



Mount Anville

Montessori Junior School

2½ – 12 years

Outdoor Play Policy

Reviewed in light of COVID-19 August 2020

(Ratified by BOM 1st Sept 2020. Previously ratified in September 2018)

1. Purpose

Mount Anville Montessori Junior School (MAMJS) recognises the importance of outdoor play and experience for all children. Outdoor play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body and spirit; children learn well when the whole self is stimulated.

At MAMJS, our outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children. We are committed to following good practice in relation to ensuring ratios are maintained when outside playing and all staff members are aware of which ratios will be maintained.

Due to Covid-19, we have had to amend our play practices in light of guidelines issued by the HSE, HPSC, DES and www.gov.ie. The amendments made to the current policy have been highlighted in blue.

2. Principle

This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, [Department of Education and www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool) dedicated guideline whilst living through the Covid-19 pandemic

3. Rationale

A requirement under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 stipulates that all services shall ensure that;



(a) A suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

(b) The regulations also outline that where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises, services must ensure that the outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

- MAMJS recognises the importance of outdoor play and experiences for all children and provides access to outdoor play each day weather permitting.
- MAMJS believes that outdoors is one of the best learning environments for young children. Our outdoor environment is accessed daily and offers diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching experiences for our children.
- MAMJS is a nature-based, outdoor focused school. We offer seamless provision where the children can choose to spend their time either indoors or outdoors. Our outdoor environment offers diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching experiences for our children with lots of opportunity for play, movement, and sensory stimulation. One of the biggest challenges to outdoor play is sometimes just getting started.

4. Aims

At MAMJS, we aim to;

- ✓ Provide a stimulating, enjoyable and safe environment for children to play, investigate, explore, problem solve and use their imagination and creativity in an outdoor environment.
- ✓ Ensure that the children have plenty of opportunities to develop their large motor skills.
- ✓ Provide active learning experiences for children so that they have plenty of opportunities to practice their developing skills.
- ✓ Encourage the children to have respect for the outdoor environment and to care for living things
- ✓ Provide the children with the opportunity to relax and to release built up energy throughout the day.
- ✓ Provide the children with opportunities to co-operate with others and to build on their social skills.
- ✓ Stimulate their senses by offering different sights, sounds, smells and touching/feeling opportunities.



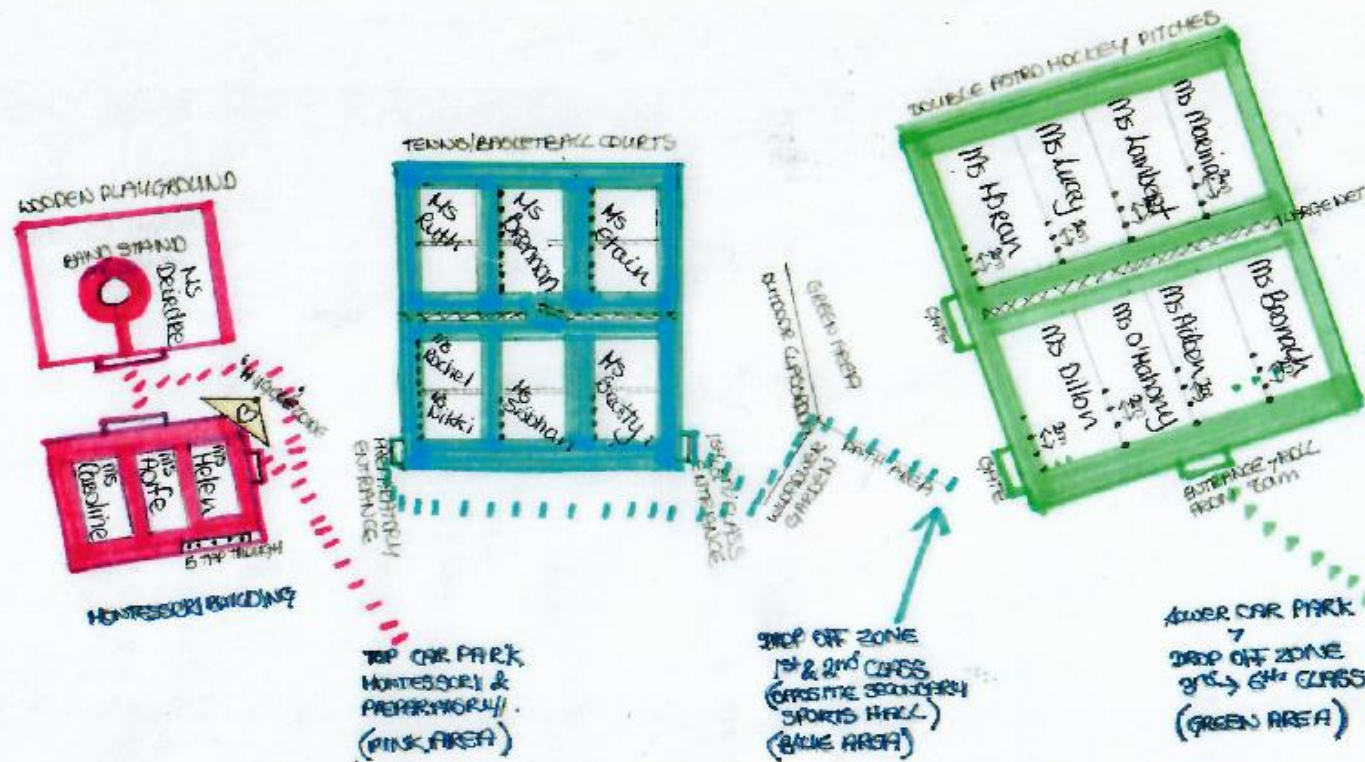
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- ✓ Provide children with space to take part in energetic, noisy, large scale activities as well as opportunity for quieter play.
- ✓ Observe and recognise how the children learn through play in the outdoor environment.
- ✓ Ensure that all staff understand the value of outdoor play and are enthusiastic and active in their approach to learning outside

5. Outdoor Play Environment

- There are three opportunities per day to have play time. One before school to ease crowds at the school gate and to stagger students entering MAMJS that is supporting social distancing
- The map below indicates the play zones that are in use in the morning and also at lunchtime. In each play zone, there are play pods that are allocated for each class bubble
- When the class bubble comes out to their respective play pods, they will bring their own class basket of balls/equipment. This is washed at the end of the day. The balls are coloured coded per class, so mix-up of equipment is eliminated
- The second map shows the split small breaks from 10:20am to 11:00am. The children will bring out their basket of balls for their own class to use. There will be no sharing of equipment between class
- The yard procedure poster displays the simple yard rules below
 - Covid-19 procedures will apply:
 - Green dots at each yard indicate where to line up. Supporting social distancing
 - Walking on left-hand side to and from the classroom when in corridors
 - Bring own basket of balls/equipment
 - The staff have a yard supervision roster for morning, little break and lunch break



	Montessori Astro Play and Wooden Playground Zone	Tennis Courts	Hockey Pitches
Play Pods are based on a whole class, referred to during Covid times as a 'class bubble'	Ms Aoife's class bubble	Each Preparatory class has their one play pod	Each 3 rd class has their one play pod
	Ms Caroline's class bubble	Each 1 st class has their one play pod	Each 4 th class has their one play pod
	Ms Helen's class bubble	Each 2 nd class has their one play pod	Each 5 th class has their one play pod
	Ms Deirdre's class bubble		Each 6 th class has their one play pod
<u>Please see map below of class bubbles in their respective play pods</u>			

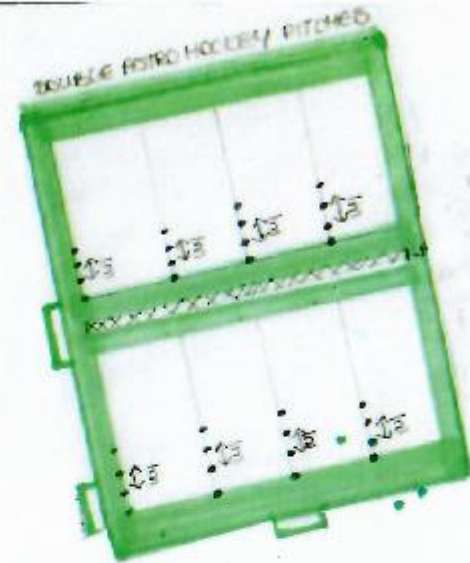


COLOURED AREAS IN YARD ZONE IDENTIFY MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS TO THEIR ALLOCATED PLAY ZONES AND ADULT SUPERVISION PATHWAYS.

• DOTS INDICATE Lining-up AREAS FOR EACH CLASS



Split Morning Breaks (August 2020)



Split Morning Breaks			
The 4 Montessori Classes will take their main break at 11:50 in Montessori and Wooden Playground			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caroline (zone 1), Aoife (zone 2), Helen (zone 3), Deirdre (zone 10) Zone 11 will be for one Montessori bubble to use per day 			
10:20am-10:35am		10:45am-11:00am	
Zone 1, 2 & 3	Preparatory Classes (1 Siobhan, 2 Nikki, 3 Rachel)	Zone 1, 2 & 3	
Zone 4	Ms O'Mahony	Zone 4	Ms Etain
Zone 5	Ms Dillon	Zone 5	Ms Aileen
Zone 6	Ms Brennan	Zone 6	Ms Bronach
Zone 7	Ms Moran	Zone 7	Ms Lambert
Zone 8	Ms Beatty	Zone 8	Ms Marina
Zone 9	Ms Lucey	Zone 9	Ms Ruth



Yard Procedures

- Risk assessment of the play area **has been zoned into play pods**
- Ensure pupils are ready for the yard
- Ensure children walk in an orderly manner to the play area
- **Children should keep their social distance from each class bubble. 3rd to 6th class keep social distancing between each child also**
- **Each play area has been zoned for each class both in the morning, break time and lunch time**
- One adult to ensure first aid bag and bell is available **in each designated yard, for use in each class zone**
- Supervise children playing in **their zoned play pods, walking around the perimeter of each play pod and intervening when necessary (masks to be worn when social distancing cannot be maintained)**
- Speak with positive words and voice to the children
- Remind the children of our yard rules
 - We care
 - We learn
 - We play nicely
 - We share
 - We play together
- Inform class teacher if any issues arise in the play area
- **Our outdoor play space at MAMJS**
 - ✓ Provides a place full of meaning for children to gain understanding and skills



- ✓ Makes learning fun and enjoyable
- ✓ Encourages children to explore and discover together **in their own class** and on their own
- ✓ Allows children to add to what they know and are learning
- ✓ Allows children to practice skills
- ✓ Allows children to test how much they are able to do
- ✓ Encourages children to experiment and take risks
- ✓ Enable children to learn through play, movement, communication, and sensory experience

6. Health & Safety

6.1 General Safety

- Children are supervised at all times during outdoor play at MAMJS. For the Montessori class level, child ratio is allocated in accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. MAMJS staff follow a clear weekly supervision schedule, to ensure the safe supervision of children at all times during outdoor play.
- The outdoor playgrounds have fencing and gates around each one. Children are lead into the playground by the supervisor(s) and all entry and exit points are secured during play time. There is one door into the Montessori building and one gate exiting the playground, which is opened/closed by supervising staff only. Children are safely lead back to their classrooms once outdoor play time has ended.
- The supervising staff members ensure the safety of the children during play time, and report any concerns that may arise to designated personnel (Deirdre Conway and Kyra Murphy are the Health and Safety Representatives, with Robert Dobbyn being the Health and Safety Officer) regarding equipment/play areas.
- The supervising staff members are responsible for the distribution of play equipment, as they see fit on any given day. **If this is done, the staff member has to ensure that the equipment was cleaning after previous use and cleaned following use.**
- **Children need to have washed/sanitized their hands before and after coming out to the play pods (coming in from yard, children should washed their hands rather than sanitise as a first option)**
- The children are encouraged to clean up the outdoor play area after they have played in it.



- The children are involved in taking care of their outdoor environment, as they are of their indoor environment.
- Outdoor play occurs only when weather permits. Please see MAMJS 'Rainy Day Procedure' outlining the procedures followed during wet days/extreme weather conditions.

6.2 First Aid

- The main First Aid kits are available in Deirdre Conway's Office, [exit to Montessori Astro \(on high shelf\) and the Welcome office](#) and another is available at the porch entrance to the yard area. Minor incidents are dealt with on site during play time and all other injuries may be transferred to the 'Street' for a quieter environment to assessment injuries (this of course will be dependent of the nature of the injury). [If a staff member cannot ensure social distancing, then a face covering should be used.](#)
- Any major incidents are logged in our MAMJS '[Incident Report Book](#)' located in the [Welcome Office](#) or the '[Montessori Incident Book](#)' located in the [Administration Office](#) and relevant necessary steps regarding contacting parents/seeking medical attention are taken as required. The parent/guardian [must sign the accident book at the Montessori class and Aftercare level](#) and receive a copy of the incident report.
- All incident reports and communication with parents is done via our MAMJS 'Welcome Office' or Administration Office

6.3 Clothing

- MAMJS ensures that children wear appropriate footwear daily for play time, i.e.; strapped shoes/non-slip runners.
- MAMJS encourages parents/guardians to ensure that all items of clothing/belongings are labelled with their child's name before coming to school.
- Wet Days: Children are encouraged to wear their hooded school coats if only a slight rain. [Children remain indoors when weather does not permit outdoor play. Children will need to remain in their class bubble on a wet day and stay in their places inside.](#)
- Warm/Hot Days: Children are encouraged to wear hats during outdoor play when it is excessively sunny.



A designated supervisor is allocated to fill out the Yard Risk Assessment for Montessori class level prior to use of outdoor playground. Any risk need to be dealt with immediately or the Health and Safety Officer contacted immediately through the Bursar's Office (see MAMJS Risk Management Policy)

Person Responsible:

- Deirdre Conway and Kyra Murphy are the Health and Safety Representatives
- Robert Dobbyn is the Health and Safety Officer

Policy Ratification

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis, following a risk assessment consultation with Colin McGlynn in August of each year. Mr Dobbyn brings issues to the Board of Management for ratification at the first meeting of the school year.