

Teaching and Learning

Outdoor environment and resources



Outdoor learning is a crucial element of the EYFS Framework. Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and development. It offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.

“Children need opportunities to develop their own play and independent exploration. This is enjoyable and motivating. They also need adults to ‘scaffold’ their learning by giving them just enough help to achieve something they could not do independently. Helping children to think, discuss and plan ahead is important, like gathering the materials they need to make a den before they start building. These are ways of helping children to develop the characteristics of effective learning.”

Development Matters 2023

Task

Working with a partner, observe how the children play in your current outdoor provision based upon the following questions:

- Do the children have enough space and freedom to follow their intentions and shared thinking?
- Are there opportunities for children to talk about their experiences whilst using their senses? For example, “The mud feels so squelchy”
- What opportunities are there for the children to develop their gross motor skills in a variety of different ways?
- Are the children challenged and given opportunities to take risks?
- Are the children provided with opportunities that differ from the opportunities they are given when inside? for example: The outdoor environment should look and feel completely different so that the children can access a whole range of new and diverse skills and learning opportunities.

- Are all of the areas of learning reflected in your outdoor environment?
- Are there opportunities for children to explore and problem solve using a variety of natural resources? Why do you think this is important?
- Do the children have opportunities to take care of their outdoor space? For example, sweeping leaves and litter picking.
- What opportunities are there for the children to observe and take care of animals, plants and vegetables?

Based on your observation and discussions, be sure to action plan any identified improvements needed.

Further reading:

<https://www.theempowerededucatoronline.com/2017/05/outdoor-play-areas.html/>

<https://theimaginationtree.com/inspiring-outdoor-play-spaces-kids/>

<https://forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>