



OUTDOOR PLAY

Quality Area 1, 2 & 3

At Parkdale Preschool we believe active outdoor play is essential for healthy child development. We feel that outdoors is the very best place for our students to learn, practice and master emerging gross motor skills, as it gives freedom of space which cannot be replicated inside. Outdoors provides the perfect place to learn through movement and allows children's play to become more active. Research has also found that children's play outdoors becomes more purposeful, motivated, less inhibited and more social. Outdoor play also provides benefits such as improved concentration, enhanced imaginative and creative play, increased problem solving and leadership skills, improved social and emotional skills, increased physical activity, reduced anxiety, improved moods and leads to increase Vitamin D levels and a stronger immune system (<http://www.letthechildrenplay.net/>, 2012).

Our preschools outdoor play area is a welcoming and inclusive space rich in both man-made and natural open ended material, such as plants, sticks, logs, trees, edible gardens, sand, dirt, rocks and mud which in turn promotes independence, exploration, discovery, spontaneity, risk-taking and a connection with nature. This allows us to meet *National Quality Standards* and provide a curriculum that is influenced by the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)*.

'I will understand problem-solving, self-exploration, decision making, number relationships, structures, complex vocabulary, healthy living, cause and effect, creativity, imaginative thinking, and my natural world when I am big. Because I play outside while I am little!'

WEATHER

At Parkdale Preschool we also encourage increased opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all types of weather. We believe in providing children the opportunity to play outside in all types of safe weather conditions, including sunshine, rain and cold.

Following principles from SunSmart, in the hotter months (September to March) we ensure that children who play outside wear a sun protecting hat and sunscreen (including reapplying sunscreen after four hours) and that they avoid play outdoors in extreme heat.

During the cooler months and wet weather, play outdoors is also encouraged. We allow children to explore outdoor, whilst wearing appropriate clothing, in cold and wet weather. This wet weather environment offers different learning opportunities for play. Jumping in puddles, walking on a slippery surfaces, playing in damp sand and feeling and smelling rain and mist are all important learning activities.

During summer months, parents must provide a sun protective hat (wide-brim or bucket) for their child and apply sunscreen at the beginning of each session. During the cooler months, parents must provide children with a water proof jacket, warm hat and gumboots for outdoor play in wet weather.

RISK

Our outdoor play area also allows children to participate in "risk-taking play" a vital component to learning and child development. Risky play can often be seen in a negative light, however in play, risk does not mean dangerous. It means the type of play where children seek thrills and excitement, where the possibility of physical injury may exist, but they are recognised and evaluated according to the child's ability. This means giving the children freedoms to climb, how high to climb, to explore unaided, to get dirty, to balance, to tumble, to fall, to rough house and be active.

Risky play also provides children with the opportunities to push their own boundaries and take different approaches where they may succeed or fail. These fails may result in tears, a scrape or a fall, but this will allow children to learn from their mistakes and bounce back, building their own resilience.

We ask that families ensure that children's footwear enables them to play safely, including when climbing (thongs or crocs are not suitable for preschool).

Teachers and educators will always ensure that equipment meets safety guidelines and is not damaged. We will also ensure safety check lists of outdoor area are completed every day and any maintenance issues are reported.

MESS

Outdoor messy play is a vital component to learning at Parkdale Preschool. Our outdoor area is rich with materials and experiences that encourage this type of play. Children playing in our outdoor environment have access to sand, bark, plants, dirt, water and mud. They are encouraged to use this in their play. We provide smocks and a small number of gumboots, however, we require parents to send their children in clothes and shoes that are appropriate for messy play and to always pack a spare change of clothes in their children's bag.

Despite its appearance, messy play can make an enormous contribution to a child's cognitive and creative development. Playing in dirt, sand, mud, water and other messy mediums allows children to be free with their learning. It allows them use all of their senses, to foster a positive approach to new experiences, to be free to explore all possibilities and to tap into their curiosity about the world around them and their strong desire to explore and find out more.