play.

Accidents will be recorded and parents/carers informed in accordance with our procedures.

Safeguarding and Security

Outdoor areas will be managed to reduce the risk of children leaving the setting unnoticed or unauthorised people gaining access to children.

Staff will remain particularly vigilant around gates, doors, boundaries and collection times.

Any concern regarding a missing child will be managed immediately in accordance with our **Missing Child Policy and Procedure**.

Shared Premises

The Wendy House operates from premises shared with other members of the community.

Access to the outdoor area and the use, storage and positioning of outdoor equipment will therefore take account of arrangements agreed with the **Management Committee of the River Valley Centre**.

We will respect the requirements of the shared premises while ensuring that children's safety and learning remain central to our practice.

Any hazards or concerns arising from use of the premises by other groups will be addressed before children access the affected area.

Working With Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are asked to support outdoor play by:

- providing suitable clothing and footwear;
- naming children's belongings;
- providing Wellington boots where possible;
- providing appropriate sun protection;
- informing us of relevant medical or individual needs; and
- understanding that children may become wet, muddy or messy while learning outdoors.

Outdoor exploration and messy play are valuable parts of children's learning and development.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where statutory requirements, risk assessments, premises arrangements or the needs of the setting change.

Policy Approval & Review

Policy year	2026/2027
Approval status	Awaiting Management Committee approval
Next scheduled review	March 2027