

Awe and wonder



Part 2:

Within the photo above there are a variety of opportunities for children to play, explore and learn. This area enables independent discovery and builds upon a child's curiosity and imagination skills.

The first feature that promotes development within science and mathematics is the trees in the background. Children are able to explore sticks and develop their mathematics skills by measuring which stick is bigger and explore different textures such as mud and leaves. This area will be beneficial for children with specific needs, as it allows them to experience different textures and aromas enabling them to use all their senses to explore their surroundings (Homan, 2017).

The trees allow children to learn over a long time period such as seeing the different seasons and how it affects the trees and the area around it. This can encourage the children to ask questions about the weather and explore and learn about where the flowers go in the winter. Different seasons will allow every individual to have the opportunity to explore new experiences.

The hill enables the children to learn terminology such as 'up' and 'down'. This wording can be taught to them in a simple and fun way outdoors without the children realising they are learning.

The children can participate in activities such as leaf and bark rubbings or pressing natural items into clay, this allows them to make pictures using their natural

environment. The tree allows the children to make dens out of the sticks, this will teach the children about weight and balance, for example will this heavy stick be able to lean on this thin stick? Practitioners can bring other materials such as tarps, ropes and netting for the children to create their own dens. This allows the children to learn about properties of materials such as is this item waterproof? They can figure out what materials work best for their dens.

The second feature is the grassy hill. This enables the children to learn about different surfaces, allowing them to practice their balancing walking up and down the hill. The 'sense organ for the vestibular system assists the children in balancing and has an immediate impact on vital life functions such as respiration, digestion and heart rate (Themotorstory.org, 2014). Within the curriculum for wales it states that children should be able to learn how to learn after nature, being able to have the opportunity to connect with the world around them (Gov.wales, 2015). Children are able to observe and collect insects in microscope pots enabling them to see the insects close up. Learning about how many legs each insect has which enables them to learn about counting, what colours they can see which builds upon the children learning their colours, where each insect lives and thinking about what insects need to survive (Nerdy with Children, 2013). The children are able to go bug hunting, which allows them to be able to use their independent thinking skills to consider where they think different bugs would live.

Collecting insects allows the children to have the independence to collect an insect of their choice. It can enable the children to choose what they want to do with the insect such as deciding that they want to draw the insect, whilst others may just want to observe the insect and watch the actions it makes. From this they can see how many spots a ladybird has or a close up of the patterns of the animal. Children are curious individuals so enjoy observing animals in their natural habitats. They should be encouraged to explore relationships between living beings, learning about their life cycle and habits. (The curriculum for wales, 2022)

Children are able to collect different materials and create their own bug hotels, this allows for a discussion about what objects the insects would like in their habitat. This activity builds upon the children's teamwork, communication and cooperation skills.

The hill allows practitioners to ask questions of the children such as what do we need to help flowers grow? this allows for a discussion about life cycles and encouraged children to want to grow their own flowers.

It enables the adults and children to participate in sustained shared thinking, allowing the practitioner to explore with the child and figure out answers to questions that they may not know but that the children may have asked. By being involved in sustained shared thinking, children can become aware that even adults do not have the answers to everything. An effective practitioner will continue the discussion and try and figure out the answers rather than shutting down the child's curiosity (Peters, 2014).

The hill allows the children to have the freedom to roll and run down the hill enabling the children to build the confidence to try new things.

The grassy hill enables the children to make daisy chains and create other jewellery using items such as bark, leaves and grass. This improves their dexterity and fine motor skills.

The third feature pinpointed in the photo is the tunnel that is accessible to all children, no matter their ability or disability. This means children who are in wheelchairs are still able to join in and be included.

The tunnel allows for the children to learn about reflection of sound waves, as when the children will talk within the tunnel their voice will echo. This allows the children to explore this concept.

The tunnel is dark enough in the centre to allow for the exploration of light and dark. This Sensory deprivation can enable children who may feel overwhelmed by other children and sounds to have a quiet time to themselves while still remaining a part of the activity. Removing the sense of sight, attunes and focuses the sense of sounds, and thought. Restricting other stimuli, enables a reflective consideration, that would otherwise not be possible. The dark environment can be changed with the use of torches. Creating shapes and shadows. Glow in the dark shapes draws the focus to them and, creates an alternative learning medium.

The tunnel allows practitioners to introduce terminology to the children such as 'in' 'over' and 'through'. This enables them to have a working representation of the meaning of the word, adding interest and a visual connection.

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	Woodland area	Date:	13 th March 2022
Assessor:	Ellie Howell	Review date:	13 th September 2022

Experience outdoor area	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Hazards and risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING
Encouraging Outside independent learning (foundation phase)	It will increase their knowledge, confidence and wellbeing. Children will be able to explore a woodland area and make decisions and ideas for themselves	Outdoor elements, nature and new experience such as wildlife for example birds and insects	Pupils and adults	- Inform staff and pupils of the boundaries of the forest school and reinforcing them with visual markers. - Adults will allow children to have a child-led approach and figure out situations for themselves. - Some children may have never experienced being able to play around in mud so practitioners need to encourage them.	L
Picking up items	They are able to explore items within the woods and learn how they can care for wildlife. Children will develop their gross and fine motor skills. Children are able to explore different items and collecting and examine what they have found.	Children picking up things that are sharp or items dangerous to them such as glass, bits of plastic and other rubbish that could cause harm to the children.	Pupils and adults	- Adults must look around the area, removing any inappropriate items found. A risk assessment must be completed each time they plan to go outside. - Set boundaries, show the children what they are and not allowed to pick up. Boundaries can also be set to ensure that children stay in a certain area and do not wander off. Practitioners can mark trees with colours so children are constantly aware of the areas they are allowed in. - Make a point of telling the children the golden rule which is that the children must not be anything in the mouth.	L

The weather conditions	Children will be able to have a hands-on experience of different weather conditions. Children will learn about what clothes they should wear for different weathers. This will allow children to be able to become more independent and understand what different weathers mean for the type of clothing they should wear. Words such as hot, cold, wet and dry can be introduced to them.	Children are at risk of hypothermia if weather is too cold. Children may be uncomfortable and become distressed if they are too wet when the weather conditions are too wet. Children may be at risk of heat stroke on warmer days. This can cause harm to the children. Practitioners need to be able to use their judgement to take the children back inside if the weather is too warm.	Pupils and adults	- Practitioners should check the weather app and make a sensible decision whether it is suitable for the children to go out in. - Adults must ensure that children have the appropriate clothing for the weather type, including waterproofs. - If the weather worsens adults should take children back inside. Practitioners should use their own rational judgement to know when to take the children back inside. - If hot weather practitioners can ensure that they provide drinks for the children and staff. - Adults should talk about how the weather will affect certain areas in the woodland so that children can take extra care when walking on or participating in that activity.	L
Children independently exploring the woodland area	Children are able to have a sense of freedom and are able to independently learn for themselves. Children are able to assess their own risk.	Lack of supervision Hazards behind the identified safe area.	Pupils and adults	- Staff are aware of procedures if a pupil goes out of sight. - Staff are aware of who to notify if they are unable to locate pupils. - Boundaries are set	L
Uneven surfaces	Children are able to practice balance and get used to different surfaces. Figuring out for themselves what they can do to walk safely.	Children may fall, trip causing them to hurt themselves.	Pupils and adults	- Show the children the different surfaces and guiding them if they need support. - Ensure the children have the appropriate footwear on. - Encourage children that it is ok to fall over, they just	L

				need to get back up and try again. • Explain to the group that they need to move around safely and should not push each other. • Ensure that any surfaces are safe from any items to minimise the risk of children tripping over.	
Carrying sticks and poles	Children are able to use their imagination to transform the stick into other objects such as wands and swords. Children are able to create their own play by turning the items they find into anything that they want.	Children could bang their heads or poke their or other children's eyes. Children can harm each other which could result in the child going to hospital or needing first aid.	Pupils and adults	• Show the children how they should carry the sticks around. • Warn the children that they need to look out for other children and staff members. • Allow children to play with sticks and other items they find however ensure that they watch their surroundings and do not swing the sticks around.	M
Poisonous plants/berries nettles within the area.	The children enjoy to explore, they will learn about the plants that they should not touch.	Children could prick or cut themselves They could eat any berries that they find causing them to be under the risk of being unwell.	Pupils and adults	• Teach the children about the golden rule 'nothing goes in the mouth' • Perform daily checks to remove anything poisonous • Adults should check the area before and after each session.	L
Toys and resources being safe to use	Children are able to use equipment and play areas with little risk of themselves.	Children could slip on any left-over water on equipment. Children could hurt themselves if the equipment is broken or loose.	Pupils and adults	• Daily checks should be taken to ensure all equipment is safe for use. • Adults should check over all equipment ensuring that all equipment is not broken. Any equipment that is broken should be taken away. • Make sure the equipment is free of any water to prevent any harm.	L

Part 4:

Adults should provide children with the opportunity to lead their own learning and explore their surroundings for themselves, especially in an outdoors capacity. The role of the adult must be to support and encourage curiosity and confidence within children (N A T U R E P L A Y, 2012).

This approach enables them to experience a hands-on learning, which allows children to understand the concepts of a variety of areas within education. Froebel (2020) felt that education that was taught outdoors, and introduced in a hands-on manner enabled children to gain a wider range of knowledge and understanding.

According to Montessori (1990) children need to be able to learn through touching, experiencing and doing. A hands-on approach allows children and young people to have a grasp of the materials, giving them a tangible aid to touch and explore.

The role of the adult must follow the four purposes within the Curriculum for Wales (2022). This framework encourages children to become a valued individual within society. An early year's practitioner must enable the children to become ambitious, independent, ethically informed, happy and confident.

The Curriculum for Wales has four purposes, the first one is that children should be encouraged to become independent capable learners who are eager to learn (Welsh Government, 2020).

Practitioners can facilitate this by promoting resilience in children, showing them that it is acceptable to not succeed on their first attempt as long as they have the ability to try again. Building a child's resilience is important as it encourages the children not to give up and thus achieve an increase in their self-confidence and self-esteem (Wellbeing of children and young people n.d.). They must also allow children to figure out things for themselves as this allows them to become independent learners.

Different weathers and seasons can allow the children with a variety of experiences and opportunities. Snow can provide the children with the ability to learn about the feeling of cold, what happened when snow gets warm and learn about what happens to the flowers and plants when it is winter.

Children are inquisitive and curious and therefore will ask questions about the world around them. The role of the adult is to communicate with the children and answer any questions they may have to the best of their ability. If an adult does not know the answer to the question such as 'why is the sky blue?' practitioners work with them to discover the answer. This co-production allows the discussion to continue, and encourages the children to ask more questions as they know they will receive an answer again next time (Stephens, 2007.) Practitioners must engage in sustained shared thinking. This is where adults and children can work together to solve a problem. This allows the children's question to be answered and shows them that adults do not have the answers to everything and are still learning as well (Theearlyyearstraininghub.co.uk, 2022).

Children should be able to progress to step 2 within the Curriculum for Wales (2022) which states that they are able to ask adults questions and enquire about the world around them.

The second purpose is that children should develop into creative individuals who should be able to take measured risks in a safe environment. Adults should encourage children to take risks allowing them to work out for themselves whether the risk is worth taking or, if the risk puts them in harm's way (The four purposes of the curriculum for Wales, 2020). They should be encouraged to use their imagination and be able to create resources using their creative ideas, for example using a stick to be a sword or a wand. Practitioners can develop this skill by asking the children questions such as 'what colour is the wand'? or 'what do you do with your wand? These questions can encourage the children to paint a bigger picture, therefore developing their imaginative skills (Love Early Years, 2020).

The third purpose is to encourage the children to become ethical individuals. This means practitioners showing children how to care for our environment, allowing the children to have a connection with the living world. Adults can do this by making outdoor lessons fun, as this will spark an interest in the children. This can be achieved by lifting up logs to see how many creatures they can find and, learning how to care for plants and wildlife (Bullock, 1994).

The final purpose is allowing children to develop into healthy, confident individuals. Adults can do this by helping to build their mental and emotional well-being. This can be effectively developed outdoors (Health and Well-being, n.d.). Some children find it hard to learn via a written medium alone and, this can cause the child to feel as if they are not smart enough to understand. However, when these children are taken outdoors and shown how to learn through a hands-on approach they thrive. The ability for children to hold physical items to count and complete equations allows them to truly understand the content (The Bay Trust, 2019). Within childcare settings classroom pets can help develop in a variety of areas in a child's emotional, and social development, expanding their ability to look after wildlife and the world around them, for example children can learn what different animals eat, and where they live. Having this exposure to animals can build connections between the children and animals actioning learning about science and maths through a fun and exciting experience (Pets in the classroom, 2013).

Within the Curriculum for wales (2022) it states that children should progress to be able to understand that plants and living beings grow and should be looked after. Practitioners can encourage children through providing them with open-ended resources. This allows play to be led by the children using their imagination to use the items they have, to change into anything, enabling the child to be able to achieve anything within their imagination (The Empowered Educator, 2017).

According to Nicholson (1971) we can observe greater creativity if practitioners give children more open-ended materials and opportunities. This theory is backed further by the principle of affordance (Maes, 2015). The notion of affordance was brought to us by Gibson (1979). He felt that people view situations and objects differently based on who they are. The effectiveness of the environment is based on the possibilities it holds for the children and young people (Wells, 2002).

According to Day (2007) adults must enable children to have the opportunity to experience sensory-rich surroundings for children and young people's growth.

Forest schools provide the children with the opportunity to learn about the world around them. It fosters the child's development and learning about a variety of areas

such as mathematics and science through utilising the natural environment around them (Campbell & Speldewinde, 2018).

Froebel (2020) believed that forest schools provided the chance for children to push their limitations and develop a feeling of adventure. It allows children to explore and experience height, perspective and distance. Forest schools are beneficial to children, as practitioners are able to set boundaries and therefore allow children to keep within these boundaries while still being able to use their imagination to explore and learn in their own individual way (Forest School Association, 2021).

Many children in today's society do not have the opportunity to experience mud (Rivkin 1995,2). From mud play children are able to shape and decorate in their own unique and imaginative ways. Resources can be brought from inside such as cooking utensils to enable the children to create and construct.

Nicholson (1971) emphasised that all young individuals enjoy interacting with different factors such as materials, textures and forms. The notion of loose parts is that children are able to build upon their creativity based on experimenting with these parts.

Practitioners can encourage the children outdoors by organizing nature games this utilizes the use of the outdoors. Children can make pictures and faces using items they have found, for example sticks, leaves, flowers and stones.

Montessori felt that it was beneficial to bring the interior out and the outside in. This concept aims to integrate views of nature with chances for the opportunity to learn about the live organisms that surround them. Students within Montessori schools are taught to care for and sustain the lives of plants and animals (Montessori Education UK, 2020).

Albert Einstein stated that practitioners should not only teach the children but should enable the children to have the correct conditions in which they can learn (Glenn Lim, 2012).

This means that if a child is not in the correct environment in which they feel comfortable enough in to learn then, that child will not reach their fullest developmental potential. Practitioners must sometimes sit back and observe the children independently learning, whilst also being able to gauge when it is the right time to

intervene. This approach enables the students to take a child-led approach to their education (Siren Films, 2015).

Learning outdoors provides children with endless amounts of developmental opportunities. Nature can allow children to use their imagination, learn about counting, shapes, length and measurements (EYC, 2015).

A kinaesthetic learner will thrive in an environment where they are able to learn through experiencing.

Science and mathematics can be challenging subjects for many children especially children with learning difficulties such as dyscalculia. These children will benefit from activities within the woods such as measuring skills, asking questions such as which stick is the biggest? (Sparhawkschool.com, 2022).

The role of the adult is to develop the child's natural curiosity, enabling the children to think for themselves and listening to their ideas and expanding on those thoughts, for example saying to a child 'that is a great idea, how would we make that?' (Froebel Trust, 2020)

Adults should engage in Metacognitive talk as this helps support and aid children and young people within their learning. This is where adults talk aloud when they are completing tasks even if these tasks do not involve the children (Moritz and Lysaker, 2018).

In the outdoors this can spark interest with children as they will become curious to know what the teacher is doing, and therefore want to participate.

According to Montessori children should be able to play outdoors and explore as much as possible, lessons should be taken outside rather than sitting down at a table. This will encourage children to want to learn. The outdoors enables children to promote their creativity and problem solving skills (miranda, 2021).

It can allow the children who tend to be shy within the classroom to find themselves and become more confident. This can have huge impacts on the children's social and emotional development (Chitwood, 2012).

The outdoors provides children and young people with the ability to find and learn about themselves, exploring areas within the woods and being able to have the

freedom and ability to relax and enjoy themselves without the worry that they may get dirty (Curriculum for excellence,2010).

Outdoor learning can ensure that children are given a range of opportunities. Learning from the classroom can be brought outside to widen the child's understanding, enabling them to consolidate learning in a variety of ways (Kinver, 2016).

When outdoors practitioners should ensure that they ask questions to the children for example, what colour is this? Where does this animal live? And what is your favourite flower?. The outdoors provides the children with endless opportunities to explore and learn about themselves. According to McMillan the outdoors has major benefits for the children. She believed that children should have equal opportunities inside and outdoors (Ouvry 2008).

Children need space to learn, often they can become irritated within small areas and therefore can result in uncooperative behaviour. Research has found that children who are quick to lose their temper benefitted in larger spaces where they were able to move around and engage with others freely, with regular pauses and breaks (Berk, I. E and Winsler, A 1995).

Children need to be able to feel as though they are capable learners, practitioners can promote this feeling by allowing the children to explore freely. Practitioners should step back and observe the children and ensure that they do not intervene too much allowing the children to figure out situations for themselves.

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