

Risk, Challenge and Adventure

A recent visit from our Early Years Advisor highlighted the need for outdoor activities with more elements of risk, challenge and adventure within safe boundaries. In Acorn Class we recognise that learning outside the classroom is highly motivating and can stimulate interest, and curiosity. Outdoor activities broaden children's horizons, enable them to develop new skills and build relationships. They make children more engaged with learning and therefore more likely to do well.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum places strong emphasis on the importance and value of daily outdoor experiences for children's learning and development. Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of well-being. It gives them contact with the natural world and offers them experiences that are unique to outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons. Outdoor play also supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness.

And, of course, the outdoor environment offers more space than indoors and therefore is particularly important to those children who learn best through active movement. For many children, playing outdoors at their early years setting may be the only opportunity they have to play safely and freely while they learn to assess risk and develop the skills to manage new situations. Learning outside the classroom capitalises on and develops different learning styles, particularly kinesthetic. Experiencing something — as opposed to hearing it described or reading about it — can also help improve young people's recall and reflective skills, as they can relive the event in their heads.

Adventure, risk and challenge in the outdoors are vital not just for physical development, but to develop Discoverers, Reasoners and Thinkers. - **Dr Sue Allingham, Early Years Educator**

In Acorn Class we aim to develop exciting and challenging provision that will support embedded learning. We want to give our pupils the chance to extend their life skills and develop their confidence. Risk, challenge and adventure in the EYFS are fundamental in fostering children's resilience and sense of responsibility. And – let us not forget – it is about the enjoyment, engagement and excitement of venturing out into the real world, with all its capacity for uncertainty, surprise, stimulation and delight.

All of these goals depend upon creating space and time for children to take a degree of control for their actions: giving them meaningful challenges that inevitably give rise to real risks. This means that the outcomes will never be entirely certain. While the risks can be managed, they cannot and should not be eliminated, and absolute safety cannot and should not be guaranteed. Please refer to '*The Benefits of Risky Play*' by Melanie Pilcher for further information related to this. *'If we never took a risk our children would not learn to walk, climb stairs, ride a bicycle or swim.'* **Sir Digby Jones**

In Acorn Class we believe that parental involvement in children's learning is particularly important in the early years as parents and carers are the child's first educators. With this in mind we would very much welcome your support as we develop opportunities for risk, challenge and adventure in our outdoor area.

Acorn Mountain

We have Risk Assessments in place for this climbing structure and have asked the children to explore play equipment with similar challenges at their local parks and play areas. With your support we are confident they can develop their skills and will be keen to take on the challenge of Acorn Mountain. Since the beginning of term Acorns have been using our smaller climbing apparatus adhering to set boundaries and safety restrictions. They have demonstrated growing skills and clear awareness of the risks involved. We will begin using Acorn Mountain after the half-term holiday.

Construction Site

Acorns especially enjoy building projects and have been keen to plan and develop structures. We have some fantastic play equipment to support these activities but we would like to give our pupils the chance to use real materials to deepen their understanding. There is no substitute for using real-life materials to develop their knowledge.

Our play bricks for instance are excellent replicas and on their first instance of handling them some children are shocked by their weight. Those children with previous experiences of building materials outside of school question why they are not heavy and feel different whereas those who do not have similar experiences may well accept that this is how bricks feel. This leaves them ill-equipped to manage the risks of handling such materials should they meet them in a different context.

With this in mind we would like to provide Acorn Class with a supply of real-life materials to use within a safe environment. Please be assured that we will support them in using these materials and set clear boundaries to ensure they are used safely.

If you have any of the following at home and are happy to donate them please bring them into school:

- Left-over bricks (intact not broken in pieces)
- Timber – firewood/ off-cuts / logs / stumps (no nails)
- Pipes (no sharp edges)
- Old tyres
- Milk crates

We welcome your support with introducing more elements of risk, challenge and adventure and are happy to address any concerns you may have. Please either pop in to see me at the beginning or end of the school day or make an appointment at another time.

Miss Hunt