**Play and Outdoor Learning**

As many of you are aware, Garnetbank promotes outdoor learning and play in line with national guidance and expectations.  We received a national play award last year by the international play association and the Nancy Oven Trust. We continue to support colleagues across Scotland to develop play and outdoor learning for the benefit of the children.

Children take their learning outdoor during class time, but also have at least 5 hours per week free play during breaks and lunches, which should be used to enrich learning experiences at school.  You might see from our twitter feed @PlayLearnGrow how much our children are learning through play every day.

Most of our parents and carers have expressed their support of this approach and are also keen for our children to get out to play.  However, sometimes there are worries about weather or risk, so I thought it important to remind us of why it is so important to get them out:

**Benefits of outside learning/ play** **include:**

* Children are more physically active
* Mental health/mood is improved
* Better behaviour
* Illness is reduced   (you can't catch a cold from being outside and in fact is less likely)
* Daylight is important for vitamin D and the circadian rhythm  (better sleep)
* Concentration in class is improved as research demonstrates retention of learning is higher after outdoor play
* Improved play (we know play is learning!)
* Developing positive habits for life   (if you stay inside when it rains in Scotland, you won't get out much )
* Children are more able to assess and manage risk
* Children are developing STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) through play
* Children develop the skill of creativity through play (which is a key skill to be successful in the workforce and becoming one of the most important skills of all)
* Children collaborate, take turns and problem solve in free play

**LEARNING IS ENHANCED in the class as well as out!**Children will generally only be brought in at breaks in dangerous weather (e.g. high winds or sheet ice), which does mean children should learn to be out in the rain. This is always assessed on a day to day basis.  Our shelter is being repaired at the moment, so appropriate clothing is even more important.

**Supporting Play and Outdoor Learning** -**Recommended Appropriate Clothing and Footwear**

Encourage positive attitudes about all types of weather, to encourage healthy habits for life.  Different weather can offer great new opportunities for learning.  Support us to talk to your child about the benefits and need to get outside.

Children can use their gym bags to keep some spare clothes and socks.  It is really important they dress appropriately for the weather and temperatures.  Now we are entering winter, please ensure they have the following and to label everything:

* Warm coats – waterproof if wet weather.  (They only work when they are zipped up!)
* Scarf (inside the jacket)
* Gloves
* Hat
* Trousers. If girls are wearing a skirt with tights could be worn instead of socks.
* Winter boots or wellies and a change of shoes for indoors
* Waterproof over trousers

Waterproofs are wind proof so on cold days a waterproof over warm clothes helps keep heat in.

There is a wealth of research to support play and outdoor learning.  You can find some great information here:

* <https://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Scotland%E2%80%99s-Outdoor-Play-based-Learning-Coalition-Position-Statement.pdf>
* <https://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Loose-Parts-Play-Toolkit-2019-web-2.pdf>
* <https://www.playscotland.org/>
* <https://www.ltl.org.uk/ltlscotland/>

Please don’t hesitate to speak to me should you have any concerns or questions.

Many thanks for your continued support and very best wishes.

Linda Reed