



SCHOOL GROUNDS INFORMATION SHEET

Do You Know?

Utilise a diverse range of different spaces for different things. Some flat spaces can be used for playing games, building things, planting gardens and some that have shelter can even be used to house campfires or wildlife homes!

The use of outdoor space has been found to enhance the value of learning and development for children. Elements can include quieter gathering spaces to develop social and communication skills, mud kitchens to increase physical activity and development, and activities such as campfire building, cooking, and gardening to enhance movement and critical thinking skills. It is important that we look at the shape, size and surroundings of the environment around us because then it can be used in the most efficient way so that everybody can enjoy it.

Analyse your indoor space—do you have adequate ventilation, fresh air and natural light? All extremely important for the health and wellbeing of children.

Outdoor Tips for Adults

You can set a positive example for your children to engage with the outdoors and nature just by being enthusiastic and enjoying activities outside.

Being confident and comfortable in nature will allow children to develop a healthy relationship with the environment that will continue to develop as they grow. Provide opportunities for crawling, tumbling to stimulate outer senses.

Encourage outdoor exploration by:

- Including children in gardening projects
- Building outdoor dens and forts
- Visiting local parks and woodlands
- Finding nearby community groups to join

Why Do We Need Outdoor Space?

Being outdoors in the sunshine allows our body to generate Vitamin D, which is essential to keep our bones healthy and strong.

Research also suggests that being outdoors and in natural environments has many other benefits too:

- Improves memory, attention and cognition
- Reduces stress and anxiety levels
- Increases creativity output
- Enhances children's confidence, fitness and development
- Boosts your immune system

Read the following report from Plymouth University on the benefits to a child's learning when outside:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/news/englands-largest-outdoor-learning-project-reveals-children-more-motivated-to-learn-when-outside>

So what are you waiting for? Get yourselves and your children out enjoying nature and its green spaces!

Simple Ways To Increase Outdoor Time

- 1) **Create a nature space to enjoy**
- 2) **Add a daily walk into your routine**
- 3) **Use cue cards to learn about the environment**
- 4) **Play games with the children outside**
- 5) **Go for weekly family picnics**
- 6) **See how many senses you can stimulate outside**
- 7) **Volunteer with a local conservation group**
- 8) **Join or create an outdoor community group**



CAMPFIRE CREATIONS

Creating a community campfire area for the children and practitioners to use can be a great foundation in providing empowering environments for children to thrive in.

Not only that, but the voice of the child can be implemented throughout the design and building process, as this will enable the children to be involved and feel a sense of ownership with the space.

By creating a safe campfire space, children are able to develop a sense understanding with their environment, improve their communication and language skills, and increase critical thinking skills, all whilst learning about the safe use of campfires and campfire cooking.

Resources Required

Risk Assessment

Toasting sticks

Brioche/Marshmallows/Vegetables

Heatproof gloves

Fire-pit

Fire blanket/bucket of clean cold water

Wood/Cotton Wool/Fire Light

Activity

Create a safe gathering space around the fire for children to sit, and introduce this space as a boundary. (Bucket of cold water to be kept at hand)

Show the children how to collect fire wood (dry, and dead wood) and allow them to observe the texture, smell, sound of the wood collected.

Demonstrate through stories and practical skills how the fire is ignited and kept alight.

Gather around the campfire, with one child at a time being invited to help cook their chosen food item with the fire officer (adult).

Pose questions and allow for drawing and story telling after the activity. Recognise the sensorial aspect of the fire, smell, change of colours, all pose opportunities for discussion.



0—2 SUGGESTIONS

Young children need many opportunities for heuristic play and development of a sensorial outdoor space should be considered, for example creating a noise wall, water wall and water features. Use wind chimes, wind socks and weather vanes for the children to observe and use. Mini tools should be made available for children to use.