



SOMERVILLE FEDERATION

Outdoor Play Policy

**TO BE REVIEWED BY THE GOVERNING BODY
(June 2026)**

Outdoor Play Policy

Providers must plan and organise their systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs.

Aim of the policy

To plan and provide experiences, which are appropriate to each child's stage of development as they progress towards the early learning goals.

The vision for all young children

- All children have the right to experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors.
- Young children thrive and their minds and bodies develop best when they have free access to stimulating outdoor environments for learning through play and real experiences.
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic adults are crucial to unlocking the potential of the outdoors.

“Early Years Vision and Values for Outdoor Play” - Learning through Landscapes

Procedures

- The staff will use the outdoor area as a natural resource for learning, including the outdoor space when planning for the children's learning and development.
- The staff should ensure that the outdoor area offers the children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve and use their imagination and creativity as effectively as they can in the indoor environment.
- We will provide opportunities to develop children's gross motor skills, to run, jump etc. and have regular physical exercise. Physical exercise should be planned for all children in Somerville Nursery School.
- We will aim to give children the opportunity to plan and have ownership for their learning in the outdoor environment and Forest school.
- We will encourage children to take care of their outdoor environment and to care for living things/.
- The staff will support children in developing their appreciation of natural beauty and a sense of wonder about the world.
- Children will be given the opportunity to relax and rest in the outside area.
- Staff will use their observations and assessment of the children to plan for the next steps in children's learning.

Health and Safety

- A full risk assessment of the outdoor area is undertaken and all hazards minimised. Risk assessment should be reviewed every 12 months or earlier.
- Staff will encourage children to help set up resources outdoors as appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Children will be taught to use tools safely and effectively.
- Equipment used by the children must be checked carefully as it is set out and put away - Any unsafe equipment should be removed immediately and reported to the Assistant Head Teacher / Headteacher / Site Manager.
- Fresh drinking water should be available at all times.
- Staff should ensure they are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear for outdoors e.g. Sun hats etc, wet weather clothing
- All staff should ensure children are wearing the appropriate clothing and footwear, depending on weather. E.g. Sunhats must be worn in sunny and hot conditions. Parents are asked to apply long-lasting sunscreen before nursery. Wellington boots and puddle suits are to be worn in wet / damp conditions .
- Staff always need to be aware of the number of children outside and head count accordingly, as they would do inside.
- All staff should model high quality interactions and promote positive behaviour.
- All portable play equipment should be stored safely at the end of the day.
- Children should be supervised at all times, with staffing arrangements organised to meet the individual needs of all children and adhering to statutory ratios.
- All staff must be clear about issues of safety and supervision.
- Students on placement cannot be left alone with the children and must work under the direct supervision of a qualified staff member.
- Depending on the frequency of use the sand will need a regular disinfectant treatment - a weak solution of child-safe household disinfectant should be sprinkled on using a watering can or similar and sprayed in with a hosepipe. Children should be kept out of the sand area for a day. Annual topping up and occasional replacement will be required. (ROSPA)

Information to parents

Parents are advised that children will be using the outdoor provision all year round.

- Cooperation is required to ensure that clothing is weather appropriate.
- Parents will be reminded to apply long lasting sun cream before nursery.

References: -

- Early Years Vision and Values for Outdoor play – Learning through Landscapes
- Somerville Nursery School Equal Opportunities Policy
- Somerville Nursery School Health and Safety Policy
- Sand Play in Children’s Play Areas – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework: For group and school-based providers (Oct 2024)

Guidance to support the procedures

- *A safe and welcoming environment is planned to meet the needs of individuals and children, who are able to explore and investigate their world with developing confidence and security.*
- *Floor surfaces are kept free of unnecessary tables and chairs to give children more room to move around. Carpeted areas, soft play and cushions provide comfortable areas to explore resources and sit, crawl, climb and walk near to members of staff who are frequently at floor level with the children.*
- *Displays and equipment are stored at accessible height for children to access and the children are encouraged to be responsible for making sure equipment and resources are put back when finished with.*
- *Children are encouraged to use equipment with care and respect, for example children are shown how to turn the pages of a book carefully so that they do not rip and where to put them back so that other children may enjoy them.*
- *Staff will provide sensitive and thoughtful interactions to enhance the children's growing self-esteem and confidence, allowing children to make choices and decisions.*
- *Opportunities for child-initiated play are offered, by setting up resources that are accessible for children to use in their own way, such as collections of 'treasure' and natural materials.*
- *Staff facilitate children's play by helping the children to make decisions, develop their language and encourage positive behaviour.*
- *Books and resources used in Somerville Nursery School are carefully chosen to provide positive images of race, gender and ability.*
- *Activities, learning opportunities and experiences are planned that reflect the children's families and community's interests and diversity.*
- *We would welcome visitors from the local community.*
- *We will aim to increase children's independence and help them to develop a sense of self-identity.*
- *Each child is positively valued for what he or she can do, and staff respond warmly and attentively to the child's contribution. This is achieved through positive praise, reinforcement and encouragement. Staff have high expectations of the children and will encourage them to reach their full potential through friendly and sensitive support and guidance such as praising children who are attempting to feed themselves, giving them time and encouragement, rather than the adult constantly spoon feeding.*
- *Staff will observe what interests children in their play and let the child take the lead, for instance in helping them to secure fabric to make their 'den' or helping the child to find suitable objects to put in his/her wheelbarrow at the 'building site'. Staff listen to what children say and value their input. Allowing children to make some of their own decisions in their play, for instance children initiating their own use of resources for their own purposes.*
- *The partnership with parents is about learning from each other. We will aim to make parents feel a welcome part of the setting and we strive for continuity between home and the setting. We adopt a non judgemental approach and respect parents as the child's most important people. Parents and carers are kept informed about their children's care and development through informal contact at the beginning and end of the session, when their input and*

viewpoint is valued and listened to. Each Key Person will act upon shared information to ensure the child's well-being is catered for, and encourage parents to feel confident and happy to leave their children.

- *Staff will model positive behaviour with the children; they will praise positive behaviour shown by children. When children are kind and helpful to each other, staff will point out why they are pleased with the children and encourage them to play and interact with each other in a positive way.*
- *Staff are aware of the ability of young children to express their feelings and are sensitive to the emotions displayed by the children, but we will set fair and consistent boundaries of acceptable behaviour that are appropriate to the children's understanding. If a child is distressed following any incident they will be supported and comforted.*
- *Staff will use puppets and role-play to demonstrate positive models of behaviour. If a child's behaviour gives cause for concern, this will be discussed with parents and strategies will be developed with the parents. The school has a policy for behaviour. All issues need to be handled with sensitivity and care to ensure that all children know they are in a caring and nurturing environment.*
- *Appropriate to their age and development, children are encouraged to help decide about 'rules' and boundaries. Children will talk about the need for rules to keep them safe, happy and healthy. Staff will talk to the children to help them to decide what is and is not acceptable, and lead them to make positive choices.*
- *Adults will model positive behaviour alongside the children during their play. Through stories and role-play the children re-enact story situations, being able to explore feelings and emotions and consider choices and their consequences.*
- *Play underpins all development and learning for young children. It is through play that children develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. In Somerville Nursery School, play is well planned both indoors and outdoors, supported by adults who are able to join in, challenge, extend and support learning through play.*
- *Staff will be confident in taking advantage of children's interests or unexpected learning opportunities. (seize the moment)*
- *The environment is set up so that there is a balance of both child-initiated and adult-initiated play, both indoors and outdoors. The environment and experiences allow children to develop their physical skills and a range of physical play equipment is available both indoors and outdoors. 'Continuous Provision' environments such as the sand, water, play dough, mark making, small world etc are always available, which will be 'enhanced' through thoughtful additions to support children's interests. Opportunities for sustained shared thinking should be fully supported.*
- *'Focused' or adult-led experiences and activities are also planned, which provide support and guidance from staff, such as exploring sounds with a range of instruments, listening to a story, singing a song together or role playing an imaginary trip to a desert island.*
- *We aim for children to develop as independent, curious learners, who are willing to take calculated risks in a safe environment, where they can try out new skills and experiences. We will provide resources that stimulate children's natural curiosity. Resources for child initiated exploration and play,*

such as 'discovery boxes' and a range of natural materials are available for the children to select from.

- We recognise children's need to have some quiet time and therefore provide a quiet, cosy corner with adult and child seating to enable children to enjoy a quiet time to rest or relax, without distractions.
- Children's language and mathematical thinking is well supported by staff who respond sensitively to children. Staff will observe, listen, mirror, model and respond to children, taking time to listen to children and to interpret their non-verbal gestures, sounds and body language. Staff provide good role models of social communication by making eye contact, smiling and making positive verbal responses whilst children are talking to them. Staff will respond with positive responses and show that they are interested in what the children are saying, allowing children to process information and have time to respond. Staff recognise the importance of children's thoughtful 'silences' and know the value of not over questioning children during their play, but making thoughtful responses such as 'I wonder what...?' or 'Tell me about...' 'Can you tell me how to...'
- We provide rich and stimulating opportunities to develop children's language and imagination through stories, rhymes, songs and role-play. The environment supports a love and interest in books and print, and the Somerville Nursery School provides a print rich environment. Varied examples of print such as books, magazines, posters and leaflets support children's interest should be available throughout the room. The reading area provides comfortable seating and a range of high quality books by popular children's authors. Puppets and artefacts from the stories support books so children are able to 'retell' or act out stories, developing their storybook language.
- In the choice of books, we offer we aim to provide children with a rich and varied diet exposing the children to diverse and imaginary settings, themes and topics. Mathematical language and concepts are also developed through a collection of books with mathematical themes. Resources and everyday objects are used to develop mathematical concepts such as various length socks for children to sort and match.
- We believe that children's imagination and creativity should be encouraged throughout the environment. We provide experiences and opportunities that help children to develop the skills, attitudes and knowledge that they can use in all areas of learning and development. Adults are central to helping children to discover what being creative is. Adults introduce new and varied materials and media, stories, music and contexts into the environment and space. Resources are organised so that children can select independently to support their play.
- We allow children to create and represent their own interpretation of the world, and recognise that it is more the process of creating something, than the finished product. We support the children by helping them to access skills and techniques. We allow children the flexibility to develop their own ideas and do not constrain children by imposing adult-determined outcomes. We will give children the opportunity to use a variety of tools when undertaking any creative work e.g. Scissors. It is the children's own work that we will display and by this showing our respect and value for their creativity.