

Practitioner's Guide



“Let’s talk cohorts

A photograph of an outdoor nursery area. In the foreground, there is a large tree with dense green foliage. To the right, a tent with a blue door is visible. In the background, there is a wooden structure and a dirt path. The ground is covered with dirt and several old tires are scattered around. A sign in the bottom left corner features a sun icon and the text "Welcome to Earthtime!".

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“Let’s talk cohorts”



How do we organise our groups?

- ❑ To support the government's test and protect policy, Earthtime have divided our children (maximum **32**) into **2 groups**.
- ❑ Each group ('Squirrels' & 'Hedgehogs') comprises up to **16 children** and a **consistent group of staff** (mix of full and part time across the week).
- ❑ In accordance with the ratios each group is therefore made up of **2 staff members** and **up to 16 children** on any day.
- ❑ Our 2-3 group ('Little Ladybirds' – 8-10 children) also operate in **their own group**; with their own **dedicated staff** on a **1:4 or 1:5 ratio**

Getting in and out of our setting

- We have **1 drop-off point** and therefore **1 meeting space**. Due to the nature of our setting, all adults are asked to maintain **physical distance**
- For the purpose of drop-off and pick-up times we operate within the guidance that states that up to **30 children** can be together in one space at a time
- We prefer that children spend **the majority of their day with the same group**, timings are planned to support this





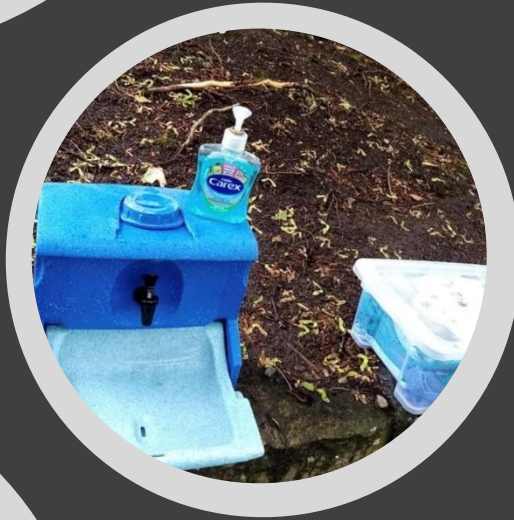
What other spaces do we use?

We are very lucky to have the run of several woodland spaces on this 1000 acre+ estate (although our other nursery uses an urban park and has a similar abundance of space, so there is richness everywhere!). Left image: a small woodland space between the walled garden and a public footpath, we have a few loose parts (pictured) and a tyre swing at one end and a fire pit at the other. Middle image: a parachute suspended from the trees provides a permanent shelter in this space and is a long way from the woodland by the walled garden at the opposite end of the estate. We enjoy sitting around the fire under the parachute and have a wealth of natural climbing frames from the standing and fallen trees as well as things we have built ourselves including a seesaw, balance beams, climbing frame and swings. We also enjoy bug hunting and den building here. Right image: taken from underneath the parachute pictured, you can see another parachute off in the distance – that provides further shelter, another fire pit and lots of other activities around that space. It is home to our mud kitchen, a tipi, a woodworking / tools area and a 'pirate ship' that we built from pallets.





Toilet tent under the tree



Personal Hygiene Outdoors

- Toilet tents or screens, willow domes (as toilet shelters) and handwashing stations are positioned in our main 'go to' spaces for frequent handwashing and those 'I need to go now' moments!
- Each group has their own toilet and at least 1 handwashing station for that session.
- Cleaning takes place regularly during each session and more thoroughly at the end. Each group has an anti-bacterial spray and cloths with them.
- We are lucky that we can store our toilets and cleaning supplies in some of our spaces, but where that is not possible, we just pop them into a bag with the toilet.

How does the day flow?



- ❑ Children are dropped off at the gate by the car park and all play together in that space (**maximum 30 children**).
- ❑ As soon as one group has all of their children they leave the space to move elsewhere on site, **taking everything they need with them** – toilet, handwash system, snack, additional resources.
- ❑ Snack and lunch are enjoyed outside in whatever space the group are using, often around a fire.
- ❑ A **‘floating’ staff member** covers lunch breaks and collects snack once finished, delivers lunch and is generally on hand to support. Ratio of 1:8 with never fewer than 2 staff per group is maintained at all times.

So how do we plan?

Each group is responsible for their own consultative planning in line with 'Planning in the moment'

Learning observations are made each day which inform the next day's planning, for the group and for each child. This ensures that we are true to our ethos of child-led learning.

Seasonal activities are offered alongside those which provide the natural 'next steps' in the children's progress.





- **Physically distancing the parents at drop-off / pick-up?** We have a small car park but a long fence line – mostly they spread themselves out reasonably well but we will draw parents away for their handover conversation into a larger space if necessary and regularly remind parents in our newsletters.
- **How do we finish?** Our funded nursery sessions finish at 3pm. Some parents pick up their children earlier so as to also then go for the school run. Some stay later and take advantage of our later finish option. This naturally spaces out the pick-ups, but we all return to the area next to our car park about 15 minutes before pick-ups start. The children enjoy this chance to come back together and see other children (and staff) from the other group and share their experiences from their day.
- **Recommended cleaning resources?** We try to be as environmentally friendly as possible, so use an eco-friendly surface sanitiser spray (check the contact time, they vary) and we use washable cloths rather than wipes or other disposable products. We also use washable single-use hand towels flannels – the perfect size for single use – for the same reasons.

Useful links

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Resources from Earthtime:

<https://bit.ly/2JAgIM9>

<https://www.popaloo.co.uk/>

<https://potette.com/>

<https://campfiremag.co.uk/camping-toilets>

Our handy hints and tips on #outdoorplay for parents and carers:

<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/thrive/>

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