



WELTON
FREE RANGERS

FOREST SCHOOL
NURSERY

Outdoor Footwear Policy

Policy statement

At Free Rangers we believe it is important that children have the opportunity to spend time outside barefoot.

Tracy Byrne, a podiatrist specialising in podopaediatrics, believes that wearing shoes at too young an age can hamper a child's walking and cerebral development. "Toddlers keep their heads up more when they are walking barefoot," she says. "The feedback they get from the ground means there is less need to look down, which is what puts them off balance and causes them to fall down." Walking barefoot, she continues, develops the muscles and ligaments of the foot, increases the strength of the foot's arch, improves proprioception (our awareness of where we are in relation to the space around us) and contributes to good posture. (The Guardian August 2010).

As a Forest School Nursery we believe that children need to know what it feels like to walk barefoot on the grass, to paddle in water and feel the sensation of sand between their toes.

Therefore we have devised the following footwear policy:

Children will wear suitable outdoor footwear when:

- Visiting the paddock or going on outings (including taking part in Forest School activities at Otters Wood, the Brook or the Plantation).
- Climbing on trees or planks of rough wood.
- Taking part in large construction activities.
- There is ice or snow on the ground.
- An activity is deemed to require suitable footwear for the children's safety or comfort.

Staff will talk to the children explaining why it is important for them to wear shoes, if children refuse to wear shoes staff will assess whether the activity is deemed safe to be carried out barefoot, if not an alternative activity will be offered to the child(ren).