



The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery, is a “more-than-profit” community-led organisation offering families in North East Fife a unique, outdoor child care service for their pre-school children.

Cathy Bache has been piloting the concept of outdoor play and learning for children aged 3 – 5 years since September 2004. With this experience behind her Cathy, registered Drama and Primary Teacher and parent of three, is skilled in providing a physically and intellectually stimulating environment that is safe and secure for children to play in and be cared for.

The Secret Garden is open 49 weeks of the year, 08.30 – 17.00 Monday – Thursday, and 09.00 – 13.00 Friday

Fees: 3 – 5 years £34.00 (Friday £16)

Pre-school funding available

Care Commission registered, our adult:staff ratio is 1:6

Priority of places will be given to children from within the catchment area of Letham Primary School and existing clients.

The minimum session offered to families is one full day.

Eight and a half hours outdoors may seem a long day and perhaps, to some people, extreme! In our experience if the day is carefully planned all needs of the children are met: social, emotional, intellectual, creative and physical. The monitoring of the physical needs of the children through the day is most important because we all need quiet time and rest.

The structure of the day is organised so that at the start when the children arrive at Letham Park there is time and space for each child to find their own way into play and socialising. As the children warm to the environment and each other play is more dynamic and physical; a walk is taken up the hill and then we establish our 'base camp' in the woods for the day where play is free and spacious.

An early lunch gives us all an opportunity to gather together, share news and stories over our packed lunches, a lull in the activity, a period of stillness and quiet before the afternoon's energetic play begins again. A snack break is taken in the afternoon, where we offer a choice of raw fruit and vegetables, rice or oat cakes, dried fruit and nuts and water or, in winter-time, Rocks Organic Lemon – hot! As the day winds to an end we make our way back to the park to play and be met by parents and carers.

Children may be picked up before 16.00 but this will entail the parent/carer coming to the woods to meet the group. The Lead Practitioner has a mobile phone so can be contacted easily for directions.

The 'accommodation' for The Secret Garden is varied and visited daily.

Beginning and ends of sessions will be at Letham Park, with play facilities and outdoor classroom. We are at present liaising with the Fife Council to develop community consultation re changes to the park, looking at creating more exciting and challenging equipment and creating natural habitat/biodiversity wildlife areas. The combination of resources in the park will allow for extensive physical play but also areas for quieter, more reflective play. The outdoor classroom will provide a meeting point, a gathering place, an area for conversation, catching up for children, parents and staff.

Opposite the park we have access to Letham Village Hall, which we will use in the event of the most severe weather condition that may require us to retreat indoors for safety reasons: gale and blizzards. Letham Hall will be our registered 'premises' with the Care Commission.

From the park the walk up the hill to the woods provides the daily physically active walk that is recommended for all children.

Nestled into the woodland we have access to an area of field. This sheltered location offers us perfect conditions for developing a garden. There is a tent with stove for rest times and lunch break. A 'bio toilet' is also located here for toileting facilities.

A bio toilet is a collapsible toilet seat with a compostable bag attached. The seat offers the child sitting stability for having a poo and the waste is collected in the bag.

Nappy changing is conducted within the woods or, in the event of bad weather, in the tent or under cover of temporary shelters.

Within the woodland there is space and freedom, a wildness and variety of landscapes to explore and play, offering the children: mystery, magic and adventure, places to hide in, dens to create, physical and dexterous skills to develop. It is recognised that the senses of a child are stimulated within the natural environment; their desire to look, listen, touch, taste and smell heightened, leading them to develop curiosity, discovery, a graceful learning of what is happening for the individual, the group, the woodland and its inhabitants.

