

# The Outdoor Area



Outdoor play is enjoyable for children and important for their growth and development. When outdoors children are able to run, skip, jump, climb, throw, hop and catch and use their outside voices, which provides a healthy break from being inside. Being outside gives children the opportunity to stretch their muscles, breathe fresh air and enjoy the freedom of space.

Many times outdoor settings are much more than physical activity. They provide children with opportunities for learning and what goes on outdoors. Science for instance, comes alive as children explore nature and make first hand observations. While outside, children are using all their senses to discover their world. Children see leaves changing colour, touch trees, hear birds or simply smell the air.

## Benefits of the Outdoor Area

Just as you would design and arrange the indoor space. You must give careful thought to ensure that children are exposed to activities and materials that support growth and development. Listed below are some suggested learning objectives that support a child's overall development.

- Children develop decision making (choosing an outdoor activity).
- Enables children to re-enact life experiences (playing as a fire fighter, painting a fence with water).
- Encourages children to develop and co-ordinate hand / eye movements (catching, throwing etc).
- Helps children develop gross motor skills (climbing, swinging, jumping etc).
- Children have a better understanding of spatial awareness (swinging, climbing up, down, over or under).
- Develops children's balance (using the balance equipment, walking on different surfaces).
- Increases children's vocabulary (learning new names for natural objects, plants, birds animals).
- Demonstrates children's social skills (participating in social play with other children).

Being outdoors provides an endless amount of opportunities for children to explore and discover. Children will begin to notice changes in the weather, listen to different sounds and explore natural objects, which you can use to encourage further learning outdoors with children.

## Linking to the Early Years Learning Framework

- 1.3** – Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities.
- 2.4** – Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.
- 3.2** - Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.
- 4.4** – Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials.
- 5.1** – Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.

**QIAS Principle 4.4.6** – Staff promote each child's physical abilities.