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

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 accessed 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 math, as well as giving children a sense of environmental awareness. Our outdoor provides an alternative but equally exciting experience, to our indoor facilities.

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 firsthand 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. 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 playroom 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.

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 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 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!

Reviewed by Sam Nolan-Booth April 20 Next review date: April 22

**Learning & Development**

**Covid-19 Update 15.05.20**

It is evidenced that being outdoors can significantly reduce the chance of infection when following social distancing guidelines. It is therefore the decision of 1st Steps to take full advantage of the outdoor spaces available within nursery. The children will be encouraged to join in with many outdoor activities and experiences during their time with us. This will include the upkeep of our vegetable patches.

Children should be provided with thin layers that can be added or removed as necessary as our motto still stands strong. ‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’. Our sun safety policy will be strictly adhered to on sunny days and shaded areas used to their full advantage.

The Government Guidance- Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings, outlines the use of outdoor space. Each age group will have a designated zone within the outdoor space that reflects their indoor space to ensure that there is no crossover of groups in order to reduce the risk of infection spread.

**Waterloo**

When returning into the building pre-school will use their own door and Baby Suite and Little Explorer’s will use the main back door at staggered times (Waterloo Site).

**Bootle**

Pre-school will use the fire escape and rooms 1-4 will use the main door at staggered times (Bootle Site). Once an area has been finished with ALL of the equipment and resources must be cleaned and sanitised before the next session or group can use it.

Updated by Sam Nolan-Booth 15.05.20