

A banner with colorful triangles spelling out 'SPRING' in a playful font.

Grass Roots Newsletter

A simple, elegant black swirl line.A cartoon illustration of a bee with yellow and black stripes, blue wings, and a friendly face.

Hello June!!

Welcome to our June newsletter! With the summer solstice approaching and the sun finally making a welcome appearance, our focus this month is completely dedicated to The Magic of Outdoor Play. The outdoor environment is not just a change of scenery; it is an essential, dynamic classroom where learning happens on a grand scale. This month, we want to help you maximize the unique physical and emotional benefits of being outside, while keeping our children safe, hydrated, and protected under the summer sun.

As always, our health and well-being initiatives are driven by our setting's dedicated Physical Activity and Nutrition Co-ordinator (PANCo). Utilising our Level 4 training in early years health, we have structured our June curriculum to ensure that outdoor spaces are fully utilised for physical development. From tracking the physical benefits of open-space movement to monitoring nutritional hydration during warmer days, our expert-led team is here to guide your family through a healthy, active, and sun-safe summer.

Monthly Theme: The Outdoor Classroom & Sleep Science

Stepping outside changes how a child moves, thinks, and behaves. Open spaces naturally invite "vigorous physical activity"—the kind of high-energy running, chasing, and leaping that is difficult to replicate indoors but vital for cardiovascular health and lung development.

The Circadian Rhythm Connection (Better Sleep Through Light)

As a PANCo-led setting, we love looking at the holistic picture of a child's health. Did you know that outdoor play directly impacts how well your child sleeps at night? Exposure to natural morning sunlight helps regulate a child's circadian rhythm (their internal body clock). It triggers the daytime production of serotonin, which later converts into melatonin—the sleep hormone—when the sun goes down.

- **The Goal:** If you are struggling with bedtime battles, try moving your active outdoor time to the morning or early afternoon. Getting outside for just 45 minutes before midday can dramatically improve nighttime sleep quality and help children fall asleep faster.

Neurological Benefits of Going Barefoot

This month, we are also emphasizing the physical benefits of barefoot exploration for toddlers and babies. The sole of a child's foot is packed with thousands of sensory nerve endings (proprioceptors). When a child walks barefoot on uneven natural surfaces like grass, smooth stones, or sand, their brain receives a flood of data about texture, temperature, and incline. This data is what allows the brain to map balance and coordination. Going barefoot strengthens the arches of the feet, builds ankle stability, and promotes better posture than walking on flat indoor floors in rigid shoes.

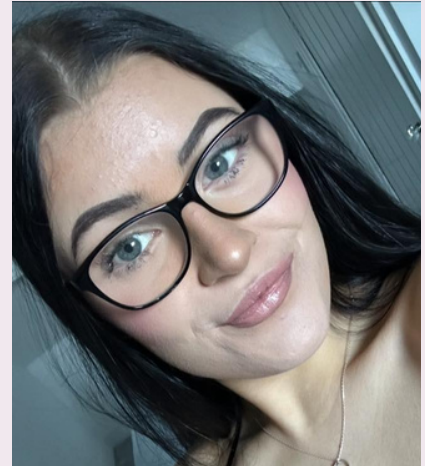


Practitioner Spotlight:

Our spotlight this month is on Callie.

Callie joined us in September 2024 on student placement. She has since done some bank staff shifts and now she has completed her level 3, Callie is joining us as a full time practitioner.

Callie works in preschool at St Peter's and in her free time Callie is a dancer as well as working extra shifts as a waitress.



Event Calendar:

- Family SEND support session @ Grass Roots Family Centre Thursday 18th June 10am - 12pm.
- We break up for the Summer holidays on Friday 17th July
- Maths week is 8th - 12th June

Community News:



- Check out Grass Roots Family CIC facebook page for community events
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086769567112>
- 50 things to do before you are 5 has events on their website
<https://calderdale.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome>
- Support Noa's Place, a vision of one of our nursery's parents - www.noasplace.org.uk

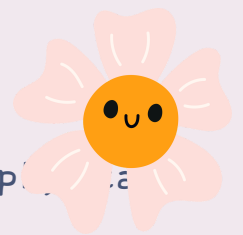


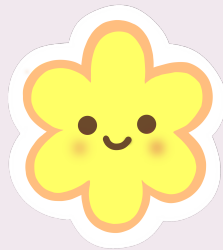
Book Review:

We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen

This classic British story is the ultimate anthem for outdoor play, a celebration of movement and resilience.

- Why we love it: It perfectly mirrors the physical challenges of the real world. The family doesn't give up when they face an obstacle; they realize they "can't go over it, can't go under it, oh no! We've got to go through it!"
- Physical Link: This is a magnificent book to act out physically at home or in the park. Create large movements for each texture: high-knee marching for the "long wavy grass," heavy stomping for the "deep cold river," and slow-motion resistance movements for the "thick oozy mud." It builds lower-body strength and spatial awareness.
- Communication Link: The book is famous for its rich onomatopoeia (swishy swashy, splish splash, squelch squerch). Singing or chanting these rhythmic phrases while moving helps young children coordinate their breathing with their physical actions, which supports speech rhythm.





Curriculum Focus: Clean Air & Nature Trails

This month, our practitioners are taking our daily learning journeys completely outside, building directly upon the physical stamina our children developed during May's walking initiatives.

- **Celebrating National Clean Air Day:** Following our fantastic work with Living Streets' Little Feet, we are using National Clean Air Day this June to teach the children about the environment. We will be doing "breathing games" in our garden, talking about how trees help clean our air, and continuing to encourage families to leave the car at home whenever possible.
- **The Sensory Nature Trail:** We have transformed our outdoor spaces into an active nature trail. The children aren't just walking; they are moving with a purpose. We are hunting for insects, balancing along log paths, and reaching high into branches to spot birds. For our babies, we are setting up outdoor "sensory blankets" where they can feel the natural breeze, look at the dappled light filtering through leaves, and practice rolling on real grass.

? Q&A: Overcoming the "Sun Cream Struggle"

Q: My toddler absolutely hates having sun cream applied. It turns into a screaming match every single morning. Do you have any tips?

A: This is a challenge almost every family faces! The trick is to give the child a sense of agency and control over their body. Try the "Dot-to-Dot" method: put small dots of sun cream on their arms and legs and let them use their fingers to connect the dots and rub it in themselves.

You can also use a clean, damp makeup sponge or a foundation brush to blend the cream onto their face; children often find the soft texture of a brush much more soothing than human hands. Finally, let them apply cream to a washable doll or even a dot on your nose first. Turning it into a playful, predictable routine removes the fear and the power struggle.



Recipe Corner: Homemade Fruity Hydration Lollies

These lollies are an absolute staple for hot summer afternoons. They are entirely sugar-free, packed with vitamins, and encourage independent food preparation.

- The Recipe: Take 200g of natural, plain Greek yogurt (rich in calcium and protein) and blend it with a handful of ripe summer berries (strawberries, raspberries, or blueberries). Pour the mixture into ice-lolly moulds.
- The Twist: Drop a few whole blueberries or chopped mint leaves into the moulds before freezing. This creates an interesting texture that requires children to use their tongue and teeth to navigate the lolly as it melts.
- The Conversation: Discuss the freezing process with your child. Ask: "How does the wet yogurt turn into a hard, crunchy ice lolly?" This links physical science to their healthy food choices.
- If you don't have lolly moulds, just drop some spoonfuls of yoghurt on a plate lined with baking parchment and add fruit, put in the freezer and 'voila', you have frozen yoghurt drops!

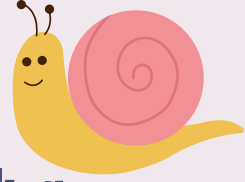


Tools & Tricks: Sun Safety & Hydration Hacks

As temperature levels rise, safeguarding our children's bodies requires careful planning. Here are our top PANCo-approved strategies for summer safety at home:

- The Shadow Rule: Teach your child this simple rule for sun safety: "If your shadow is shorter than you, it's time to seek the shade." This typically happens between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM when the sun's UV rays are at their strongest.
- Infused "Spa" Water: If your child refuses plain water, do not resort to sugary juices. Instead, make an "infused water pitcher" together. Let them crush fresh mint leaves, drop in sliced strawberries, or squeeze lime wedges into a clear jug of water. Watching the fruit bob around makes drinking water feel like an exciting, decorative treat.
- The Sun Hat Habit: Always choose a wide-brimmed hat or a legionnaire-style hat (with a flap at the back) rather than a standard baseball cap. This protects the delicate skin on the back of the neck and ears, which is highly susceptible to burning.
- Useful Link: For up-to-date guidance on childhood sun safety and checking UV levels, visit the [NHS Sunscreen and Sun Safety Guide](#).





Risky Play: Barefoot Terrain & Tree Clambering

The outdoor environment provides the perfect canvas for healthy risk-taking. Nature is naturally unpredictable—no two branches are the same thickness, and no two stones are the same shape.

- **Developing Proprioception:** When a child climbs a tree or walks across a gravel path barefoot, they are forced to calculate their grip and foot placement carefully. This calculates their proprioception—their internal sense of where their body parts are in relation to each other.
- **Managing the "Wobble":** It is completely normal for children to wobble or slip occasionally during outdoor play. This "micro-failure" is exactly how the vestibular system (the balance center in the inner ear) calibrates itself. Allow them the space to feel off-balance on a safe surface; it is the only way they learn to correct themselves and avoid major falls in the future.

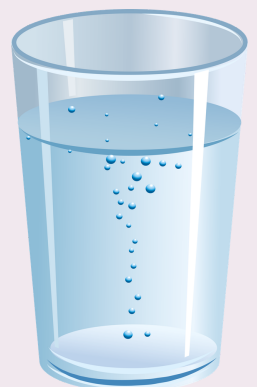


Healthy Choices: Sizzling Summer Nutrition

Warmer weather often changes a child's appetite. They may reject heavy, warm meals, making it the perfect opportunity to introduce high-water-content, nutrient-dense foods.

- **Water-Rich Foods:** Did you know that around 20% of our daily water intake can come from food? Hydrate your child from the inside out by offering snacks like watermelon (92% water), cucumber sticks (95% water), and strawberries (91% water).
- **Salt & Mineral Balance:** When children sweat during physical play, they lose vital minerals. Offering a small snack of savory cheddar cheese or a handful of olives alongside fresh fruit helps replenish these natural salts without relying on processed snacks.
- **The "Cool Down" Routine:** After an active session outdoors, create a transition routine. Bring them inside, wash hands with cool water, and sit in a darkened room for 5 minutes with a refreshing snack before lunchtime. This lowers their core body temperature, ensuring they are relaxed enough to sit well and digest their food properly.

 You 
 Can 
Do it! 





Online Safety: Weather Tracking & UV Mapping

We can use digital technology to help children understand how to care for their own bodies in relation to the environment

- **Checking the UV Index:** Before heading outside, open a weather app on your phone with your child. Show them the UV Index rating. Teach them that if the number is 3 or higher, it means the sun is strong and their bodies need "the big three": sun cream, a hat, and a water bottle.
- **Nature Identification Apps:** Download a child-friendly nature app (like Seek by iNaturalist). Use your phone as a digital magnifying glass to snap photos of leaves or bugs on your walks. This turns a sedentary device into a tool that pulls your child deeper into physical, outdoor exploration.
- **Meteorology for Minis:** Visit the Met Office for Schools website together for fun animations that explain how clouds form and why the sun keeps us warm.



Sustainability: Respecting Our Green Spaces

True sustainability means caring for the natural environments that keep our bodies healthy and active.

- **Leave No Trace:** Whenever you take your physical play to the local park or beach, play the "Litter Detective" game before you leave. Challenge your child to spot and collect any rubbish (using safety grabbers) to ensure the space is left clean for the animals and other families.
- **Reusing Water:** Teach your child about water conservation. If they have leftover water in their drinking bottles at the end of a hot day, don't pour it down the sink. Have them march it over to your houseplants or garden flowers to give them a drink. This connects their own physical health and hydration directly to the health of the planet!

Policy Update - Sun Safety Policy

Every month we will share one of our updated policies with the newsletter. Please take your time to read this and feedback any comments you may have in relation to this.

You can find all of our policies on the website <https://www.grassrootsdaynursery.com/policies-and-procedures>

