



Outdoor Play & Learning Policy

Bijou Day Nursery & Crèche, Cowbridge

Policy owner: Nursery Manager / Rheolwr y Feithrinfa

Version: 2.0

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Approved by: Samantha Rennison, Responsible Individual / Unigolyn Cyfrifol

1. Policy Statement

Bijou Day Nursery & Crèche believes that outdoor play and learning are essential to children's health, well-being and development. We are committed to providing rich, stimulating and challenging outdoor experiences as an integral part of our Montessori-inspired curriculum, in line with the Curriculum for Wales.

This policy is informed by the Curriculum for Wales 2022 (particularly the Health and Well-being Area of Learning); National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare (Wales) 2016; CIW guidance; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31).

2. Benefits of Outdoor Play

- Supports physical development — gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination and spatial awareness
- Promotes emotional well-being — resilience, confidence, risk-taking and problem-solving
- Enhances cognitive development — curiosity, exploration, scientific thinking and creativity
- Supports social skills — cooperation, negotiation, turn-taking and communication
- Connects children with the natural world — understanding of seasons, weather, plants and wildlife
- Improves health outcomes — vitamin D, fresh air, exercise and reduced screen time

3. Our Outdoor Provision

- All children have daily access to outdoor play, regardless of weather (except in extreme or dangerous conditions)
- Our outdoor area is resourced with a range of natural, open-ended and age-appropriate materials
- Outdoor learning is planned alongside indoor learning, not as an afterthought
- Activities include gardening, nature exploration, water play, construction, mark-making, role play, physical challenges and sensory experiences
- We incorporate Forest School principles where possible, including mud kitchens, den-building and natural loose parts

4. Risk-Benefit Approach

We adopt a risk-benefit approach to outdoor play. This means we acknowledge that some risk is necessary and beneficial for children's learning and development. We do not eliminate all risk but manage it intelligently through:

- Daily visual checks of the outdoor area before children access it
- Regular formal risk assessments of the outdoor environment and equipment
- Appropriate supervision ratios maintained at all times
- Staff training on outdoor risk management
- Teaching children about managing risk themselves (age-appropriate)

5. Weather Considerations

- Children go outside in all but the most extreme weather
- Parents are asked to provide appropriate clothing: waterproofs, wellies, sun hats, sun cream
- The nursery provides spare clothing and waterproofs where needed
- In hot weather, outdoor play is scheduled to avoid peak sun hours (refer to Sun Safety Policy)
- In icy conditions, the outdoor area is checked for hazards and adapted as necessary

6. Curriculum Links

Outdoor play supports all six Areas of Learning and Experience in the Curriculum for Wales:

- **Languages, Literacy & Communication:** Storytelling outdoors, mark-making, nature journaling
- **Mathematics & Numeracy:** Counting natural objects, measuring, patterns, spatial awareness
- **Science & Technology:** Investigating minibeasts, growing plants, weather observation
- **Health & Well-being:** Physical activity, emotional regulation, healthy risk-taking
- **Expressive Arts:** Outdoor music, nature art, creative construction
- **Humanities:** Understanding seasons, local environment, caring for living things

7. Welsh Language Outdoors

Staff use Welsh language naturally during outdoor play — naming plants, animals, weather and giving instructions bilingually, in line with our Welsh Language & Culture Policy.

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