Outdoor Adventuring

Grass Roots Nursery Group

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the principles, procedures, and expectations for Outdoor Adventuring at Grass Roots Nursery Group. Outdoor Adventuring provides children with rich opportunities for exploration, learning, and development in natural environments. It ensures sessions are safe, inclusive, child-led, and aligned with our ethos of nurturing curiosity, independence, and connection with nature.

This is a practitioner-facing document.

2. Statutory Responsibilities (EYFS)

Our approach reflects the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), including:

- Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements
- Promoting good health and physical development
- Ensuring safe supervision and risk management
- Providing rich learning opportunities across all areas of development
- Supporting children's personal, social, and emotional wellbeing

Outdoor Adventuring is delivered in line with our duty of care and all relevant health and safety legislation.

3. Our Approach

Practitioners at Grass Roots Nursery Group are expected to:

- deliver child-led, interest-driven outdoor learning experiences
- support children to take safe, calculated risks
- model respect for nature and the environment
- maintain high standards of supervision and safety
- use outdoor experiences to support holistic development
- observe children closely to understand their learning and dispositions
- communicate sensitively with parents about routines, kit, and expectations
- follow all risk assessments and safety procedures consistently

Leaders ensure staff are trained, confident, and supported to deliver high-quality outdoor learning.

4. Key Principles

Learner-Centred Practice

Sessions are child-led, with practitioners responding to children's interests, ideas, and discoveries.

Holistic Development

Outdoor Adventuring supports physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and creative development.

Risk-Taking and Decision-Making

Children are encouraged to take safe, calculated risks and make decisions within a supportive environment.

Connection with Nature

Children develop a deep appreciation for the natural world through hands-on exploration.

Reflective Practice

Sessions include opportunities for reflection, sharing, and celebrating achievements.

5. Preparation

Before each session:

- staff review the Outdoor Adventuring Handbook and relevant risk assessments
- equipment is gathered, checked, and prepared
- parents are reminded of the kit list at the start of each term
- staff ensure children are appropriately dressed for the weather
- the site is checked for hazards and suitability

6. Session Structure

Group Gathering

Children and staff meet together to introduce the session, share ideas, and revisit safety rules.

Child-Led Exploration

Activities are loosely structured to allow children to follow their interests, explore freely, and engage in meaningful play.

Safety and Risk Management

Staff maintain active supervision, support safe risk-taking, and reinforce boundaries and rules.

Reflection and Sharing

At the end of the session, children gather to reflect on their experiences, share discoveries, and celebrate achievements.

Return and Reset

Staff ensure the site is left clean and tidy and return equipment to the nursery.

7. Safety and Rules

General Safety

Children are supported to:

- stay within agreed boundaries
- avoid hazardous materials
- use tools safely and appropriately
- respect plants, wildlife, and the environment

Specific Rules

Children are introduced to rules relevant to the site, such as:

- avoiding certain plants (e.g., nettles, brambles)
- not touching fungi or unknown natural materials
- staying within sight of staff at all times

Risk Assessment

- A dynamic risk assessment is completed at the start of each session.
- The woodland or outdoor site is formally risk assessed regularly.
- Activities are adapted based on weather, site conditions, and children's needs.

8. Equipment and Supplies

Staff ensure:

- tools are age-appropriate, safe, and used under supervision
- first aid kits are taken to every session
- boundary markers are used where appropriate
- equipment is cleaned, checked, and stored after each session

9. Observation and Assessment

Practitioners observe:

- children's engagement, interests, and learning behaviours
- physical development and coordination
- social interactions and emotional wellbeing
- problem-solving, creativity, and resilience

Observations are documented and shared with parents through learning journeys and conversations.

10. Benefits of Outdoor Adventuring

Outdoor Adventuring supports children's holistic development and contributes meaningfully to all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Through hands-on exploration, problem-solving, and connection with nature, children develop essential skills, dispositions, and knowledge.

Physical Development

- Builds strength, balance, coordination, and gross motor skills through climbing, running, lifting, and tool use.
- Supports fine motor development through handling natural materials, tying knots, and building structures.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)

- Fosters confidence, resilience, independence, and emotional regulation.
- Encourages teamwork, cooperation, turn-taking, and empathy.
- Provides opportunities for children to take safe, calculated risks and make decisions.

Communication and Language

- Enriches vocabulary through exposure to natural phenomena and descriptive language.
- Encourages storytelling, questioning, and expressive communication.
- Supports listening, attention, and following instructions in real-world contexts.

Cognitive Development (Characteristics of Effective Teaching & Learning)

- Promotes curiosity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity.
- Encourages sustained shared thinking and deep engagement.
- Supports children to test ideas, make predictions, and reflect on outcomes.

Literacy

- Provides opportunities for mark-making using natural materials.
- Encourages storytelling, sequencing, and imaginative play.
- Supports environmental print awareness and early comprehension.

Mathematics

- Offers real-life opportunities for counting, measuring, comparing, estimating, and pattern-spotting.
- Encourages spatial reasoning through building, navigating, and exploring.

Understanding the World

- Deepens children's knowledge of nature, seasons, habitats, and environmental change.
- Encourages observation, enquiry, and scientific thinking.
- Builds respect and care for living things and the natural environment.

Expressive Arts and Design

- Inspires creativity through natural materials, music, movement, and imaginative play.
- Encourages children to explore textures, patterns, sounds, and forms found in nature.

11. Procedures for Outdoor Adventuring Sessions

Pre-Session

- gather equipment
- review safety rules with children
- remind parents of kit requirements
- complete a dynamic risk assessment

Session Start

- walk to the site safely
- revisit boundaries and expectations

Activities

- offer a range of open-ended, nature-based experiences
- encourage child-led exploration and discovery

Reflection

- gather children to share experiences and learning

Tidying Up

- leave the site clean and undisturbed
- return equipment to the nursery

12. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Outings and Visits Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Promoting Positive Behaviour
- Learning and Development Policy

- Infection Control Policy

These policies work together to ensure safe, enriching outdoor learning experiences.

13. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, guidance, or best practice.