

## Benefits of outdoor play in the early years

The benefits of outdoor play are endless and provides children with many opportunities to express themselves and be free to run, jump, skip, explore and shout. Some children learn best and are more focused when they are outside. The outdoor environment is just as important as the indoor environment and they should complement each other because outdoor play is vital for a child's mental and physical development. Some of the many benefits of outdoor play include:

### **Encourages a healthy lifestyle**

Getting outdoors and embracing physical activity, walks or visits to the park helps children to burn off energy whilst encouraging a healthy lifestyle. Outdoor play is an extremely important factor in combatting an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and being active from an early age helps to form healthy habits for life.

### **Develops social skills**

Being inside can sometimes feel busy compared to playing outdoors, the outdoors is less intimidating and allows children to come out of their shells and join in fun new games. Giving children great outdoor learning experiences provides them with opportunities to talk to new children that perhaps they wouldn't have spoken to indoors.

### **Understanding risk**

An outdoor environment provides children with more opportunities for risk taking, playing adventurously motivates children to extend their own boundaries and explore. Children can be involved with play on a much larger scale whilst outdoors and in ways that are different from indoor play. They can learn to problem solve and make calculated decisions such as 'can I climb this tree' or 'should I jump from this height'.

### **Well-being**

Allowing children to have the freedom to play outdoors helps them to feel happier and calmer because being outdoors means that children can naturally soak up vitamin D; which is said to help improve moods and promote positive mental attitude. The outside environment is the perfect place for children to burn off energy giving them the opportunity to concentrate more on focused activities.

### **Encourages independence**

Allowing children to play outdoors gives them a sense of freedom to make discoveries and explore by themselves or with their friends. Without adult supervision children will learn how to take turns, negotiate equipment and pick themselves up if they fall over, resulting in children learning how to be independent whilst building self-confidence.

At Marshalswick Pre School we promote free flow play and encourage all children to enjoy and explore our gardens and outside area. We provide outdoor activities that complement what we offer inside, and we love taking learning outside. We believe that by allowing children to engage in play outside provides them with a fun learning environment to learn new skills and information.