

Out Door Play Policy

Outdoor play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body and spirit; children learn well when the whole self is stimulated. At Crèche Cois Laoi we are committed to ensure that out door play is an integral part of the curriculum for children of all age groups.

Crèche Cois Laoi believes active learning experiences outdoors, along with fresh air and exercise, are essential for young children.

Aims

- To provide a stimulating, enjoyable and safe environment for children to play, investigate, explore, problem solve and use their imagination and creativity in an out door environment.
- To ensure that the children have plenty of opportunities to develop their large motor skills
- To provide active learning experiences for children so that they have plenty of opportunities to practise their developing skills, making them feel good about themselves and enriching their understanding of the world around them.
- To encourage the children to have respect for the out door environment and to care for living things
- To provide the children with the opportunity to relax and to release built up energy through out the day
- To provide the children with opportunities to co-operate with others and to build on their social skills
- To stimulate their senses by offering different sights, sounds, smells and touching/ feeling opportunities.
- To provide children with space to take part in energetic, noisy, large scale activities as well as opportunity for quieter play
- To plan a balance between child initiated activities and adult directed activities.
- To observe, assess and record how the children learn through play in the outdoor environment and to support their learning by adapting the outdoor curriculum to meet their individual needs
- To ensure that all staff understand the value of outdoor play and are enthusiastic and active in their approach to learning outside

Daily play

Children spend on average 30 to 45 minutes per day in the outdoor playground from February to October. This is often broken up into two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This is a good opportunity for children of all ages to have the opportunity to play with each other. This helps to develop their social skills. It is also a great opportunity for children who have siblings in other classes to meet up with one another.

Environment

The outdoor play area consists of two separate play areas; one is based in the upper level of the building, off the dining room and this caters solely for younger children from the Nursery room. This play area consists of a large train into and out of which children can easily climb and as well as a number of push along-toys, balls and a pop up tent. The play area at the lower level consists of two climbing frames with slides, sand pit, swings, spring mobiles, two play houses, wheeled toys, fun ball game, an out door snakes and ladder game, a grass area at the back of the crèche which contains a football net and a basket ball net plus an outdoor toilet.

Outdoor play activity incorporates a wide variety of activities including running, jumping, ride-on toys, climbing, crawling, balancing, slides, swings, sand and water play, role play, ball games, story time and gardening. There are also a lot of open ended materials in the crèche which encourage children to further develop their imagination.

Children are encouraged to engage in self paced play, unstructured outdoor play and are free to use their imagination.

Staff interact with children and support children's play and learning. Some indoor activities are conducted outside, weather permitting and include small group work for art and craft activities, play dough and painting.

General Safety in the outdoor playground:

- Children are supervised at all times and general crèche adult child ratios are also adhered to in the outdoor playground
- The out door playground is secure. There is one gate in the outer playground and entry and exit through this gate is only with a security code. This code is known to staff and security and the code is changed regularly throughout the year. There is double fencing around the playground, one down low near the playground and one surrounding the outer area. Shrubbery is planted on the sloped area of the crèche as well as all along the outer fencing.
- There are security cameras around the playground.
- Management ensures as part of their daily checks that all areas of the outdoor play ground are thoroughly checked each day prior to the children's outdoor playtime.
- An annual maintenance contract agreement with the outdoor play equipment provider is in place and provides for a safety check of all equipment twice yearly
- The climbing frames, slides, swings, and spring mobiles are all secured and placed on an impact absorption safety surface.
- Swings include restraints for use by young children
- The outdoor play ground can cater for up to 40 children. There are no set times for rooms to avail of the lower level outdoor playground, but if **more** than three rooms are outside, then the children from the room who have been outdoors the longest return indoors.
- The children are encouraged to clean up the outdoor play area after they have played in it. There are posters stuck up in the playground showing where things must be put.

- The children are involved in taking care of their outdoor environment, as they are of their indoor environment.
- When the children go out to the playground, the roll book, tissues, a water jug and little cups are brought outside also.

Safety on the climbing frame and slide:

- Staff encourage the children to go down the slide with their feet first.
- Staff encourage the children to wait until the slide is clear before they go down.
- Staff get the children involved in drying the equipment if it has been raining before out door play time.
- Children from the Toddler Room 1 are not permitted to use the big climbing frame and slide.
- All the other rooms are permitted to use the frame under supervision

Safety on the swings:

- There are two sets of swings in the outdoor playground.
- One set is for the under threes and the other set is for the older children.
- Both sets of swings have a yellow box drawn on the ground around them and children are not permitted to enter the yellow box when the swings are in use.
- Children are not permitted to push the swings when there is nobody on them

Safety in the sand pit:

- Staff encourage the children to keep the sand in the sand pit
- Staff encourage the children to use only the sand pit toys in the sand
- The sand pit is covered daily in the playground and the sand is changed 4 times a year and more frequently if necessary

Safety when bringing the indoor equipment outdoors:

- No sharp items are permitted to be brought outdoors, for e.g. pencils, musical instruments etc
- If the children are having snack outside they are not permitted to run around while eating

Clothing

Staff ensure that children are dressed appropriately for different weather conditions.

For hot weather:

- Babies are required to wear light, loose clothing with long sleeves, full length trousers and sun hats with neck protectors
- Pre-school children are required to wear t-shirts and sun hats which protect their face, neck and ears.
- Each child must have a labelled bottle of HIGH FACTOR sun cream in the crèche during the summer months.

- Staff will apply sufficient sunscreen to the younger children while older age groups will be encouraged and helped to apply sunscreen themselves
- If the weather is too hot, the children will be brought to a shaded area.
- Children will be given extra water while playing outside

For cold weather:

- All children must have an outdoor coat, hat or hood and preferably gloves or mittens.
- For wet weather, each child should have rainproof clothing and boots and have a spare set of indoor clothes.
- The clothes must all be labelled and left in the crèche for use throughout the winter.