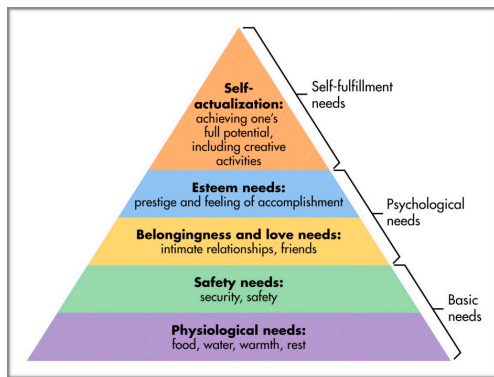


'Choose either 'the beach' or 'the woods' to plan a visit for a group of children. Describe how visiting this location can support learning.'

Priest (1986, p.23) states that "Outdoor education is an experiential process of learning by doing, which takes place primarily through exposure to the out-of-doors. In outdoor education the emphasis for the subject of learning is placed on relationships, relationships concerning people and natural resources". The main aim of outdoor education is to incorporate areas of the curriculum through gaining first hand experiences which are critical in establishing values that can only be taught outside the four walls of the classroom. Welsh Assembly Government (2009) The outdoors is the ideal environment for experiential learning, because it offers unique opportunities to be creative, to move around, to be noisy and to take risks. To ensure that children achieve the optimum learning experience they should be given the chance to experience both lessons being taught within the sheltered environment of inside the classroom and within an outdoor environment providing a feeling of freedom, especially during the early years of education to build the correct foundations in order for the children to achieve and to grow as individuals. Institute for Outdoor Learning (2019) suggests that "The positive memories and lasting benefits impact academic achievement, new skills learning, personal and social development, care for the environment, career and professional development, wellbeing and mental health". Therefore, the inclusion of outdoor learning in all aspects of school life is paramount in ensuring that the children in school today are "healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society". Donaldson (2015:29). To ensure that children are healthy individuals the schools need to ensure that physical and social development is being pursued which is an appropriate way to include and use outdoor learning to effectively develop the children as well-rounded, healthy individuals, which in turn relates to the new curriculum in Wales.

The Glossary of Educational Reform (2014) describe the Learning environment as the "diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn; the term is often used as a more accurate or preferred alternative to classroom, which has more limited and traditional connotations". This suggests that learning in school does not always have to occur in the classroom and be constricted to the four walls of the classroom. Children should be allowed to explore and venture to obtain the most out of the learning experience. In addition, children learn in a variety of ways and contexts. As the focus is to teach the children, the aim is to ensure that the children obtain the most out of the environment in which they are studying to optimise their ability to learn. As already mentioned the learning environment should not be constricted solely to the classroom; there is no limit on the variety of different learning environments. Each environment brings a different learning experience and is beneficial to children to provide first hand experiences they may not encounter outside of school. Learning can come from a visit to a woodland, a beach, a forest, etc. A learning environment is a physical formation but is an emotional body which aims to provide a safe space

for learning. Maslow (1943) suggested that "in order for individuals to achieve their full potential, a range of basic needs have to be met first".



(Figure 1- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)

An individual's needs must be focused on especially when working with children to ensure their development. Figure 1 shows Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and it suggests that when an individual's basic needs (e.g physiological and safety needs) and psychological needs (e.g. esteem needs and belongingness and love needs) are met and have been fulfilled they can move further to the higher order needs of self-fulfilment (e.g. self-actualisation). This in turn helps the individual reach their full personal potential. The learning environment plays an extensive role in satisfying the needs of the learner. The environment in which the child learns has links with the ability to develop the learner. OECD (2009) states that "Classroom climate not only has been shown to affect student outcomes and attainment but is a prominent policy issue in a number of countries and regions". This in turn suggests that with a positive learning environment, and in this case a classroom, the learner is more likely to achieve in relation to learning. Furthermore, there is an increased awareness of this and there is an emphasis on establishing a positive learning environment. As a result, the use of environments outside the classroom are being used as a catalyst for development and ensuring that the children are comfortable in their environment. Ofsted (2004, p. 2) demonstrates that "outdoor education gives depth to the curriculum and makes an important contribution to students' physical, personal and social education". This ultimately underlines the importance of the inclusion of learning outside of the classroom, which then in turn has a positive knock on effect on the child's ability in the classroom.

The purpose of this assignment is to plan an educational visit for a group of children to either a woodland or a beach setting. A school trip can be used as an effective teaching tool to enhance the social and personal development of the children. There is a common perception that school trips dispense opportunities for kinaesthetic learning and provide children with the world around them in different ways. This is especially true for special educational needs (SEN) children who learn better through visual and sensory events and helps them to develop their understanding. Ofsted (2008, p.4) state that "hands-on activities led to improved outcomes for pupils and students, including better achievement, standards, motivation, personal development and behaviour. Therefore, the importance of school visits is unprecedented to ensure the development of children and to allow the children to become more connected with the world around them and help them to become "ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world" Donaldson (2015, p.29). A copy of the educational visit policy can be viewed in the appendix.

The chosen location for the school visit is a woodland environment in 'Penllergare Valley Woods'. It is a country park in the area of Swansea West and situated on the outskirts of Swansea. The area is easily accessible by coach and has an area for transport to pick up and drop-off. After undertaking some research it has become evident that there are toilets on hand including a disabled toilet facility. The park is wheelchair friendly should it be needed, however, there are some parts where it would be difficult to operate a wheel chair. It is a community woodland managed by the local charity the Penllergare Trust. It is well-known for having a picturesque landscape (pictures can be seen in the appendix) and is free to visit. The woods "do not currently have an education programme available, but you are welcome to visit and provide your own activities". However, there are a variety of options for visitors to do while visiting the woods: "Choose a lakeside stroll, a heritage trail, a wild woodland walk or a riverside ramble". Therefore, the woods are a perfect area to visit on a school trip as it provides many opportunities for children to experience the outdoors and links with the ESDC themes of 'The Natural Environment' and 'Choices and Decisions'. Furthermore, the area provides a chance to implement strands of the 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig'. ACCAC (2003) state that pupils should be "Visiting, studying and appreciating the various landscapes of Wales". Therefore, the children would be able to do this while on the trip.

The aim of the visit is to include a variety of the seven Areas of Learning in the Foundation phase framework to ensure that the children achieve the optimum learning experience from the visit. Also, there will be an implementation of cross-curricular teaching through the use of combining two or more Areas of Learning. Barnes (2015) suggests that cross curricular teaching "seeks to build more knowledgeable, lasting and transferable understanding of the world around us". Therefore, the activities will try to incorporate all of the Areas of Learning, especially the 'Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity' and 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World' combining throughout the day the two areas which in turn will teach the children transferable skills which they can use outside of the classroom.

For the purpose of this assignment the name of the school undertaking the trip is 'Central Valley primary school'. The school is situated approximately 10 minutes away from the woods which is beneficial as the children will not have to travel for a long period of time. The chosen age group is a Year 1 class consisting of 28 children and 1 of these has Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the form of Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Chang & Chang (2018) found that "outdoor activities provide 7 main benefits to children with autism, including promoting communication, emotion, cognition, interaction, physical activity, and decreasing autistic sensitivity". Therefore, having the chance to experience the outdoors in a way they may not have before may increase productivity for all children but especially the child with ASD.

The chosen theme for the proposed visit to the woods is 'houses and homes' which is incorporated with the story 'The Gruffalo'. The children will learn about the different habitats of the different animals that appear in the story. 'The Gruffalo' would be the class story of the week and to make the activities more enjoyable they will be tailored to the story to ensure maximum engagement in the activities. This will give the children a deeper understanding of where and how animals live.

This would give them a more-rounded perspective of the wider world around them with an element of their story of the week to further establish the connections the children can make with the natural environment. Furthermore, by actually visiting the area their knowledge of how to protect the environment for future generations will be improved. This in turn relates to the ESDGC theme of 'The Natural Environment'. As mentioned, the theme of 'houses and homes' would be made to link with the story 'The Gruffalo' and that was a reason for choosing the theme. However, pupil voice was a key factor in choosing the activity. Firstly, all the children had already read the book during story time and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all so therefore, it was chosen as story of the week. Furthermore, the children asked to experience the story in the real world and this was taken into account when deciding to centre the visit around 'The Gruffalo'.

As part of the visit the children will be tasked with different activities and challenges which in turn will develop a variety of skills. Another reason for the trip is that it would allow the children to develop different outdoor skills which they could then transfer back to the classroom. One of the skills being developed is the children's thinking skills. Welsh Assembly Government (2008) state that developing thinking can be described as "developing patterns of ideas that help learners acquire deeper understanding and enable them to explore and make sense of their world". Having the chance to visit the woodland environment and looking at the different habitats develops the thinking skills tremendously and children are getting a further understanding of the processes that occur in the natural environment. Furthermore, Welsh Assembly Government (2008) state that "these processes enable learners to think creatively and critically to plan their work, carry out tasks, analyse and evaluate their findings, and to reflect on their learning". The activities chosen to be undertaken promote creative thinking as they will be asked to draw and make their own houses for the animals in the story. In addition, the children would be asked to critically analyse and evaluate their homes and the homes of the groups. This is further developing their thinking skills as it is allowing the children to plan, analyse, evaluate and reflect on what they have been learning about.

Prior to the visit the teacher would have to ensure that certain actions are taken to ensure that the visit is a success. Firstly, the teacher would have to prepare a 'Parent/Guardian consent form' (a copy can be found in the appendix) to accurately figure out which children would be attending the trip. Also, the form asks for two emergency contact numbers, to ensure that somebody can always be contacted if required. Furthermore, a bus would need to be booked and through using knowledge from the consent form, the teacher can accurately book a suitable sized bus as the form of transport to the Woods (an e-mail regarding the price of the bus can be seen in the appendix). National Union of Teachers' (2008, p.5) recommend that as a general guide for school trips there should be "1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3". According to this information, the preferred number of adults would be four for the trip and for the purpose of the activities that would be undertaken the number of adults required would be four. However, parent helpers would be on hand as a resource for support. In addition, a pilot visit would be undertaken by the teacher to ensure that the environment is suitable for the children and for the purpose of work with habitats. Also, as a result the teacher would be able to form an appropriate risk assessment (a copy can be found in the appendix) regarding the risks that may be encountered while on the trip. Furthermore, the teacher would be able to plan the activities effectively in relation to the most appropriate areas in the woods

where the activities could be undertaken. For example, the teacher would need to investigate which areas of the woods would be the most suitable for the habitats of the animals in the story.

As already mentioned, the theme for the day would be 'houses and homes' through the use of 'The Gruffalo'. The children would arrive and the teacher would set the scene to the class. They would need to help find toy animals from the story which the teacher would have hidden before hand. After finding the animals the children would return to 'base' and would split into their four groups (which would have been decided prior to the trip). Then each group would be delegated an animal and they would all be asked to draw what they thought the habitat would look like. The teacher would ask questions about the characteristics to intensify the thinking skills of the children. Following this, several children from each group would present their drawings to the class and discuss them amongst themselves. The children would then build the habitat for their designated animal using natural materials found in the woods. Each group would be lead by an adult and they would then ask the children to further develop thinking skills. For example, which materials would be best to use and where would be the best place to build the home? This in turn would introduce pupil voice which relates to the United Nations' (1989) Article 12 that: "Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously". Providing children with a chance to voice their opinions would make them feel more comfortable and feel part of the activity. After the children finish they would take a picture of their habitats using an iPad, targeting the DCF. Then they would show the other groups and evaluate their own work, again promoting critical thinking skills. (A copy of the lesson plan for the day can be seen in the appendix)

Following the trip, the children would use their experiences to recap on their knowledge of habitats. As a creative writing lesson they would be tasked with writing a diary of their animal from the first day in their new home. The children would be writing in the first person and it would be almost a role-play activity. The teacher would set out a certain example model of the kind of things the children could include. Welsh Government (2014) state that children in Year 1 "are able to follow a form modelled by the teacher". The activity would further develop the thinking skills of the children as they would ultimately be asked to put themselves in the shoes of their animal and think about their feelings regarding their new home. Another activity that would be undertaken is interviewing the different animals about their new homes. Some of the children would be the animals and the others would be the interviewers. The children would make use of interrogative sentences made by the teacher and the children could make up their own questions. The children could also use iPads to video their interview, which they could then present to the class. The teacher could also do a separate lesson on habitats and using the pictures taken from the visit could re-establish the characteristics of a habitat. The teacher would ask the children what a habitat needs in order to keep the animals safe and warm and many similar questions. This would further develop the thinking skills of the children as they would have to re-call on previous knowledge gained during the trip and other lessons.

In conclusion, the chosen activities for the visit to the woodland environment would be beneficial for the children's learning. There are many Areas of Learning that would be targeted with these

activities. Furthermore, the activities promote the children's thinking skills as they would gain a deeper understanding of how animals live. They would gain that understanding in a real-life scenario by obtaining hands on experiences that perhaps they would not have had before. This in turn would build the foundations for a more rounded pupil. O'Brien and Murray (2005) state that "Contact with nature has also been seen to be associated with increased creativity and language development". Therefore, engaging with the outdoor environment does not only improve physical development, but also creativity and language at the same time. The visit planned for this assignment looks to develop all of these and more, which would form more knowledgeable, creative, confident individuals, which in turn relates to Donaldson's (2015) four purposes:

- "ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society".
- Donaldson (2015) '*Successful Futures*'

Therefore, the aim of the assignment is to ensure that all these purposes are met.

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