#### 1st Steps Outdoor Play and Gardening Policy

**Outdoor learning and the Early Years Foundation Stage** **(EYFS) framework**

Children’s entitlement to high quality outdoor play experiences is strongly endorsed throughout the EYFS framework and early years practitioners have a statutory duty to facilitate daily outdoor opportunities all year round. Practitioners must provide access to an outdoor play area or ensure that outdoor actives are planned and taken on a daily basis.

It’s not just about climbing frames, our children are encouraged to take their learning outside with features designed to develop motor skills, mark-making, reading and literacy, as well as giving children a sense of environmental awareness.

By its nature, the outdoor environment provides a unique place where learning can be accessed in ways that are appropriate and crucial to young children’s development. Outside play offers opportunities for children to use all of their senses and to be physically active. They can learn by moving, doing and exploring, they can experience first hand the weather, the seasons and nature as well as working in different ways and on larger scales than indoors. Children can be more exuberant and messier than indoors and can enjoy a greater sense of freedom and independence. This is why it is important for practitioners to give as much emphasis to planning outdoor environments and experiences as they would to indoor activities.

Here at 1st Steps, we like to ensure that all children have the opportunity to explore outdoors. Our outdoor resources include a play house and decked area at the top of the garden. We have a hobbit house which creates an imaginary world for children to support their creative, communication and language development; as well as their social skills, as they engage in story making and inclusive play. Our mud kitchen is fun yet educational allowing the children to role play and experiment, promoting wellbeing, learning and development.

The outdoors creates a completely different environment to explore stories and literacy. Stories such as 'We're Going On a Bear Hunt' which can be brought to life and acted out so children can immerse themselves in imaginary play. Our communication friendly spaces including our hill house and messy play room help to create areas to promote such experiences. All of these areas help extend imaginative role play that children experience indoors. We also have a writing and maths shed to help develop our children’s literacy and maths skills. Different resources are displayed for use within these areas and are checked daily for damage and general wear and tear. All damaged items are removed immediately.

We have a Planting and Growing Area.Planting areas help children learn about nature and how things grow. Tending and cultivating vegetables and herbs supports children's understanding about healthy eating and where food comes from.

Our messy play area houses a large sand pit which helps tosupports mathematical concepts through tipping, filling, measuring, constructing and building.

## To ensure these objectives are met, our practitioners will check all our outdoor areas and facilities before entering the garden with the children to ensure there is no rubbish or damaged items, if there is they must report it to the office and remove it. Staff must ensure that all equipment and resources used are stored away properly and encourage the children use a variety of natural resources and tools correctly and safely to help in the garden i.e. planting vegetables. When leaving the garden staff will ensure head counts are met.

## We also must have the support of our parents and encourage them to adopt this policy by ensuring they provide clothing for all different types of weather, this will include scarves, hats, wellies etc for wet conditions and sun hats and cream for hot conditions. Our motto here at 1st steps is ‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.’ Therefore some weather conditions may limit outdoor play but it won’t stop it!

This policy supports staff in consistently promoting the curriculum framework document and supports children in making progress in the three prime areas and four specific areas of the EYFS. The Every Child matters outcome for children ‘being healthy’ involves children being physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, having healthy choices, and leading healthy lifestyles. NB – the ECM document is now known as ‘Help Children Achieve More’ (see policy). Our outdoor provides an alternative but equally exciting experience, to our indoor facilities.

Reviewed by Michael May 2016 Next review date: May 18

**Learning & Development**