



## Section 6

### Embedding care for our outdoor spaces into our experiences

#### 6.16 Beach visits

See also [6.14 Inland water margins](#), for links and safety guidance and [6.17 Sand dunes](#) and [6.18 Rock pools](#).

#### Being beach aware

Every beach is different: we need to know the subtleties of the tides, flow of water and how this can impact on the play experiences in different weathers and at different times of the year. Local authorities usually know who is responsible for different beaches and coastline. Remember to read and adhere to advice on signs.

Occasionally strange items turn up on beaches. If this happens, keep your distance, cordon off the area and treat as an emergency incident. Contact the Coastguard (Tel: 999) **immediately** and tell them about the object: size, shape, colour, markings, features (fins, horns, wires, pins), visibility (in sand or washed up), and any leaks or smells.

**Check the tides** every time before you visit to ensure you have space to play safely on the beach

#### Caring for beach and marine life

- The [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) applies to beaches and has specific commentary.
- During bird nesting season (April to July) follow the requests on any notices.
- Keep your distance from seals, allowing them to rest at any time of year.

- Regular 2-minute litter pick keeps the beach cleaner. Children soon learn how to litter pick safely, knowing what is okay to touch and what an adult needs to take care of.
- Keep an eye out for injured wildlife especially after storms and contact [SSPCA Animal Helpline](#) to report any concerns **[03000 999 999](#)**

“We love beach visits! We use sticks as markers to show the children how far they can go along the beach. We discuss this together so the children feel part of the decision making. The litter pick part is vital. Always bring a bag for the rubbish you find.”

(Tracey Malcolmson, Cunningsburgh Early Years, Shetland)

#### Reflective thoughts

The world relies on reciprocal relationships. For example, find a smooth pebble on your beach. Imagine how long it took for the water and pebbles playing together to make this happen. That’s a lot of play over a long time!

What other examples of reciprocity can you find in your outdoor spaces?

How can you describe this in ways that your children understand?



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#### Find out more

- Out to Play [Section 6.4.7](#)
- **Group Safety at Water Margins guidance: Group Safety at Water Margins (rospa.com)**
- **Going Out There:** Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-site Visits
- **Coastguard safety campaign**
- **Royal Life Saving Society UK:** enjoying water safely
- **Royal National Lifeboat Institution**
- **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents**
- **Surfers Against Sewage** website
- **Scotland's Year of Coastal Waters 2020-21** has lots of ideas
- **World Ocean Day** is 8 June each year with lots of resources on the website and annual programmes for the day



#### 6.17 Sand dunes

**How strong are our legs?** If children are not used to walking on sand, take this into account when visiting as little distances can seem much further. If we have a child with mobility issues, is it possible to hire an adapted beach buggy?

**What do our children think about sand dunes?** Does it remind them of other places... being in the desert or on the moon?



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#### What do our children want to do?

Depending on the wind direction, dunes can be ideal for a snack in a sheltered spot or lying on our backs and listening to the sand and grass moving and watching the world go by.

The **strandline** is the high tide or water mark. It's often a line of seaweed or debris that has been washed ashore.

**Sand dunes are biodiversity hotspots!** They are constantly changing as they are moved by tides and wind. When marram grass grows, their roots bind to the sand grains and stabilise the dune. In time, flowering plants and small shrubs become established and eventually coastal heathland is formed where flowers, moths, butterflies and many rare insects can be seen.

#### Invasive species alert

If sea buckthorn (***Hippophae rhamnoides***) or pirri-pirri burr (***Acaena novae-zelandiae***) are growing in the dunes you visit, be extra careful to check your clothing and footwear at the end of your visit in case you have picked up any berries or burrs. Bin what you find.

#### Stay away from sensitive areas.

Follow the advice of signs - conservation work may be happening, e.g. marram grass planting.

Some of Scotland's rare birds nest in dunes between April and September especially along the edges of dunes near the strandline. Leave them in peace.

Always stick to footpaths or boardwalks where they exist - this minimises the erosion of sand and plants caused by our presence.

Dune sliding is so tempting but sliding down loose sand, on the seaward side of high dunes is damaging the biodiversity which has taken many decades to build up.



#### Find out more

**NatureScot Sand dunes** have lots of information about the importance of sand dunes. 71 per cent of UK's sand dunes are found in Scotland

**Dynamic Dunescapes** is a sand dune restoration project. It has a lot of suggestions for things to do, education links and family activities

#### 6.18 Rockpools

**Rockpools rely on the tides** to be replenished. Check the tides before you go to ensure there are rockpools and to avoid being caught by an incoming tide.

**A small gym or yoga mat** can be laid out near a rockpool to provide an insulating surface for any child who needs this for warmth, stability and to lie on.

**Go easy** - rocks can be slippery. Keep an eye out for hidden hazards too, such as broken glass.



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#### Knowing what you're seeing

What names would you give the wildlife you see? Look at its shape, colour, texture, movement and location to help you choose.

The RSPB have a [Rockpool ID](#) chart.

The Marine Conservation Society have helpful information too [Seashore Safari](#).

**Remember to replace rocks** as you found them if looking underneath to see what is there.

**Checkout the seaweed.** Use free floating seaweed if you want to play with it. Don't tear off any attached to rocks. Remember where you found it and put it back there when you've finished.

“Our children are used to climbing rocks in different types of weather, with supervision, but the children do learn to risk assess for themselves. I'd wait till the nicer weather if verging out for the first time. We have had fantastic times with amazing finds: starfish, crabs and not a tuff tray in sight! We've enjoyed this whether bare foot or waders and wellies.”

(Gillian McKeown, Childminder, Fife)

**The water is clear** in most rockpools so you can see lots of things just by looking in! It's like peeking through the window of someone's house. What can you see?

**Rockpool creatures** like to be left alone to get on with their lives. Using a net to catch something may harm them if they get stuck in the holes of the net.

**Use a cylinder or pond viewer** with a see-through bottom so that you can view the animals in their natural habitat without having to remove them. Why not make your own? [How to make an underwater viewer](#)

**Be light on your feet!** We are giants compared to rock life! As you move over rocks, take care not to crush or damage some of the more delicate creatures.

**Life on earth - and in water.** Use the framework in [4.5 Learning about life on Earth](#) to help you make connections between all the elements and wildlife.

