

Rathmore Primary School and Nursery Unit



Outdoor Play Policy

Date Ratified:	May 2025
Date of Review:	May 2026

This policy has been written following a consultation process, ratified by the Board of Governors and communicated to the school community as required. It will be monitored and reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule.

Outdoor Play Policy

Article 31

Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

Rationale

In Rathmore Nursery learning outdoors as an intrinsic part of the pre-school curriculum. We recognise that outdoor play is essential for the learning and development of young children and is beneficial to their health and well-being. We are fully committed to utilising our outdoor spaces whatever the weather.

Aims

At Rathmore Nursery we aim to:

- Provide children with opportunities for outdoor play that promotes the development of confidence, co-ordination, well-being and strength.
- Provide a safe and supportive outdoor environment which encourages the children to engage.
- Plan for a challenging and progressive programme of learning experiences.
- Promote and develop social skills such as sharing, decision making, co-operation with others, negotiation and fairness.
- Encourage outdoor play in all weathers with the appropriate care taken to protect children from the elements.
- Create an environment in which children can learn to take risks in a controlled environment

Role of Nursery staff

- Be aware of safety issues.
- Work together to observe, assess, evaluate and plan for progression in learning, ensuring learning is linked to the curriculum and based on the children's' interests.
- Observe children at play, interact when invited to do so by the children or when it is appropriate to do so.
- Initiate games and activities
- Set up obstacle courses and games to enable the children to explore a range of fundamental movement skills.
- Take a step back to give children the freedom to explore and develop their own ideas and to safely encourage and supervise 'risky play.'

- Use resources / questioning / statements when appropriate to extend, challenge, enhance or engage children.

Organisation and areas of play

We endeavour to have outdoor play every day for a sustained period of time. In the third term children should have access to outdoor play for the greater part of the session. Depending on weather, staffing and children, it may be possible for children to have access to both indoor and outdoor play simultaneously at certain times of the year. In addition, the Nursery have adopted the ethos and principles of Forest School Education (see Forest School Education, A Shared Ethos).

During outdoor play there will be an opportunity for children to experience a wide range of activities and resources including:

- Their own purpose built outdoor learning environment
- The junior playground
- Outdoor learning pods
- The field
- Wheeled vehicles
- Large and small loose parts
- Mud Kitchen
- Role Play house
- Planting and growing area
- Quiet area
- Imaginative area
- Story telling area
- Nature area
- Water area
- Construction area
- Stone area
- Mark making area
- Music area
- Small resources for physical play, for example bats, balls, hoops...
- Open space for running and games (the field and junior playground)

Equipment is stored in the large shed and the small container in the Nursery outdoor area. Small equipment is also stored in various storage containers throughout the area.

Planning for Outdoor Play

Please see the Curriculum Policy which outlines planning.

Health and Safety

- When setting out the equipment each day staff must complete a daily Risk Assessment Checklist and be vigilant throughout the session.
- Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children and never leave the area unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility.
- It is important staff move around the area constantly, so all areas are adequately supervised.
- When there is more than one staff member outdoors they will position themselves in separate areas so that no area is unsupervised.
- Students helping outdoors must never be left in charge of any area.
- Children will be counted in and out of the outdoor play sessions.
- All equipment should be clean and fit for use, and if necessary stored away carefully ready for the next day.
- If a child is injured they should be treated outdoors with the portable first aid kit. If it is necessary to bring the child indoors the other staff should be informed and the child should be treated near the door. Details of the accident must be written up as soon as possible. The child's parent/carer must be informed either by Seesaw, phone or at the end of the session.
- An Education Authority accident form will also be filled out for more serious incidents.
- To enable children to fully experience outdoor play opportunities parents are requested to send their children in clothing that is suitable for dirty / wet play.
- Children's clothing should be monitored carefully, e.g. untied shoelaces, scarves which are too long and may cause accidents.
- Children will be taught how to use all equipment safely. When using large loose parts they are encouraged to check if it is safe and to leave space between themselves and the child in front when moving across planks/crates. Reminders of routines and our Class Charter will reinforce the importance of children keeping themselves and each other safe.
- When children are using the climbing frame staff must be aware of any risks (e.g. objects left underneath). Staff will encourage children to look before they move on the slide or when jumping off apparatus.

The following factors will be taken into consideration in different weather conditions:

Warm Weather

- Parents are advised to provide a hat and to ensure their child has sun cream on when they come to Nursery on sunny days.
- Shade will be provided for the children.
- Children will be encouraged to drink water.

Wet / Cold Weather

- Children will still have access to outdoor play if the weather is wet/cold.
- Parents are requested to ensure children are dressed appropriately.
- Staff will assist children in putting on any waterproof clothing.

A decision will be taken to determine if it is in the interest of children's safety to have outdoor play restricted / cancelled for particularly poor weather.

Sun Safety

At Rathmore Nursery we want everyone to enjoy the sun safely and aim to promote this through:

Education

- Through rhymes, songs and stories, role-play, and visuals we teach the children about the dangers of the sun and how best to protect themselves.

Protection and Shade

- The outdoor play area has appropriate shaded areas.

Clothing/Sunscreen

- On sunny days children are required to bring a sunhat for outdoor play.
- Children may wear shorts with their school uniform t-shirt.
- Children must continue to wear suitable footwear for playing outdoors.
- Parents/carers are requested to apply sunscreen to their child before the start of the Nursery session. This is communicated to parents via the newsletter at the start of the summer term and reminders are put on Seesaw.

Timetabling

- On warm days water is constantly available for children and staff.
- As the morning session finishes at 11.20am the children are home for the warmest part of the day.
- The afternoon session falls during the warmest part of the day. Staff will make the decision each day as to how long children can safely play outside – there are lots of shaded areas the children can access outdoors.
- Shaded areas will be utilised for story/music/circle time.

Information to Parents

Parents are advised that children will be using the outdoor play area as an 'outdoor classroom' and across all seasons of the year.

Support from parents is required to ensure children are dressed appropriately for outdoor play.

Outdoor play will be discussed at the induction meeting.

Seesaw will be utilised to share the learning that is taking place outdoors with the parents.