

## Learning through play – Marshalswick Pre School and Nursery: Outdoor play

Research shows that the most effective way for children to learn is through play. Play underpins the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity.

Here are some examples showing how we encourage children to learn through outdoor play:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**  
*Children of all ages get pleasure from being outside and can act on their strong impulse to investigate. They can be curious, inventive, interested and explore our great outdoors in a safe environment where strong relationships with their peers and key people ensure their inquisitive natures blossom.*
- **Physical Development**  
*Children can be physically active on a much bigger scale when they are playing outside than they can when playing inside. They don't just run and jump around either! Children can develop control and dexterity with tools and small equipment through digging and gardening, or using bats and balls, and sand / water play equipment. Spatial awareness will also develop when using outdoor equipment such as trikes and scooters.*
- **Communication and Language**  
*Outdoors, children can hear and respond to a different range of sounds as they begin to recognise and distinguish between noises in the outdoor environment. They can use action and movement alongside words and sounds to convey their ideas and meanings. The outdoors is also where stories, songs and poems can be shared and enacted on a bigger scale than they can when inside.*
- **Literacy**  
*Mark-making opportunities outdoors are every bit as valuable as those that take place inside; Pre School children enjoy making handprints in damp sand, while older children can use sticks to form marks and shapes in mud. Larger scale painting on walls or blackboards which is also a great outdoor mark-making activity.*
- **Mathematics**  
*Pre School and nursery children can number rhymes and act out number games outdoors. Natural materials that are found outdoors, such as twigs, conkers, chestnuts and pebbles can be counted and sorted according to size by older children. Early mathematical language is promoted through a range of outdoor games including 'What's the time Mr Wolf' and the parachute game.*
- **Understanding the World**  
*The outdoors is a place where children of all ages explore and investigate a wide range of materials that cannot be found indoors. Outdoors, all children can work through practical investigations, for example, what happens when a tower of soft bricks is pushed over, or how to make a rocket zoom into the air. Talking about the weather and seasons will help children understand cause and effect in the environment they live in.*
- **Expressive Arts and Designs**  
*The outdoors is full of creative opportunities. The natural world provides lots of*

*inspiration for mark-making with leaf and bark rubbing, flower pressing, sticks, rocks and creations using fir cones and seed pods.*