

ECEY5005
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AI Declaration

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.



(Pope, J. 2026)

Learning Story – Boundless nature of the Beach and its endless possibilities.

9:30am

The image provided above took place during a beach school trip, which I took part in from previous workplace at a holiday club during an October half term. The setting I was working with had a partnership with a beach school workshop group. It was developed to facilitate and support children in areas of deprivations in accessing a beach environment and to learn through play and exploration. With links to the scientific aspect of the sea and beach, and links to mathematics. According to Beach Academy (n.d.) they emphasise the importance of children having a connection to the shores of Wales, to be able to appreciate the outdoors and the wonderment of the marine environment and its place in the world.

We arrive at rest bay, Porthcawl. The day is dry and the sea is calm. A bus pulls up, full of voices of excited children from the ages 6-11. I was sitting with my group that I will be supporting for the duration of the trip to the beach. Four children ages six to

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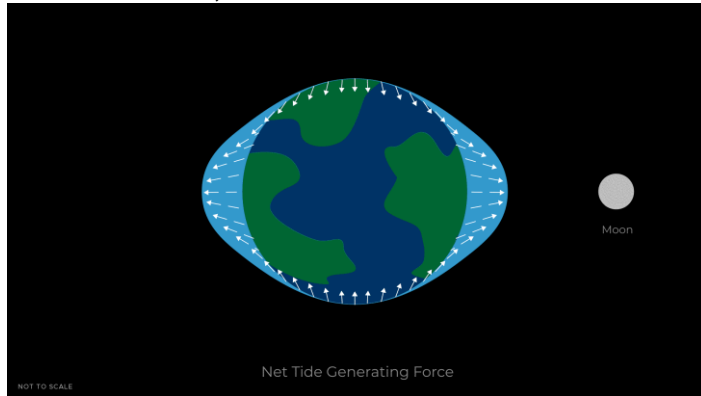
seven. One child excited and exclaiming “Look I can see the sea!”. We turn to the window and see the expansive sea and sands and dunes of rest bay. I say to the group, “the tide is in today; we won’t have to walk far to get into the sea”. “Oh, yeah” one child says. I go on to say, “I wonder why the tide is so close today, I wonder if there is a reason”.



(Britannica Kids, 2026)

The children ponder the question for several moments, one child then goes to say “is it the moon? I remember Mr Jones saying it was the moon!”, I was going to say something, when another child said “No! It’s not the moon, the moon is far away” I would use this moment to share the understanding of how the moon influences the sea and tides, “the moon is s close to the earth that is pulls and moves the tides depending on where it is”. “Oh” three of the four children would go on to say. We unload from the bus and start our day at rest bay.

According to the Curriculum for Wales (2019) Science in our world plays paramount importance, that impact the lives of not just children, but everyone. Wales wants its young people to be capable and the means to involve themselves with science and the influences it has on the greater world and environment.



(NASA, 2026)

10:30am

We arrive at the meet up location at rest bay beach and we can see that various resources and equipment are out and spaced out. Our group is greeted. The lead of the beach explains what is there and for it to child led as possible with the adult being there to support and facilitate where needed. My group of four children gravitated towards the sand art; there was a small example of a sand turtle. "Look!" one of the 6-year-old boys shouts. "How did they do that, looks like a giant turtle in the sand". "Can we make one says another child", I say, "of course, look the sand is perfect to make what you need, the sand is wet enough to take hold". The group of children move off and gather what they need, making use of spades, rakes, shells, buckets, hands, sticks and stones. One of the children came up to me and ask if I would help outline the turtle shape. "Look, I'm going to try and use the stick to make a turtle shape on the sand. Would you like to help me?". Two of the children went and grabbed to sticks and swiped and curved different shapes from straight line to semi circles. One of the children used a rake to loosen the sand and another began piling the sand and making a dome like shape. After some time, the turtle met the children vision and were satisfied with the results. "Wow, I wonder if we will see turtles here today?" I went to say, "I can certainly see one you've made today, but turtles live in much hotter countries and enjoy swimming in the sea". The children chatter excitedly.



(Kidspot, 2015)

The four purposes, which is enshrined into the new curriculum for Wales. Which goes onto shaping the ethos and approaches within schools and certain settings. Enabling children and young people to be ambitious learners, enterprising contributors, health individuals in their community and to be informed about their home environment and the greater world (curriculum for Wales, 2020)

11:30

After a bit of snack and a break. One of the seven-year-olds, suggested a great idea "Let's go and explore the beach, I want to see if I can find some crabs!". "let's go and explore I day to the group" we wander slightly away from where we made the crabs. Other groups were present as well as the playworkers from the beach school. There were magnifier glasses of different sizes and shapes, as well as nets. "We need to be gentle when we look at the different creatures, were in their home now" I go on to say. So, we move towards the rockpool, looking around crouching low looking closely. One of the children excitingly points at a crab and looks closely with the magnifier. "I can see its legs; I think I can count 10 legs!". "Well done, what about the shape of the body?"

Another child speaks up "It's like a circle, I think an oval shaped body?". We move closer together. "that's right, how many eyes can you see and what colour is the crab?". The children point, busy counting and talking to each other about the crab and if there were anymore. The oldest in the group share their thoughts "I can see two eyes, and I think the crab is grey". The children were inspired and continued to explore.

The curriculum for Wales (2019) puts great emphasis on developing the skills need for children to begin to understand mathematics and numeracy. Giving credence to different concept and the complex ranges that children will cover during their years of growth and development. With being on a beach, there are different opportunities to see different mathematical concepts be they abstract, visual, physical or through verbal communication.



(North Wales Wildlife Trust, n.d.)

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The day continued with lunch in between and we were nearing the end of our visit.

All the group partook in a walk and bit of free directed play.

According to Teach Early Years (n.d.) practitioners may facilitate, support or organise the beach school experience, the fundamental aim is to understand the endless opportunities to learn and thrive within an environment that is the beach. The beach is a great way to accommodate the various ways children respond and adapt to learning in such environment.

This experience has always stuck with me and provided an invaluable insight into how I look at various environments within Wales and beyond.

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Part 3

Activity	How will children BENEFIT from this activity? (Science and Maths Learning)	Hazards and Risks	Who is at Risk?	Precautions/Control Measures	Overall Risk Rating (Low/Medium/High)
Create Sand Art	Understanding structure, use of materials, wet vs dry, use of tools, what are we making, animals	Choking hazard, sharp or dangerous items in the sand, crabs,	Children and adults	Conduct a check of the environment prior to visiting, appropriate supervision, teaching moments with the children.	Low Risk
Collect and count shells and stones	Patterns, shapes, sizes, colours, what lived in the shells, understanding the habitats of sea creatures.	Sharp shells or stones, swallowing hazard, contamination.	Children and adults	Ensure that checks are made prior to the state of the beach, adult supervision, conversations with the children	Low Risk
Exploring the rock pools	Seeing where different creatures live, difference between fresh and saltwater, wet, cold, dry, seaweed.	Slipping, drowning, sharp edges, being snapped by crabs, consuming seaweed	Children and adults	Adult supervision, lifeguard trained individuals, appropriate footwear, conversation with the children.	Low Risk
Building a sandcastle	Understanding the use of tools, problem solving on what kind of sand to use, how many sandcastles to build, comparing the sizes of the sandcastle	Risk of consuming sand, unknown or hazardous material within the sand, sand in eyes.	Children	Adult supervision, gentle prompts and guidance where needed, checking the environment for items and materials that could cause harm	Low Risk

	Molds and use of tools				
Swimming in the sea	Develop an understanding of what the sea is, why do fish live in the ocean, why is it salty, why is the sea that colour, what kind fishes and ecosystems exist in the sea.	Risk of drowning, consuming the salt water, harmful animals, swept away by the currents, debris in the water, poor swimming conditions, other individuals that may pose harm	Children and Adults	Ensuring that both children and adults are confident swimmers and understand the dangers of sea, ensuring that a member of staff has appropriate lifeguarding and first aid training. To work and communicate with RNLI of the group's presence on the beach and to ensure that the lifeguarding station is manned. Finally, ensuring a suitable ratio is place for swimming, one adult for every two children.	Medium to high risk
Exploring the wildlife and experience centre	To develop an understanding of what us used to observe the seas and beaches. What is living on this beach and the local area, making links to the mathematics of the length of the beach, depth and size of the sea. Begin to make links from the centre to beach, how many seagulls	Wandering off from the building, children getting lost in the crowds of the other people, tripping hazards from the displays and wires, slippery floors from water and sand from the beach. Uneven surfaces outside the building such as the beach	Children and Adults	Ensuring there is sufficient adult supervision, at the exit and entrance ensure that there are members of staff there, support pupils where needed to access the different exhibits and information. A precheck of the environment to ensure that the indoor environment is safe. Children to wear high Visers with the settings contact information on the back, regular head	Low Risk

	are there, mussels, grabs etc.	to the ramp and potholes.		counts throughout the day.	
Going for a walk on the Welsh coastal path	Recognising patterns in the environment, what does that cloud look like. Can you see the horizon, what is that land in the distance? Why can't we see it? How long is the coastal, learning about distances in the environment. Why does it take longer to walk on and compared to a concrete path? Understanding what a sea barrier is and its purpose to stop flooding. What kind of animals live along the coastal path.	Uneven paths that could cause falls and injures. Adders are known to inhabit the dunes that the coastal path takes, so a danger of venomous bites. Getting lost in the dunes, risk of separating from the main group. Risk of children wandering off. Other people and their dogs could cause potential harm.	Children and Adults	Ensuring sufficient ratio of adults to children. Wearing of appropriate clothing and the use of high visibility jackets. Stick to the official coastal path routes, teach the children the importance of given space to the wildlife. Exploring the route prior the commencement of any activity involving the coastal path.	Low to Medium Risk
Finding minibeast and creatures with magnifier equipment	Counting the features that the creatures may have e.g. how many eyes, legs, spots, stripes etc. the differences in the kind of creatures	Possibility of these creatures and minibeasts being poisonous or harmful. The magnifier might shatter and cause injury. Uneven	Children	Ensuring adequate adult supervision. Help the children understand the various creatures that live on and near the beach. Ensure that equipment the children are using is safe and fit for purpose. Support the	Low Risk

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found such as crabs living in the rock pools with sea water and a bird perching on the rocks.

terrain may cause falls or trips while searching for minibeads. Possibility of children wandering off into the sea or away from the beach.

children exploring the rock pools, giving gentle reminders of the crabs and the risk of falling.

Part 4

A child's ability to play in an outdoor space can have an important impact on their physical health. Being able to run, jump, skip, climb and play unhindered has been shown to have positive benefits for a child's personal, social and physical development. It can also help lower various health issues, such as stress and high blood pressure (Grigg, 2016).

Outdoor learning plays a fundamental role in contributing to the well-rounded and holistic development of children in the early years and beyond. The benefits cannot be understated, and the role it plays can have an impact later in life. Robertson (2014) outlines the importance of outdoor learning and play, explaining that the outdoors contributes to the development of skills and cognitive development in many ways. It allows young people to become creative in terms of abstract thought and problem-solving, encouraging the growth of creativity within children and allowing practitioners to facilitate a child's self-directed play in an outdoor environment. Sahrakhiz, Harring and Witte (2018) explore the potential and purpose of the outdoor environment, noting that in the United Kingdom, certain areas such as health and wellbeing can benefit when children are removed from a traditional indoor environment and placed into an outdoor environment. It is also noted that there can be less pressure when working with children in this environment. White (2011) notes that the environment should fit and work for the child, rather than the other way around. A child who faces barriers to accessing an outdoor environment must still have the opportunity to develop crucial and beneficial experiences.

When considering the adult's role in supporting children and young people in an outdoor learning environment, we need to consider how we can use an outdoor space to support the development of various skills, such as mathematics and its conceptual links to the outdoors. The Curriculum for Wales (2020) framework outlines and supports what a practitioner can do to support children's numeracy in an outdoor environment, such as promoting logical reasoning and making use of mathematical language to explain what they see and to express their own ideas and thoughts. Tovey (2013) analyses and explores the impact of the theories created by Froebel (1861) and how they influenced ideas and perspectives regarding outdoor spaces accessed by children. An environment in this regard takes into account the idea that an ideal outdoor space should not be tidy, organised or quiet, nor should it be chaotic, dangerous or loud. There is a fine balance between different attributes that benefit a dynamic environment, enabling creative minds to explore and make links within the environment, such as mathematical concepts.

It is key for children to feel at ease and welcomed in an outdoor environment, especially if that space is going to be used as a learning opportunity. Bilton (2010)

makes the case that children may not want to participate in activities or play that is perceived by adults in their lives as dangerous or harmful. As a result, they may not want to explore or take risks, which could hinder the development and potential benefits of learning in an outdoor space. A child-centred approach to learning, both through the environment and professional practitioners, is crucial and beneficial. There is also a need to ensure that children can engage in their irresistible urge to play and participate in self-directed play (Bruce, 2005).

Many different organisations within the UK and Wales exist to support children and young people's access to outdoor spaces, as well as to help practitioners develop the skills and experience needed to support the use of different outdoor environments. Organisations such as Natural Resources Wales (n.d.) have created resources that can support mathematics and numeracy in an outdoor environment, noting that resources are already available. Practitioners can make use of natural materials such as leaves, sticks, grass, flowers and more. There is also a need to understand the environment, such as a forest, and consideration needs to be given to how the outdoor environment should be treated. This includes putting away rubbish, leaving nothing but footprints and being aware of any hazards.

Activities such as making leaf strings can be simple and open-ended, while providing opportunities to link different aspects of numeracy with developing skills involving counting. For example, children could ask: How many leaves are there? How many are red or green? How long should we make the string? These moments provide children with opportunities to develop critical-thinking skills and adapt their ideas.

Sessions in an outdoor environment can support further mathematical concepts, not just simple counting. Creative Star Learning (2020) explores a wide range of ways to support numeracy development within children. Areas such as the concept of time, measuring, recognising patterns in the environment, symmetry and matching can all be encouraged and facilitated in an outdoor environment. The Froebel Trust (2026) notes in its publication the importance of the autonomous learner within a child and for that child to understand what they can and cannot do. This is an important point for any child to understand what they want and how to achieve it. It is noted that children learn better, and it is hoped that through understanding Froebel's work, practitioners can respect and value the child's own work and attempts at learning.

Maynard and Waters (2014) explore the ideas of Montessori while sharing similar ideas with Froebel and highlighting the importance of the outdoors. Montessori placed greater emphasis on real-world links and physical health and development. Real-world links could include activities such as counting money, determining how far a walk is to town or estimating how long a bus journey would take to reach the next town.

Consideration needs to be given to how scaffolding in play can be enhanced and supported through outdoor learning and play. Nature Plays Forest School (2025)

explains the importance of scaffolding and how it relates to and benefits children utilising an outdoor space. Having practitioners who understand scaffolding can help a child move from one stage to another and gain experience and confidence in their abilities. In an environment such as a forest school, there are different instances where scaffolding can be used to support children of different ages, not just those in the early years.

A facilitator, for example, could support a child to collect wood and sticks to make a bug hotel, then move on to collecting wood for the purposes of making a fire. From there, the facilitator could safely support the child in building the fire themselves. This allows the child to make use of critical thinking to determine which sticks or pieces of wood are best suited to the task at hand.

Vygotsky (1978) goes into depth regarding his theory of scaffolding among children and developed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In simple terms, a child would be at the centre of their own development, with skills they have already completed or feel confident in, alongside skills that are ongoing or developing towards completion. Scaffolding has become increasingly important and crucial for the holistic development of all children. It helps to increase the involvement of the child in their learning and development. Through scaffolding, a practitioner or other professional can identify any issues a child may have in achieving certain skills and areas of development.

For example, a child may have difficulty with multiplication while engaging in outdoor play and counting how many leaves they need to make leaf art. The aim is that by breaking down a large activity, challenge or piece of play, a child can complete it bit by bit until they are confident enough to move on to the next step (The Early Years Network Team, 2023).

Scientific understanding and development also play a role in supporting children's growth and knowledge of the wider world and how it is defined. Waite-Stupiansky and Cohen (2020) explore how science has a role to play in outdoor learning. Science helps children and adults develop knowledge and understanding of why certain things happen and why they look the way they do. For example, children may wonder why a stick falls to the ground or why the sea is far away or appears closer. Science and understanding can help provide answers to these concepts within our world.

Akman (2015) states that children in the early years are not simply attuned to exploration and curiosity; they are born with an innate desire to explore and think. A sense of wonderment cannot easily be replicated, and young children want to understand the world around them and, through this, develop their problem-solving skills.

Science in Wales is enshrined and encouraged within the Curriculum for Wales, with its own Area of Learning and Experience, with the aim of developing young people

and children into having the skills needed both now and later in life. The Darwin Centre (2022) goes further by arguing that practitioners and other professionals need to have the knowledge and experience to support scientific development and understanding. Teachers are encouraged to adapt and create opportunities that help children thrive not only in the indoor environment but outdoors as well.

There are endless opportunities to provide and support science in an outdoor environment. For example, when exploring the weather, children could use sticks or their feet to tap the soil to encourage worms to come to the surface. The tapping can have a similar effect to rain hitting the ground. This could then be linked further by observing birds in the morning doing the same (MetMatters, 2025).

Murray (2019) explores the idea that science, like any education, is a fundamental right for all children across the globe, with links to the UNCRC. When making use of science, questions arise about how this links with a practitioner's practice and understanding. Science is increasingly becoming valued in a wide range of settings, with consideration being given to the benefits to a child's cognitive and social development, as well as their understanding of the wider world. Developing a curious mind through outdoor experiments can stimulate a young child's mind and encourage them to become more observant and questioning of the world around them, according to Water Rokit (2026).

The conclusion from this is that outdoor learning in any environment plays a crucial and fundamental role in the holistic and healthy development of all children. The outdoors, whether it is a forest or a beach, allows a child to grow socially, emotionally, physically and mentally. The outdoors could be an important opportunity for a child to explore and learn more freely while enabling self-directed play. At a beach, for example, taking risks such as swimming or exploring rock pools can contribute to a child's physical health and help them grow in confidence when it comes to taking risks and understanding their own limits.

An outdoor environment may also support areas of science and mathematics. Making links and exploring themes surrounding these areas can lead to the development of crucial skills in a child. Skills such as recognising patterns in the environment can be developed by observing patterns and sequences when gathering leaves of different shapes and colours. Engaging in hands-on experiences enables a child to grow, learn and understand the mathematical and scientific links within the environment. Engagement is also crucial in ensuring that children feel challenged.

Practitioners and professionals have a clear and defined role in supporting children's access to and development within an outdoor environment. Teaching moments can provide the necessary scaffolding to help a young child reach the next steps in their development and overcome challenges.

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In conclusion, the opportunities for learning in an outdoor environment should not simply be seen as children being left to their own devices outside. There are tangible benefits that can be seen in a child's confidence and understanding. These experiences can build their own sense of self and resilience, which can benefit them as they venture into the wider world and eventually reach key milestones later in life.

Therefore, practitioners should keep in mind the importance of providing ample opportunities for children to have access to an environment where barriers are removed, ensuring that no child misses out on developing as an ambitious, capable learner. Outdoor learning isn't just learning in another location or environment but providing those opportunities for a child to become their own.

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