EAST DULWICH GROVE NURSERY
31 East Dulwich Grove, Dulwich, SE22 8PW
Email:management@edgnursery.co.uk
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OUTDOOR PLAY & PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES POLICY

Policy Statement

EDG Nursery recognises outdoor play and physical activity as an essential part of children's health, wellbeing, learning and development.

Children will have **regular opportunities for outdoor play and physical activity throughout the day**, appropriate to their age, development, interests, individual needs and attendance pattern.

Outdoor provision should be purposeful, engaging and appropriately challenging. It is not simply an opportunity for children to "let off steam", nor should it be treated as a time when adults become less actively involved in children's learning.

The EYFS requires providers to provide access to an outdoor play area or, where this is not possible, plan and take outdoor activities daily unless circumstances make this inappropriate, such as unsafe weather conditions.

Physical Activity Recommendations

EDG will promote healthy levels of physical activity in line with NHS guidance.

The NHS recommends:

- **Babies under 1:** physically active several times throughout the day in a variety of ways. Babies who are not yet mobile should have at least **30 minutes of tummy time**, spread throughout their waking day.
- **Children aged 1–2:** at least **180 minutes (3 hours) of physical activity each day**, spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play.
- **Children aged 3–4:** at least **180 minutes (3 hours) each day**, spread throughout the day and including active/outdoor play, with at least **60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity**.

EDG Nursery contributes towards these daily recommendations; it is not expected that all three hours must necessarily be completed outdoors or solely while the child attends EDG.

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Access to Outdoor Play

Children should have **regular opportunities to access outdoor provision throughout the day** rather than outdoor play being limited to one short scheduled period.

Because EDG's outdoor space is shared, rooms will take turns to access the garden throughout the day. Management and Room Leaders should organise this fairly so that all children receive meaningful opportunities for outdoor play.

Consideration should be given to:

- children's booked sessions and attendance times;
- age and developmental needs;
- the amount of outdoor/physical activity already experienced;
- children's interests;
- planned learning opportunities;
- weather conditions;
- SEND/additional needs; and
- individual children who may benefit from additional outdoor or physical experiences.

Where appropriate, smaller groups may access the garden to provide children with **more individualised**, **purposeful experiences** rather than always taking whole groups outside together.

Front Garden

The **front garden is designated for babies only**.

Older children must use their allocated outdoor areas in accordance with EDG's room/garden arrangements.

Planning Physical Experiences

Outdoor provision must be **planned with purpose**.

Room Leaders and practitioners should consider children's observations, interests, development and next steps when deciding what physical opportunities and resources should be available.

For example, practitioners may intentionally provide opportunities for:

- crawling and pulling to stand;
- walking and balancing;
- running and changing direction;

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- climbing;
- jumping;
- throwing and catching;
- kicking and controlling balls;
- pushing and pulling;
- cycling/scooting;
- transporting objects;
- digging;
- large-scale mark making;
- dancing and movement;
- obstacle courses;
- construction;
- water and messy play; and
- coordination and spatial awareness.

Staff should **plan ahead and take appropriate, interesting resources outside**, rather than repeatedly relying on the same equipment.

Not every experience needs to be adult-led. Children should also have sufficient opportunity for **child-led exploration, movement and open-ended outdoor play**.

DfE early-years guidance highlights daily outdoor access, opportunities for adventurous movement and safe risk-taking as important to children's gross-motor development.

Adult Deployment and Engagement

Appropriate adult deployment must be considered **before children enter the garden**.

Staff must position themselves so that:

- all areas of the garden can be appropriately supervised;
- potential blind spots are monitored;
- entrances, exits and gates remain secure;
- climbing and higher-risk areas receive appropriate attention;
- children can be seen and heard appropriately;
- ratios remain compliant; and
- staff can respond quickly if assistance is required.

Staff must **spread themselves appropriately across the outdoor area** rather than standing together talking. Outdoor time remains working time.

Practitioners should be actively engaged by:

- observing children;
- joining play where this adds value;

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- modelling physical skills;
- introducing appropriate challenge;
- supporting language and communication;
- encouraging cooperation and turn-taking;
- helping children problem-solve;
- extending children's interests;
- recognising when to step in and when to allow independent exploration; and
- identifying opportunities for children's next steps.

Adults should avoid unnecessarily directing children's play. Effective outdoor practice includes knowing when to **observe, support, extend or step back**.

Garden Safety and Risk Assessment

A **Garden/Outdoor Area Risk Assessment** must be maintained and reviewed by management.

In addition, staff must remain alert to changing risks throughout each session.

Before children access the garden, an appropriate safety check should consider:

- gates and entrances;
- fencing/boundaries;
- outdoor equipment;
- climbing equipment;
- damaged or broken resources;
- trip/slip hazards;
- surfaces;
- standing water;
- animal waste;
- litter or dangerous objects;
- weather-related hazards;
- plants/natural materials;
- storage areas; and
- any maintenance work or unusual hazards.

Risk assessment is continuous.

A garden being safe at the beginning of the morning does not mean it remains safe throughout the day.

Staff must continue to monitor the environment and children's use of equipment during outdoor sessions.

Any significant hazard must be **removed, isolated and reported immediately**.

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Headcounts and Supervision

Children must be accounted for when moving **into and out of outdoor areas**.

Staff should follow EDG's established headcount/register procedures and ensure that children do not enter or leave an outdoor area unnoticed.

Particular attention should be given during:

- room changes;
- staff breaks;
- collection periods;
- transitions between indoor/outdoor areas;
- movement between groups; and
- periods where several children are entering or leaving simultaneously.

Outdoor supervision must never rely solely on the assumption that **"someone else is watching."**

Room teams must be clear about deployment and responsibility.

Risky and Challenging Play

EDG recognises that children need opportunities to experience **appropriate challenge and managed risk**.

Children develop physical confidence, judgement, resilience and an understanding of their own abilities through experiences such as climbing, balancing, moving at speed, navigating uneven surfaces and testing what their bodies can do.

DfE guidance specifically encourages opportunities for children to take safe risks when developing gross-motor skills.

Staff should therefore avoid automatically stopping an activity simply because it involves an element of risk.

Instead consider:

What is the benefit? What is the actual risk? Can the risk be managed without removing the challenge?

Adults should:

- remain close enough to respond where necessary;
- assess the child's individual ability;

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- encourage children to assess situations for ther
- use language such as "Where could you put your foot next?" rather than immediately lifting a child down;
- introduce challenge gradually;
- intervene where there is an unacceptable or immediate risk of harm; and
- adapt experiences for children requiring additional support.

Risky play does not mean unsafe play.

Babies and Outdoor Play

Babies must have regular opportunities for outdoor experiences appropriate to their development.

The **front garden is reserved for the baby group**, allowing younger children opportunities for safe exploration away from older, more physically active children.

Outdoor provision for babies may include:

- supervised floor play;
- tummy time;
- crawling;
- reaching and grasping;
- pulling up and cruising;
- sensory/natural materials;
- music and movement;
- push-and-pull resources; and
- opportunities to experience fresh air, nature and different surfaces.

Babies should not spend unnecessary periods restrained in buggies, seats or other equipment when opportunities for free movement can safely be provided. NHS guidance similarly encourages babies to be active throughout the day through floor-based movement and supervised play.

SEND and Inclusive Outdoor Play

Children with SEND or additional needs must be given meaningful opportunities to participate in outdoor and physical experiences.

Staff should consider reasonable adjustments including:

- adapted equipment;
- additional adult support;

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- smaller-group outdoor sessions;
- sensory adjustments;
- alternative communication;
- additional preparation for transitions outside; and
- adapting the level of physical challenge.

A child should not routinely miss outdoor play because supporting them outside is more difficult.

Where an individual risk assessment is required, this should seek to **enable participation safely rather than unnecessarily restrict the child**.

Weather

Outdoor play should continue throughout different seasons and reasonable weather conditions where it is safe to do so.

Staff should consider appropriate:

- clothing;
- footwear;
- sun protection;
- shade;
- hydration;
- length/timing of sessions; and
- weather-specific risks.

Outdoor access may be adapted, shortened or suspended where weather or environmental conditions make outdoor play unsafe.

Related EDG Documents

- Garden/Outdoor Area Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Missing or Lost Child Policy
- SEND Policy
- Inclusion and Equality Policy
- Sun Safety Policy
- Severe/Extreme Weather Policy
- Accident and First Aid Policy

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All policies contained within this handbook have been created in line with current legislation and statutory guidance. EDG Nursery reviews all policies annually and updates them sooner where changes to legislation, statutory guidance, and recognised sector best practice.