

Learning Outdoors

“Children are like tiny flowers; they are varied and need care, but each is beautiful alone and glorious when seen in the community of peers”
Friedrich Froebel

A Froebelian Approach

Froebel was a forerunner of outdoor play for young children's learning. His vision placed open space, being out of doors at its centre and an essential and innately important part of childhood. His philosophy stemmed from the view that children, when experiencing the outdoors are developing 'a relationship with the universe' (Bruce, 2012). The view that when children are fascinated or lost in their imagination in an outdoor environment that learning is deep, meaningful, relevant and congruent with the child's inner desire to learn.



The Role of Adults

The disposition of parents, carers and staff play a vital role in a child's perspective of the outdoors. "The Norwegians state that as teachers they must be creative with the weather and use the environment to support each child's holistic development and resilience" (Solly, 2015: 21). Outdoor space gives children opportunity to risk take; getting dirty, wet, cold or a bump or bruise. Risk taking is at the heart of healthy and meaningful outdoor play. Adults are directly responsible for how the children in their care experience the world. A child's attitude is most significantly moulded by the attitude of important figures in their lives. Practitioners have a valuable role outdoors, learning with and alongside children encouraging growth and stimulating learning.



“Blessed are those who see things in humble places where others see nothing”

Camille Pissarro (Bernard, 2014: 69)



Benefits of Outdoor Play

Outdoor provision is at the heart of active learning. Children are learning to think about their place in the universe, sustainable relationships between people and the environment, enhanced personal and sensory awareness, cooperation and communication. "Learning in the outdoors can make significant contributions to literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing" (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010: 19). Froebel viewed the outdoors as a natural educator, "Froebel also believed that as children watch plants grow, they begin to understand something about the development of their own lives (Read, 2012: 17). It is vital that children in the early years have the opportunity to relate to and connect with the outdoors consistently, regularly and on their own terms.



Working Together

In order for children in our care to have the opportunity to access the highest quality learning experiences possible, parents, carers and professionals need to work together in partnership. "Children need encouragement as plants need warmth and light, they must have their parents love and understanding" (Froebel, 1967: 114). Early years practitioners have access to resources, time and knowledge that supports meaningful learning for children. The way towards best practice is to share this with the families and loved ones of children in our care. The answers lie in open and honest communication, a shared understanding and shared goal; the very best for our children.

