

Outdoor Learning Policy and Procedures

This procedure is applicable to: all Department for Education employees at Paringa Park Primary School.

Document control

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Revision Record

Date	Version	Revision description

1. Title

Outdoor Learning Policy and Procedures.

2. Purpose

To provide an overview of outdoor learning at Paringa Park Primary School. We recognise that throughout the year, the outdoor environment and weather changes; however we believe in the value of year-long outdoor experiences.

3. Scope

This policy and procedure clarifies the purpose of outdoor learning and the procedures around hot and wet weather.

4. Objectives

Our school is committed to providing opportunities for children to engage in open-ended, diverse and meaningful learning experiences that are connected to nature, while also being connected to curriculum. This includes the Australian Curriculum general capabilities particularly critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding. The possibilities for learning outdoors are diverse. The Australian Curriculum Framework places outdoor learning as one of the key curriculum connections to support and guide educators' practice. *"The outdoor learning connection provides a framework for students to experience guided, integrated learning across the curriculum in natural environments. Students have the opportunity to gain unique and specific benefits from outdoor learning. They develop skills and understandings while valuing a positive relationship with natural environments and promoting the sustainable use of these environments"* (ACARA, V8.3)

Outdoor learning and play also promotes development of literacy and numeracy, physical health and wellbeing, helps develop an appreciation of the environment. Playing and learning in nature builds opportunities for powerful learning. Professor Guy Claxton, talks about powerful learning as mind stretching, a disposition that can be learned and fostered. His vocabulary describes the wondering, engaging, explaining, experimenting, imagining, reasoning, collaborating and reflecting – all positive attributes that children utilise when engaged in outdoor play and learning. Nature based playgrounds can work effectively to build powerful learning opportunities for children and promote a growth mindset through the provision of risk, challenge, engagement and process-based play.

Research – Outdoor play in winter

There are sometimes concerns from parents about play outside during cold, wintry weather. Requests to keep children indoors can be a source of dilemma for educators. Research shows that there are a number of physical and developmental benefits children receive from spending time outdoors. These include:

- children exploring their creativity at multiple levels of development
- children being involved in vigorous physical activity which has numerous health benefits and is strongly recommended by health professionals
- addressing the issue of childhood obesity
- improvements in recovery from injuries
- increases to children's levels of happiness
- reductions in the occurrence of illness
- improvement in skills such as categorisation, classification, and learning through observation, interpretation, inference and prediction
- increased confidence, self-esteem, independence and reduced stress

- gaining an awareness of self and others and a greater sense of what they can control by playing outdoors
- increased understanding of safe risk taking
- understanding of what it means to be 'sustainable'
- building responsibility to care for the environment

Being outdoors in wintry weather

Research demonstrates that nature plays an important role in children developing relationships with outdoor elements such as: appreciation of natural processes (including weather, seasons, changes/transitions); interrelationships between organisms; care for living things (including insects, plants); and the concept that learning itself is enhanced by experiences in the natural world. This construct spans the range of topics from Eco literacy (or environmental literacy) to concepts of systems knowledge and theories of sustainability.

Adults often believe that stopping children playing outdoors during cold wintry days will safeguard them from catching coughs and colds. Professor Raina MacIntyre, (Professor of Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Head of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales) suggests that, 'exposure to cold weather will not give you a cold because colds are caused by viruses. There is an association between cold weather and the winter season, and common colds because transmission of cold viruses is much higher in cold weather. It's likely that colds and influenza outbreaks peak in winter because we tend to huddle together in small, often stuffy, unventilated spaces. It's also unlikely that exposure to cold weather will exacerbate the symptoms of a cold'.

5. Procedure detail

Outdoor learning environment

Our master plan for the development of the outdoor learning environment was developed in 2018 and implemented across the following 5-10 years. This plan exemplifies a commitment to nature play areas to promote quality learning experiences in the outdoors that are inclusive of opportunities to experience risk and challenge and that enable outdoor learning to be seamlessly incorporated as part of the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework. This will include:

- natural outdoor learning spaces
- tree climbing
- fire
- loose parts

Risk and benefit assessments are completed for all of these outdoor learning environment opportunities with the children, by staff, and displayed in the staff room.

All weather

Children will be encouraged to wear appropriate clothing in order to venture outdoor in all weather.

Wet weather – recess and lunch

- when it is hailing, the rain is heavy or a storm 3 bells sound and children will stay inside or return to their rooms
- leadership will release staff for breaks
- one siren will be sounded if weather improves and children can go out to play
- if recess or lunch is inside, teachers can fit in a break in consultation with teachers in adjoining classrooms
- children stay in own area or play in covered areas between rooms
- quiet activities are required – use of outside equipment (ball etc) is prohibited

- if children are leaving the area (to go to toilets) must receive teacher's permission
- if there is drizzling rain, children will be allowed outside wearing appropriate clothing
- staff have access to a unisex long hooded warm jacket and gloves for wearing on yard duty (available in the staff room)

Hot weather

When the temperature is 37°C or higher the following will occur:

- children will be supervised inside at break times (recess and lunch)
- outdoor education activities will be cancelled
- outdoor sporting activities, including school sports and PE lessons, the temperature limit is reduced to 35°C

See Sunsmart policy for further information.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Party / parties	Roles and responsibilities
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring, evaluation and review of policy and procedure • ensure staff have access to appropriate coats/gloves for winter/wet outdoor learning and play
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for children to learn and play outdoors • dress appropriately for any weather so they are able to interact with children and facilitate outdoor learning • model appropriate outdoor clothing including coats, beanies (winter) and sun smart hats (summer)
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote appropriate clothing for their children including coats and gumboots • be supportive of children learning and playing outdoors
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dress appropriately for any weather

7. Monitoring, evaluation and review

A letter will be distributed to families annually outlining this policy. This policy and procedure will be reviewed bi-annually by staff and ratified by governing council.

8. Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning

9. Associated documents

Government of SA & Nature Play SA Learning Outdoors Benefits Risks 2017

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