



Moving away from the  
traditional classroom:  
Outdoor education and learning

(ECIE6001)

1903366



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## Element 1: Essay

Throughout this essay I will be comparing and contrasting the scope and approach to outdoor education in two different types of settings while discussing the importance of outdoor education and relating it to relevant theories and policies within the setting. I will also critically reflect on the barriers, challenges and benefits of outdoor provision within the two settings while linking the key challenges and benefits to the natural environment, learning and health. Outdoor learning is an approach in which teaching, and learning is experienced in a setting which defies the usual constraints of an everyday classroom. What makes learning in the outdoor incomparable to usual settings is that it allows students to embrace the natural environment whilst learning skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. Not only can outdoor provision support children and young people's educational development, it also supports their physical fitness as the outdoors encourages running, jumping climbing and jumping, developing stability and muscle development. It also supports children and young people's mental health. A study 'recently reported that 90% of children said they felt happier and healthier when learning outside, and in addition, 72% of teachers also reported a positive impact on their health' (Carlill, 2016). Within The New Curriculum for Wales the four purposes were designed and developed in order for children and young people to become ambitious, capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors, ethical informed citizens and healthy, confident individuals. Outdoor education enables children and young people to creatively and effectively achieve the four purposes. Donaldson stated that 'enriched thematic approaches can be highly effective way of learning all the way through the school years' (Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools, 2020). Outdoor education correlates with the statement made by Donaldson as it provides real-world, multi-sensory experiences which can form basis of exciting and meaningful opportunities for cross-curricular learning while children and young people are able to explore their natural environment as well as the world around them.

The two settings I will be critically comparing is a primary school and a private nursey/childcare setting. Both of these settings are based within Southwest Wales. The private nursery/childcare setting ages range between two months and eleven years. Taken from their website 'we have 2.2 acres of land, offering children fantastic opportunities for

outdoor play including a small woodland, a vegetable garden, a willow work and climbing equipment' (Setting A, 2017). Within the outdoor area, they offer a log circle, mud kitchen, willow tunnel and rope bridges. They also organise and supply Forest School sessions within their outdoor area to support the children's and young people's development. This setting was where I volunteered whilst in college in order to gain my Childcare and Education diploma. The other setting, I will be discussing is the primary school in which I am currently working in. the age range is three years to eleven years. As well as having a mainstream setting, we also provide two learning resource centres for children and young people with additional learning needs and disabilities. Within this setting, it has many different outdoor areas which enriches the children and young people's development and outdoor education. They have a vegetable garden and a polytunnel where many fruit and vegetables are grown. They also have a homemade greenhouse which was built from two-litre plastic bottles that were recycled by the children, young people and staff among the setting. Both settings provide a vegetable garden in which the children and young people can produce and use the fruit and vegetables provided. Dr Sandra Austin, a lecturer in social, emotional and scientific education states that;

I see school gardens as connective spaces that allow you to see a bigger picture. You can experience the beauty as a whole and then find interesting things such as, how plants smell or look, and you can open up pieces of fruit and see the seeds. Learning outdoors offer really important direct experience of nature rather than just reading about it in class. (ECO Gardener, 2021).

However, within the private nursery/childcare setting, they provide forest school sessions led by qualified forest school leaders on a weekly basis. Spencer-Milnes (2021) states that 'Forest School can increase a child's confidence and self-esteem through exploration, problem solving, and being encouraged to learn how to assess and take appropriate risks depending on their environment'. Forest Schools recognises the importance of risk taking and promotes the opportunities for children and young people to take them risks. Risky play and experiences will support children to challenge themselves to succeed, enable self-regulation, increase creativity while developing independence. 'Climbing, jumping from heights and hanging upside down is considered as risky' (Tovey, 2010, p. 79). It is important that safety policies and regulations do not get in the way of this vital form of play. However, within the primary school setting, forest school sessions are led by members of staff within the school, this then puts safety at the front of the approach. Activities such as climbing

trees or hanging upside down within woodlands can be seen as too much of a risk to participate in. There is a continuous battle between risk taking and safety and rather looking at risk benefits, this particular setting stands alongside risk assessments where the benefits of outdoor provision sessions are not looked at as highly as the risks. A study taken within appendix A, shows how children and young people favours unstructured nature play, in order to develop holistically and to their full potential. Regardless of structured outdoor provision or risk-taking, child-led activities. Outdoor provision is essential for children and young people's development as Poppell and Monroe (2017) found that 'decreased interactions with nature can harm children's physical health and cognitive development and create a gap between children and their environment'.

Within the private setting, the age range during the school weeks are two months to the years. Due to this being early years, development is mainly through play in which the outdoor environment can be used effectively to support their development. However, within the primary school where there is a curriculum to follow, after speaking to different professionals in the setting I found that some worried that teaching the curriculum in an outdoors provision makes it difficult to evidence the learning within books. However, the skills that children and young people can gain from the outdoors will enable them to provide evidence in books where their understanding of a concept will be demonstrated. Also, as shown in The New Curriculum for Wales. The four purposes are set to develop independence and real-life learners. This can be supported and developed through the outdoor environment. Taking risks through the outdoor environment as well as indoors I also part of the four purposes. 'Becoming ethical citizens involves gaining knowledge of nature and empathy for the Welsh environment which can only be achieved through exposure to the outdoors' (Nature Days, N.D). Within the primary setting, the Areas of Learning and Experiences (AOLE) Health and Well-being identifies the importance of experiences in the outdoor environment. Providing regular access to outdoor space and experiences allows children and young people to have a positive attitude and self-perception. Activities such as litter picking around the community, rambling, running and outdoor adventures are provided weekly within the setting to encourage outdoor participation to enrich the individual's development.

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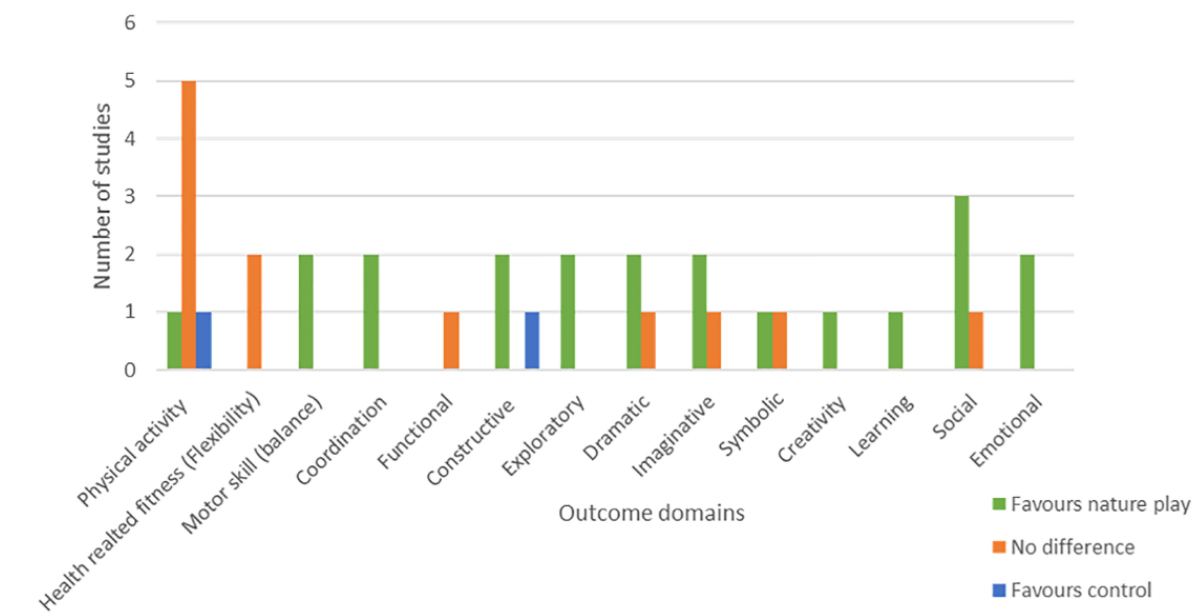
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Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of outcome of unstructured play choices.



Source: Dankiw, K. Et al. (2020).

# ABOUT US

*Out There Adventures* is a Forest School based enriching club. Forest School was developed in Scandinavia and is now growing in popularity within the UK. *Out There Adventures* consists of regular outdoor sessions in the local woodlands where children can **engage** with nature from **hands on learning**. Here at *Out There Adventures*, we encourage **healthy engagement** with risk enabling following the six guiding principles;

1. Sessions are delivered on a long-term basis (every Saturday, 11am-3pm)
2. Sessions should be **risk-aware**, not risk-averse
3. Invested in a **holistic** development of participants
4. Sessions will take place in a **natural wooded environment**
5. *Out There Adventures* will be run by a **qualified** Forest School practitioners
6. *Out There Adventures* is **learner-centered** with learner-based outcomes

To enrich the six guiding principles, we work **1:8 ratio** for the safety of all our little adventurers. *Out There Adventures* have 24 spaces available for a 24 weeks rolling enriching club.

***Book now to save disappointment!***

**“The best classroom and the richest cupboard is roofed only by the sky”**

(McMillan, 1925 cited in Machan 2021)<sup>6</sup>

*Piaget* believed that children take an **active roll** in the learning process, acting like **little scientists**. ‘acquiring new information and understanding by constructing **‘experiments’**. Using the information, they gather from their studies to **draw conclusions** and learn’ (Costantini, 2021).

At the core of *Froebel's* curriculum integrated nature and play to provide a **place for children to grow**. Froebel believed that opportunities should help children make **symbolic representations** of the world. children should develop their understanding of nature of the physical world using **play**.

*Reggio Emilia's* approach believes that the environment plays a **crucial role** in **inspiring** possible play experiences. children are capable beings who are **full of curiosity**. ‘Each child has something **valuable** to add to conversations and play’ (Claire, 2021).



**Watts, (2020).**

**Dowdall, (2020).**



**OUT THERE**

**ADVENTURES**

***We supply the resources, you bring the imagination!***

# HOW DOES IT LINK TO THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES?

The Welsh Assembly Government includes outdoor learning as a key effective feature of effective, learner-centred pedagogy (Learning through Landscapes, 2022).

*Out There Adventures* support children in all 4 of the purposes set out in the New Curriculum.

**Ambitious, capable learners** who seek and enjoy challenges while questioning and solving problems.

**Healthy, confident individuals** who build their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, reliance and empathy.

**Ethical, informed citizens** who respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society while showing their commitment to the sustainability of the planet.

**Enterprising, creative contributors** who connect and apply their knowledge and skills to create ideas and products while taking measured risks.



Yuille, (2021).

## BENEFITS IF YOU JOIN US



Children will benefit **emotionally, intellectually** and **physically**. Watch them grow in **confidence** and develop their **problem solving** and **social skills** while they build **resilience** through **adventure play**, creating a foundation for **future learning and growth**.



"Learners who are able to **engage** and **connect** with the natural world can build an empathy for the environment, showing an **awareness** of their potential impact on the living world. They can begin to explore the concept of **sustainability** in a practical way" (Welsh Assembly Government, *cited in* Williams, 2022).



"A study that **investigated** life stress and rural children discovered that children who had significant, direct contact with the natural world were **better able** to deal with **stresses in daily life** compared to those who hadn't" (Plymouth Marjon University, 2023)



"Children's **enjoyment**, wellbeing, **behaviour**, knowledge and understanding of the world, and their **physical** development **improve** as a result of using the outdoors" (RSPB, 2012, p.5).

Hidden Woods, (2021).



## WHAT WE DO

Come with us and get **creative with mud**, **hunt for bears**, **play with the elves and fairies**. Make **music in the forest**, build the **coolest dens** and get to grips with the puddles, creepy crawlies and **the great outdoors**.

Engage in hands on activities linked to the nature around you! Use our tools to **whittle sticks**, use flints to **create fires**, search for **minibeasts** while **listening to the birds**. Create yummy **mud pies** and collect **natural treasure**.

Activities that focus on inspiring a love for the natural world in each and every child through hands on experiences! It is a guaranteed good time for your **5-12-year-olds**!

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# RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

|                             |                                                      |                     |          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| <b>Location / Activity:</b> | Forest School Day – Exploration of the outdoor world | <b>Date:</b>        | 20/03/23 |
| <b>Assessor:</b>            | Sadie Maddox                                         | <b>Review date:</b> | 20/03/24 |

The boxes in the table below will expand as you type into them; pre-entered text is simply for illustration. You should delete irrelevant items and replace with text relevant to your circumstances.

Your overall risk rating – Low, medium or high – is based on your judgement about whether the BENEFITS of the activity or opportunity outweigh the RISKS.

| ACTIVITY               | How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Possible hazards                                                                                                                        | Who is at risk?                    | PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Overall risk RATING: L/M/H |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Digging area/gardening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The digging area allows children to connect with nature while strengthening their emotional and interpersonal skills.</li> <li>Digging also supports children to become environmental stewards.</li> <li>Allows children to have more scientific knowledge as well as understanding (supporting AoLE: Science and Technology) where their food comes from supporting their healthy eating and mental health (AoLE: Health and Wellbeing).</li> </ul> | Infections, cuts, scrapes and bruises. Standing water on digging area cover.<br>Eye injuries, grazes, slips and falls. Risk of choking. | Children, young people and adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff to be vigilant at all times</li> <li>Age-appropriate resources</li> <li>Staff to ensure that there is no standing water collected in the cover of the digging area</li> <li>Digging area kept clear of trip hazards</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   | Low                        |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Consumption/absorption of animal faeces                                                                                                 | Children, young people and adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covers to be placed on top of the digging area at the end of each session</li> <li>Support staff to check the area before the beginning of each session</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                     | Low                        |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Animal and insect bites, stings and allergic reactions                                                                                  | Children, young people and adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report significant number of bees/wasps to health and safety manager and if a nest is present/suspected.</li> <li>Restrict access to area if bees/wasps are swarming or if there is an excessive number present</li> <li>First aid kit to be available in case of any allergic reactions. All staff to be aware of first aider designation.</li> </ul> | Medium                     |

| ACTIVITY                               | How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Possible hazards                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Who is at risk?                    | PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Overall risk RATING: L/M/H |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Exploration of the outdoor environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes physical development and awareness of the difference in surroundings.</li> <li>Encourages children and young people to be self-aware and support their peers.</li> <li>Build their self-confidence as well as their connectiveness with the environment.</li> </ul> | <p>Cuts, grazes and trips.<br/>Eye injuries.</p> <p>Weather conditions</p> <p>Sunny days – sun burn, sun stroke</p> <p>Cold days – frost bite, hypothermia</p> <p>Rain, thunder and lightening</p> <p>Snow and ice – slippery surfaces causing injuries such as cuts, grazes, bruises or fractures and brakes.<br/>Slips, trips and falls</p> <p>Strong winds – falling trees or branches, head injuries, crushes or trips causing cuts or lacerations</p> | Children, young people and adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff to be vigilant</li> <li>Awareness talks and reminders at the beginning of each session with visual cues, supporting children with ALN.</li> <li>First aid kit available on site and to hand</li> <li>Higher adult to child ratio 1:6 (Normal ratio 1:8)</li> <li>Children supported to access activities appropriately following any IDP's, IBP's or Health Care Plans.</li> <li>Check weather conditions on the day and consider impact on the activity.</li> <li>Everyone should wear suitable footwear and clothing. Participants to be advised of the need for suitable attire in advance of the session.</li> <li>Where possible, encourage application of sunscreen, covering of shoulders and hat wearing of the individual's own sunscreen.</li> <li>Encourage wearing of warm clothing if weather temperatures are low. Support staff to encourage children and young people to keep active and even introduce a warming up activity. Keep the duration of the activity appropriate to the prevailing weather conditions.</li> <li>Encourage wearing of waterproof clothing, including footwear.</li> <li>Use extra caution when using wood when slippery and wet.</li> <li>After strong winds subside, an inspection of any trees and woods should be carried out before the particular area is used again.</li> </ul> | Low                        |

| ACTIVITY                                                    | How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Possible hazards                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Who is at risk?                   | PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Overall risk RATING: L/M/H |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Building a den</b> – using rope, logs, branches and tarp | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will develop children and young people's fine and gross motor skills</li> <li>Encourages teamwork and resilience.</li> <li>Supports creativity skills while developing independence and perseverance.</li> <li>Using the natural world for a purpose and to show what is able to be achieved in the outdoors.</li> <li>Teaches life skills that can be used for the rest of their lives</li> <li>Protects and nurture 'lost skills'</li> </ul> | <p>Rope burns, strangulation, caught in the rope.</p> <p>Suffocation from the tarp.</p> <p>Cuts, scrapes and bruises.</p> <p>Slip, trips or falls.</p> <p>Being hit by a log or branch or dropping heavy logs onto a limb.</p> | Children, young people and adults | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model and discuss the use of materials and importance of using it safety, provide visual cues for extra support.</li> <li>Material to be accounted for at the end of each session</li> <li>Check weather and area prior to use of tarp</li> <li>Process praise the children and young people to encourage safety while using the material's</li> <li>Attach ribbons to or use bright coloured rope</li> <li>Ensure ratio of staff and children and young people are correct. 1 adult to every 8 children ensures safety.</li> <li>Model how to tie rope</li> <li>Talk about tree suitability for a successful job</li> <li>Access trees prior to the activity and tape off any dead wood</li> <li>First aid kit to be carried at all times in case of burns.</li> <li>Gloves will be worn if an activity involves pulling a heavy rope.</li> <li>Demonstrate how to carry logs/branches safely (e.g., drag log or branch if longer than arm)</li> <li>If needing to move large logs/branches, give children a safety talk and explain expected behaviour.</li> <li>Model correct position and procedure to move objects and how to work as a team.</li> <li>Inform pupils of any potential hazards.</li> <li>Resources to be rich but age appropriate</li> </ul> | Low                        |

#### Element 4: Literature review 'The role of Outdoor Education'

This literature view will discuss the important perspectives which surround outdoor provision. A brief summary of the definition of outdoor provision and its perceived importance in supporting children and young people's mental and physical health will be discussed while critically analysing previous research. Other influences involved in the provision of outdoor provision such as risky play and Covid-19 and its impact in the outdoor environment will also be discussed according to their importance to outdoor provision. Recently, The Welsh Assembly Government (2023) has placed an emphasis on outdoor provision. Within the curriculum guidelines, they explained that;

Learning outdoors leads to high levels of well-being, confidence and engagement. Being outdoors supports social, emotional, spiritual and physical development, as well as providing authentic opportunities to develop and consolidate cross-curricular skills.

Article 31, of the United Nations on the Rights of a Child (1989) states that children and young people have the right to leisure and engage in play appropriate to the age of the individual. Play, indoors or outdoors is not an option nor an optional extra for children and young people, it is essential for their development. Discussions within the Ministerial Review of Play (2023) agree with the importance of play as they found that 'playing supports learning and development. Playing builds, the structures of the brain and skills such as creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking' (Play Wales, 2023, p. 7). When given the choice, children and young people will more often than not choose the outdoors, surveys carried to inform the development of the 'Foundation Phase in Wales found that the outdoors are always a top priority and favourite thing in their early childhood education setting' (White, 2014, p.2).

#### Health benefits of being outdoors

Research has shown that access to the outdoors has a positive impact on health, a study previously confirmed that 'life-satisfaction is higher for people who are physically active, and anxiety levels are lower. Five minutes of exercise in an outdoor environment can rapidly improve self-esteem, mental health and wellbeing.' (Sports Industry Research Centre, 2017, *cited in*, Homan, 2018). Dierking and Falk (1997) also advocate that long term memory retention occurs from outdoor learning experiences where Eaton (2000) found that outdoor

activities were more effective for developing cognitive skills than classroom-based learning’ (Eaten, 2000, cited in Rickinson et al, 2006). D’Ascoli and Hunter, in their 2021 work, present the Froebelian viewpoint that ‘children should experience all aspects of nature. One of the best ways children can experience nature, he argued, is through play outdoors in gardens and the wider environment’.

Although all children and young people share many of the same types of health benefits while using outdoor spaces, there are some benefits that are particularly beneficial to children and young people with mental health issues and additional behaviour needs such as attention deficient hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Time spent outdoors has restorative benefits and a positive force on stress reduction and prevention to depression and anxiety (Douglas, 2005). This has been studied in depth within the book ‘Restorative Environments’ by Berto, 2005. Wider research has particular focus on links between outdoor provision and children and young people with ADHD. Simple outdoor activities have benefits for children with ADHD as it increases their concentration levels and generally easing their symptoms. Where Taylor, et al (2001) found that the symptoms seen within children and young people were less severe for those who have opportunities to outdoor provision. Within the journal of Pediatrics, they reported that across 300 studies, they found a strong connection between positive mental health outcomes for children and young people and the presence of outdoor provision at home and in an educational setting. The report found, “exposure to green spaces was connected with improvements to physical levels— resulting in its own benefits on emotional well-being, considering the long-standing evidence of exercise on mental health” (Sweet, 2021). This can be seen in appendix E, where more than 80% of children and young people say contact with the outdoors makes them feel creative, happy, healthier and smarter.

#### Outdoor provision and risk/safety

The need for a balance of emphasis between the benefits of outdoor provision and the risk/safety perception is a factor in which professionals must consider when planning for children and young people. Little and Wyver (2008) states that ‘challenge and risk during outdoor play, allows children to test their limits of their physical, intellectual and social development’. However, injury prevention plays a crucial role in keeping children and young people safe but ‘emerging research suggests that imposing too many restrictions on children’s

outdoor risky play hinders their development’ (Brussomi. Et al, 2012). Risk taking is important for children and young people while exploring the outdoor environment. Spencer, et al, (2021) believes that ‘risky outdoor play may involve challenges, heights, speed and potential injuries, but has been associated with increased physical activity levels, decreased sedentary behaviour, improved mental health, and social benefits’. Brussomi, et al (2015) also found that ‘although there has been focus on danger, the vast majority of risky play incidents are minor’. Removing risk from outdoor provision and play for children and young people can have implications in later life. Gill, (2007) found that ‘denying children opportunities could result in risk-averse citizens, unable to cope with everyday situations; or in children simply finding more dangerous locations to carry out their risk-taking behaviour’. While Ball (2002) found that play and risk taking has many benefits to a child’s development. However, depriving children and young people of risky play has many consequences such as ‘poorer ability in motor tasks, lower levels of physical activity, poorer ability to deal with stressful or traumatic events, poorer ability to assess and manage risk and poorer social skills’ (Ball, 2002, p.50). While Haythornwaite, (2006, p.7) argues that ‘risk can be beneficial’ and should be encouraged amongst children and young people. Within a survey taken amongst parents, 58% of parents agreed and 20% strongly agreed that allowing children and young people to take risks improved their risk management skills while less than 10% disagreed and strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 60% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that there are too many unnecessary health and safety rules applied to play outdoors, this can be seen in appendix D. However, there is also research into the danger of exposure to outdoor provision. According to Lowbridge (2017) ‘children, who are learning the limits of their capabilities, are going to push themselves to the boundaries of their skill. When they don’t realise, they’ve reached their limit and try to push further – they put themselves at risk’.

#### Covid-19 and its effect on outdoor provision

Recently, a global pandemic swept through the education system, placing everything educationally on hold. Outdoor provision for a number of children and young people was also placed on hold due to the limitation of outdoor provision in their immediate area. ‘Children from less affluent families were less likely to have increased their connection to nature during lockdown’ (Friedman *cited in* Wicks, 2021). While a study found that children and young people who were able to be outdoors during lockdown were less likely to have high levels of

behaviour and emotional problems. On the other hand, children and young people whose connection to nature decreased displayed increased issues with their wellbeing, with increased sadness or anxiety. According to Wicks (2021) results of the effects of outdoor provision throughout lockdown on children and young people strengthen the case of using nature and outdoor provision as low-cost methods in order to support children and young people's mental health. Evidence of this can be seen in appendix C, where outdoor provision had increased by 58% during lockdown (Davies and Nayee, 2022). Further suggestions state that more effort should be made to support children and young peoples in connecting with nature and outdoor provision within educational settings and at home to support their mental health and wellbeing. However, further research has found that since the pandemic, children and young people have spent less time outdoors. This can be seen in appendix A, where 27.5% of children aged five to eight placed themselves as spending time outdoors 'much less' since the pandemic. While 47.5% of young people aged nine to thirteen placed themselves within the much less category. This has had a dramatic effect on the mental health of children and young people, this can be seen in appendix B where the percentage of children with mental health problems have grown amongst both boys and girls. Children and young people's mental health includes their psychological, emotional and social wellbeing, this all affects how they develop to reach their milestones and learn healthy social skills while developing holistically.

## Conclusion

The ever-growing body of research and data describing the many potential benefits of outdoor provision on children and young people's health and wellbeing implies that activities and approaches to the outdoors are worth implementing for the holistic development of the individuals. As shown, outcomes for cognitive, social and academic development demonstrates that outdoor provision can contribute to the quality of learning and development in a variety of ways. Although there is a vast amount of literature regarding the positives of outdoor provision, as with any topic, there are many areas that we have yet to learn. For instance, we have looked at the benefits of outdoor provision within an educational setting in regard to learning but how are the benefits of outdoor provision similar to or different from the same benefits from other approaches to education and learning.

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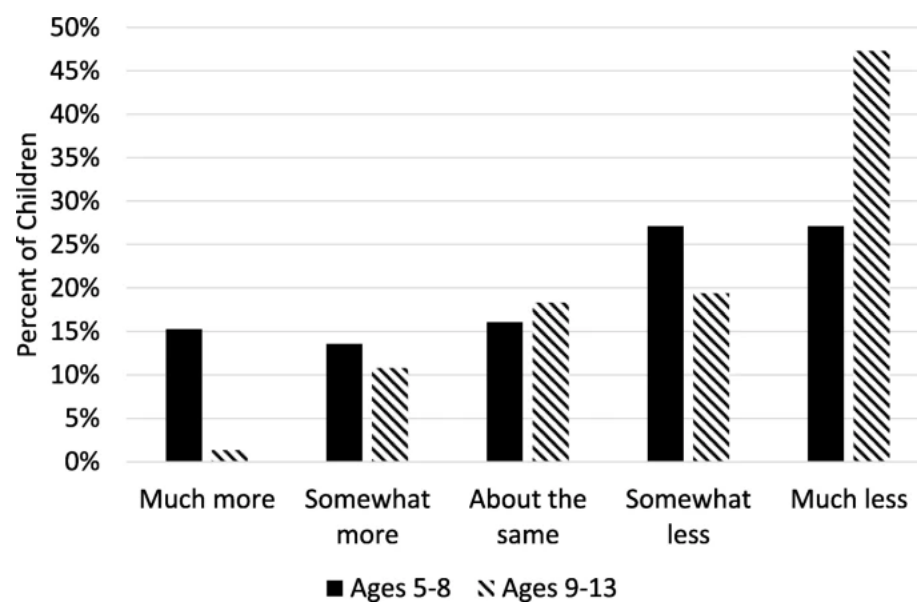
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## Appendices

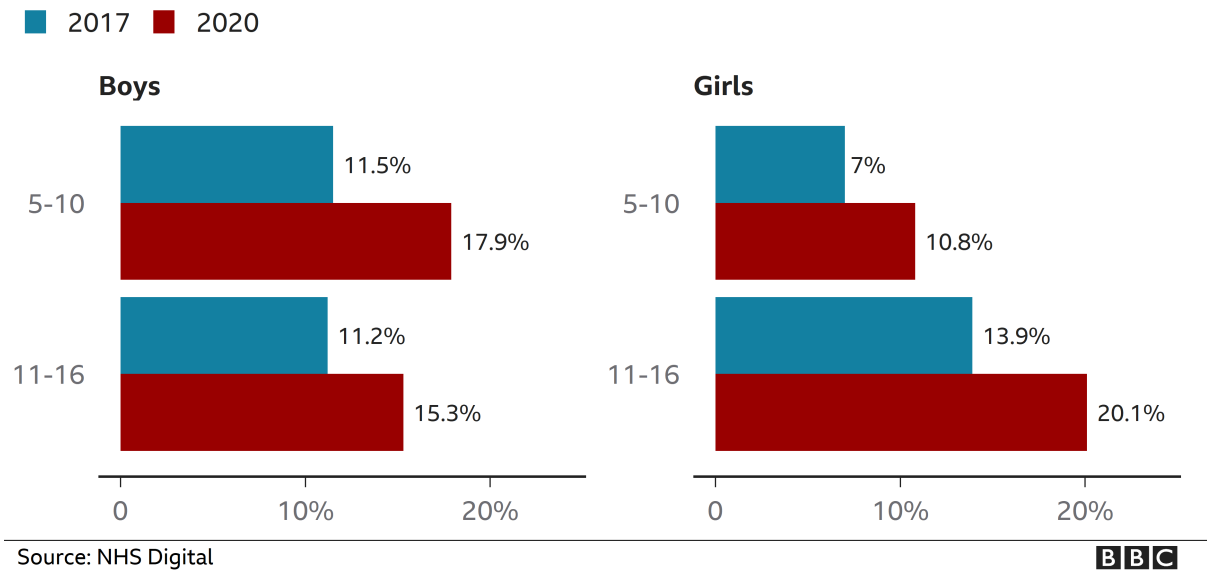
Appendix A: Percentages for each category of perceived change in physical activity.



Source: Dunton, G. Do, B and Wang, S. (2020) .

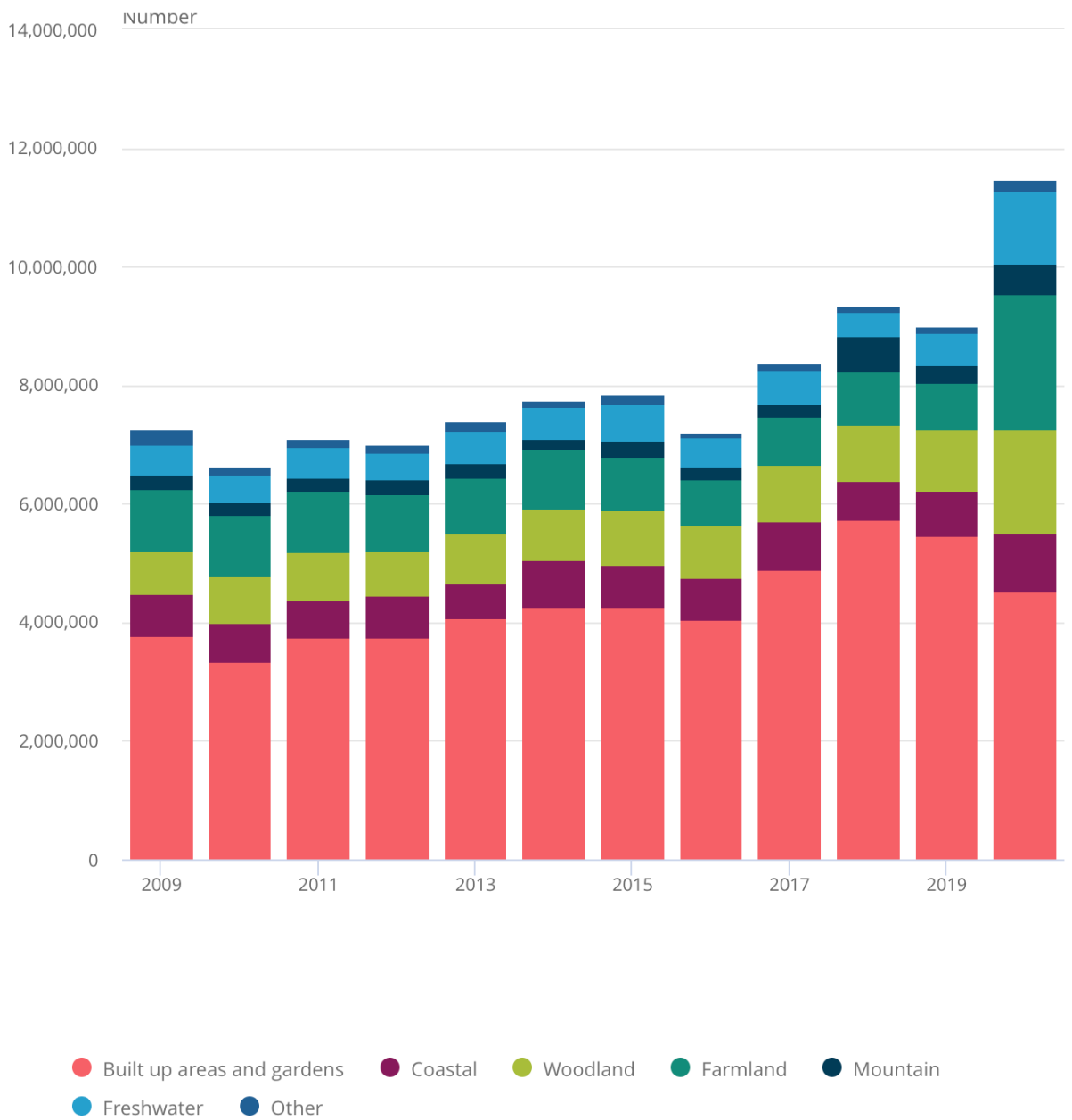
Mental health in children has worsened

% of children with probable mental health problems by age-group



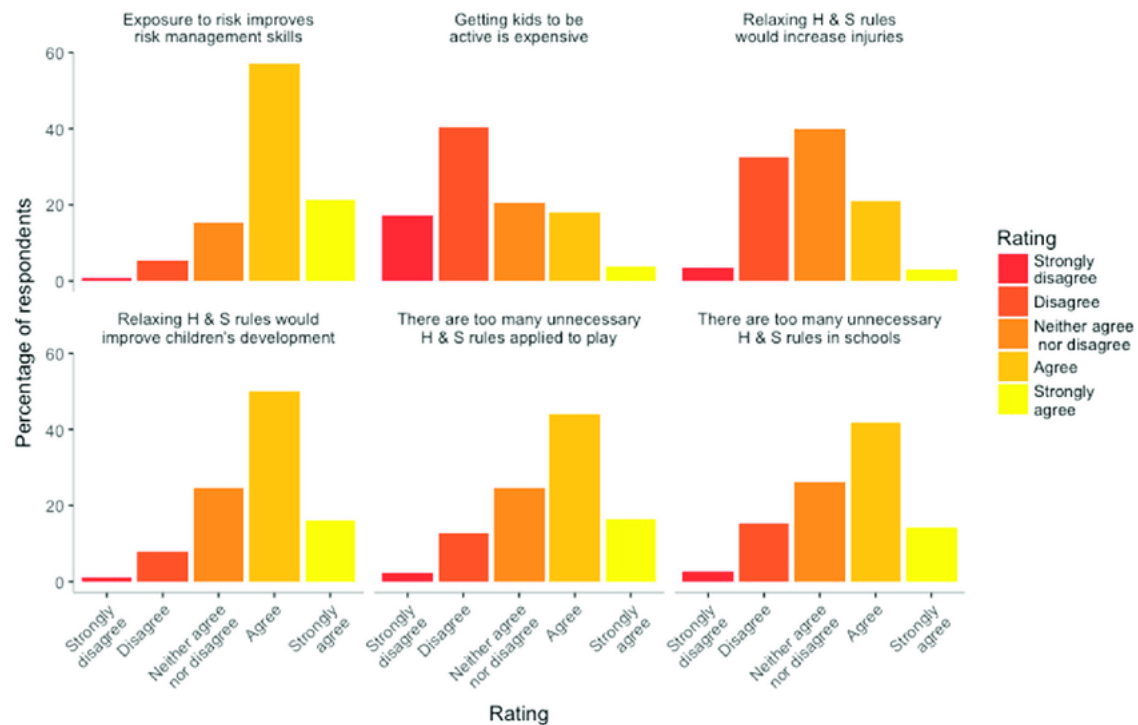
Source: Triggles, N. (2021).

Appendix C: Number of people who gained health benefits from outdoor provision.



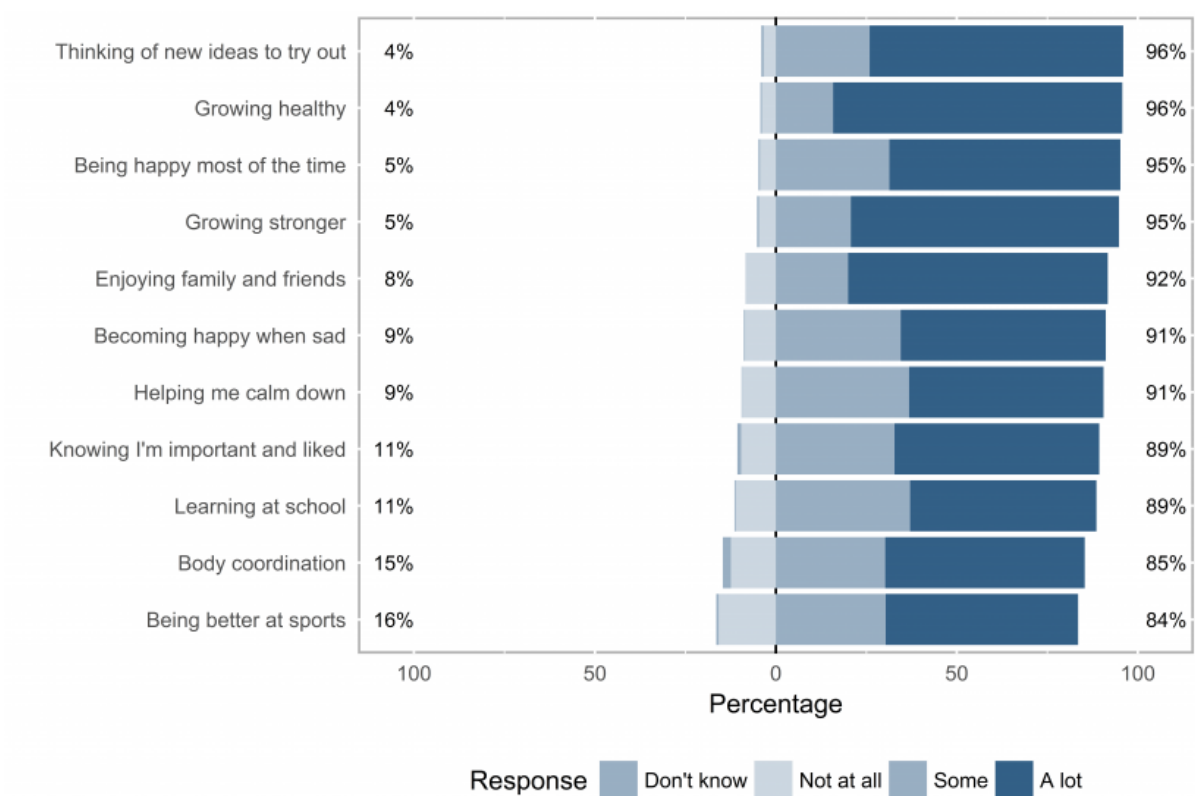
Source: Davies, H and Nayee, N (2022).

## Appendix D: Parents attitudes to health and safety rules to outdoor play.



Source: Jelleyman, C. (2019).

Appendix E: Children see many benefits of nature contact



Source: The Nature of Americans, (2023).