

No AI was used for this assignment:

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Part 1: A Woodland Photograph.

(Personal picture, 2025)

Part 2: Exploring the woodland.

The session started at 9:00am on a damp cloudy Friday morning, with a class of 20 children, aged 5 to 6 years and a total of three staff in relation to the child to adult ratio by the Welsh government (2023). The children arrived at school already dressed in their waterproofs and wellies, ready for a morning of outdoor learning. The outdoor session was implemented in a public park adjacent to the school grounds, gaining access through a linking gate. The park was surrounded by vast woodland, providing opportunities for the children to experiment with a variety of different surface levels, natural materials and scope to interact with the ever-changing environment and wildlife. The aim of the session was to be completely child-led, to allow them to explore their interests and enhance their learning through enabling adults. Prior to visiting all consent forms, risk assessments and aims of the session were agreed with both staff and guardians, alongside checks of the area before the children entered. Golden rules were also discussed with the children to ensure boundaries and safety.

The observations:

The children excitedly lined up in twos near the gate, swinging each other's arms back and forth, and jumping up and down in the line, chatting and pointing at various things they could see through the gaps of the fence in the surrounding area. As the gates opened the children ran in different directions within the designated boundaries. The children initially ran around chasing each other, playing tag whilst myself and other staff members observed to allow the children to lead their own learning.

A little while after, I noticed a group of children scurrying around on the floor and placing items in their pockets or turning the bottom of their coats inside out, to create a pouch. On approaching, one child ran over to me saying



(Personal picture, 2025)

“miss look what we found, there’s loads over there” holding up a Conker and pointing to where the group of children were. Following the child back to the group, I could see the children picking up the



(Personal picture, 2025)

Conker's from the ground. Oh, what have you found there? I asked. "Big acorns" one child told me, "They're not acorns" another child replied "these are acorns" moving to a nearby area and bringing a smaller nut shape object towards us. How do you know that is an acorn I asked, "because it has a hat on see" pointing to the small bark topping on the top of the nut. That's called Cupule, I informed them and began discussing how it protects the acorn from being eaten by animals and when it falls from the tree. The children then asked what the other object was called. So together, we looked at the similarities and differences between the two, discussing the difference in size and shape. One child commented that the acorn was like an egg shape, agreeing I responded "yes, it does look like an oval egg shape" hoping to enhance the word oval to correspond with the shape. Whilst another child suggested the other object was like a ball, to which again I agreed, however introduced them to the word sphere, before I told them it was called a Conker. The children began digging in their pockets and coats separating the Conker's and acorns into piles, categorizing between the two. I then asked which they thought they had more of, and they initially said Conker's, due to Conker's being of a larger size, however once they began counting each pile, they soon discovered they had more acorns. From this activity the children demonstrated good cardinal skills and were demonstrating mathematical language in relation to the progression step one of the mathematics and numeracy (Welsh Government, 2019).

Meanwhile in another area of the woodland, a few children had created a seesaw, using a long branch, placed over a mound of earth and were giggling. One of the children (B) was trying they're hardest pushing their legs on the ground to create the



(Personal picture, 2025)

bounce, in order to get the opposite child back down, so they could reciprocate the action. However, the opposite child could not quite reach the ground to bounce him up and kept going back up in the air, which made the group laugh. As I walked past, the children said "miss, watch" as they demonstrate the procedure. How are we going to get her down, I asked the giggling group, "We need someone bigger than B" suggest one child.

Why is that, I questioned, "because B is bigger than her, she is stuck, so we need someone bigger to push B up". A few children at this point rushed to take on the opposing side, determined to get B up

in the air. In turns, each child tried and only a few were nearly close to equaling B. Another child then went behind another, and B went up in the air. A cheer echoed around the woodland, as the children had managed to achieve their goal. I asked the children how they did it, and two children replied, “two children on one side is bigger than B on that side”, “Oh I see so two children are heavier than one.” I replied introducing the word heavier to their vocabulary. I then asked how they could balance the seesaw, which they began attempting, experimenting with different children at a time to create the desired balance required to perform the seesaw action. The children were experimenting with how applying different amounts of force or weight can change the motion or sequence of objects, whilst demonstrating knowledge of materials to create their design. This supports progression step two and three in science and technology, (Welsh Government, 2019).

Throughout this session there were also children exploring and climbing the many surrounding trees. I noticed the children had formed a line behind this one particular tree and one by one were attempting to climb it. The children found it quite tricky and kept sliding down. At this point I went over to assist and began encouraging them, through offering them verbal instructions on where to get the best grip and where to position their legs. As each child climbed, they had to pull themselves up the trunk to get a grasp on some of the outstretched branches, using upper body strength and the



(Personal picture, 2025)

right amount of force in their legs, in order to gain leverage up the tree. I asked them what they thought was helping them get up the tree, one child told me it was the bark on the tree and the lines (tread) on his wellies sticking together, demonstrating an understanding of friction. Discussing this further we then went around to look at the other trees. We discovered many different textures, some smooth, which they found hard to climb due to less grip, some which grew straight with no lower branches and the easier ones had more bark on. This gave children the confidence exploring the different textures on the tree trunks, whilst developing a simple understanding of the ecological systems building them towards progression step one of science and technology in defining our universe (Welsh Government, 2019).

After this outdoor learning session, I can see how the children enjoy the physical, engineering and environmental aspects of the outdoors. To further promote this in future sessions, I will look at bringing additional resources such as ropes, bags, magnifying glasses and clay. These future resources may help expand children's engineering and loose parts play, whilst also providing them with more opportunities to discover in detail with the magnifying glasses and clay different particles and patterns.

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	Child led Woodland exploring	Date:	4 th September 2025
Assessor:	Kelly Evans	Review date:	6 th February 2026

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?	Potential hazards and risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Exploring the natural area independently.	Develops physical skills, through movement, collecting objects, and manoeuvring on uneven surfaces enhancing fine and gross motor skills and building vestibular awareness. Children's senses are heightened due to the different natural textures, sights, sounds and smells. Language and communication skills are enhanced through interaction and introduction to new words from both staff and fellow peers. Social skills through playing with each other, co-operating and taking turns. Creating opportunities for children to become ambitious, capable and creative learners, through developing their knowledge of different plants and species, take different roles and expressing themselves. Enhances the children's rights to relax and play, allowing children to explore and play.	It is a public area allowing members of the public to be within the surrounding proximity. Potential of off lead dogs and other animals, possible risk of animal related injuries. Animal Faeces and other manmade objects, glass or needles could be on the ground, risk of contact could possibly cause infections and lacerations. Trees falling and low branches, potential physical harm through cuts, scratches, broken bones, head injuries. Weather conditions, high temperatures, storms or icy, potential risk of dehydration, hypothermia or damage withing the environment. Uneven surfaces provide risk of falling or slipping resulting in cuts, bruises or potential fractures.	Children and adults	Pre checks before entering the area by trained staff, checking the ground and trees for potential risks. Ensure weather conditions are suitable. Ensure children and adults are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions and have appropriate equipment water, hats or gloves. Discuss with staff and children the boundary areas and staff monitor potential risk points. Set and discuss with children some golden rules, which include staying within boundary, to check with an adult before touching unfamiliar objects, washing hands before and after activity. Not to disturb or interact with animals. Adult to child ratio and ensure a register of children knowing the number attending. <u>Designated first aider and first aid kit on site at all times.</u>	Low

Activity	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Potential hazards and risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Collecting natural Loose parts.	Develops fine and gross motor skills through physical movement, pincer and grasping objects, enhancing hand and eye co-ordination. Numeracy skills sorting, counting, measuring and weighing. Knowledge and understanding of the world, understanding the changing seasons, identifying different leaves, seeds, insects and birds. Language skills through communicating and discussions. Ethnical citizens by understanding the food chains and circle of life for the natural environment and how humans' impact or promote the sustainability on the planet.	Choking from putting objects in mouths. Unfamiliar or dangerous objects possible glass, needles could be on the ground. Animal faeces which children could touch or fall into, potential risk of infection.	children	Pre checks before entering by trained member of staff, Discuss with children and staff golden rules on washing hands before and after activities, not putting anything near mouths and to not touch any unfamiliar objects. Staff member to assist any children with SEN needs. <u>Designated first aider and first aid kit on site at all times.</u> Gloves/litter picker with bags so staff can dispose of any unwanted materials.	Low
Building using natural materials.	Numeracy skills, through experimenting with length, width and weight. Physical development enhancing gross and fine motor skills through movement, grasping, carrying. Language and communication through discussions with staff and peers. Social skills, co-operating with each other, forming friendships, taking turns. Scientific skills through experimenting with gravity and force.	Possible risk of children poking others with sticks whilst running resulting in scratches, cuts. Lifting heavy objects which could drop on themselves or others, resulting in scratches, cuts, pulling a muscle or fractures, from large logs landing on various parts of the body. Falling off or tripping over items, could result in scratches, cuts or fractures.	Staff and children	Pre discussion on how to hold and move around with logs and sticks carefully, Inform children if something is heavy ask for help from each other or staff. Designated first aider and first aid kit on site at all times.	medium

Activity	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Potential hazards and risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Climbing trees	Gross and fine motor skills, through gripping and pulling body through the different levels of the trees. Cognitive thinking developing self-assessing and spatial awareness skills, through working out the best and safest routes, Numeracy looking at height, length and weight of different branches and trees. Knowledge and understanding identifying which trees to climb. Friction and force from the different tree surfaces. Enhancing the senses through textures, smells, sights, smells and sounds. Language and communication skills talking to each other and staff, use of descriptive language, Creative and imaginative skills through role play. Encouraging children to become confident building resilience, determination, problem solving and understanding good and bad risks.	Potential risk of cuts, scratches and fractures from loss of grip and sliding or falling. Branches could snap through misjudgement of weight and clothes ripping or becoming caught in branches, resulting in scratches, cuts, bruising or fractures. Risk of children climbing to high and becoming stuck or scared to find the way back down.	Children	Pre discussion on how high we should climb. Appropriate clothing and footwear to be worn. Designated first aider and first aid kit on sight. Rule of one, on a tree at a time. Discussion no one to be under the branch a person is on. Staff member to be near tree when children are climbing.	Medium

Part 4: Science and mathematic within the outdoor environment.

Outdoor learning or provision is described as learning or play that takes place in outdoor spaces or natural environments, rather than the conventional classroom or indoor setting. Playing outdoors provides children with “*unique opportunities*” to engage with nature, whilst supporting their academic and holistic development (Educate outside, no-date). White (2013, p10) states how children have a right to explore and access outdoors areas, in order for them to discover what they are capable of, within a naturally inclusive environment. Maynard and Waters (2014) discuss how children’s development is enhanced when exploring the outdoors, from health, fitness benefits to problem-solving skills, whilst developing an understanding of sustainability. Mayard and Waters (2014) also add how these benefits not only support their learning, but also, found children are more likely to retain information due to the level of engagement.

The benefits of outdoor learning and playing have been developing and adapting for over a century. One of the main advocators for learning outdoors was Friedrich Froebel, who believed children develop their understanding of the world through firsthand experiences. Froebel described children as creative, curious and active learners, who gain more knowledge through play and self-activity, than within a classroom (Early education, 2021: Tovey, no-date). Froebel’s theory spread worldwide and gave children in the 1800s to the mid-1900s the opportunities to explore the natural environment within education (Machan, 2016). This is now one of the main pedagogies by the Welsh Government today, which created a new curriculum, enhancing the need for experiences outside the classroom (Welsh Government, 2023, p6). These opportunities within settings are even more essential now, as studies shown by Save the children in 2022, that “*only one in four children play outside regularly*”. Some of the reasons were due to safety concerns, modern technology or complaints from general public about noise (Save the children, 2022: Waite, 2011, p43). Waite (2011, p43) continues to discuss how when children do spend time outdoors in today’s society, it is in man-made areas, which are structurally built. However, these structurally built man-made play areas are no comparison to the opportunities a natural outdoor environment can provide towards children’s development. Natural environments offer opportunities to develop their curiosity, promote healthier lifestyle and well-being, along with encouraging creativity and imagination. Froebel believed it was the “*quality of the environment*” and the relationships within it that were paramount (Tovey, no-date).

Another approach which favors practitioners teaching children through experiences and the environment is the Reggio Emilia style of teaching. Reggio Emilia is built on twelve principles one of which is the environment being the “*third teacher*” and is arranged to ignite children’s interests (Robson, 2016, p7&8). This coincides with Froebel’s approach and believes having effective engagements with both people and environments is “*crucial*” in children’s development (Tovey, no-date). To ensure this the environment is required to be adaptable and updated often, to suit the current

needs and interests of the children (Robson, 2016, p7&8). Robson (2016, p12) continues to discuss, how environments should provide opportunities for exploring, whilst offering challenges in a safe way. Exploring challenges and risks is promoted within the Froebelian approach and discusses how practitioners should look more at the benefits risks can have, rather than the disadvantages (Tovey, no-date, p11). Froebel believed children who experience risks within play become more safer explorers than children who are protected from it (Tovey, no-date, p11). This is supported today within Curriculum for Wales, four purposes which promotes children to take manageable risks to become “*healthy, confident individuals*” (Pacey Cymru, no-date). However as much as some practitioners want to provide opportunities to explore risk benefits, some regulations ask to remove “*dangerous objects*” to avoid accountability issues (Hwb, no-date, p38). Although Froebel believed adults should support children to take risks themselves and to do this through interaction by offering direction and teaching them the strategies to be safe whilst exploring the desired area (Tovey, no-date, p12). Robson (2016, p13) advice to practitioners before entering outdoor environments is to discuss safety with the children and to then observe and listen to the children’s ideas and interests. Once practitioners understand children’s interests, developing the outdoor area becomes the next objective.

To support the development of outdoor areas, the Froebelian approach suggests providing or having access to garden or grassed areas, that offer scope for investigation and curiosity, throughout the seasons. These areas can provide opportunities to grow their own vegetables or plants and work closely with wildlife. Children then have access to witness the difference in seasons and life cycles, within plant growth and insects (Tovey, no-date). Therefore, they begin to understand how the world is full of living things that rely on each other for survival, linked with science and technology development within the curriculum of Wales (Welsh Government, 2019). Furthermore, it also supports children’s data collection skills. This was demonstrated in part two of this assignment, where children collected acorns and Conker’s, which they then categorized, demonstrating knowledge of statistic data skills (Welsh Government, 2019). These both work in connection with the four purposes of the Welsh curriculum to create “*ethical, informed citizens*” who understand the importance of sustainability of our planet (Pacey Cymru, no-date). Froebel also promotes providing areas with uneven surfaces or unkept spaces to offer opportunities to climb trees, balance on logs, which encourages physical development (Tovey, no-date). Offering opportunities like these for children to experience allows experimenting with forces and energy, understanding how gravity works or how forces affect themselves and other objects (Welsh Government 2019). In relation to mathematical development these opportunities also allow children to become familiar with geometry, in regard to exploring positions, measurements and weight (Welsh Government, 2019). This was evident within part two of this assignment, when observing the children exploring force and weight, when building a seesaw and climbing the trees. These encourage children to work towards three of

the four purposes of the Welsh curriculum in relation to problem solving (Pacey Cymru, no-date). Lastly, providing open-ended and transferable resources, known as loose parts (Tovey, no-date & Gull et al, 2019). Simon Nicholson defined loose parts as materials that can be transformed and manipulated within child centered play, corresponding with the theory of affordance (Gull et al, 2019). Gold and Elicker (2020, p2) agree and discuss how children have been playing and creating things with loose parts and other materials that offer opportunities for construction since it's "*inception*" and through child led interests, has developed children's mathematical and geometric learning using resources that offer affordance. Affordance is when an object or space within the environment, has potential to be or do multiple effects (Hwb, no-date). Loose parts support children to develop their design and engineering skills, linking to the science and technology section within the Welsh curriculum, through constructing and exploring different properties with materials (Welsh Government, 2019). Exploration of loose parts also supports children's recognition and understanding of both number and geometry, through making connections with numbers, quantities shapes and measurements (Welsh Government, 2019). These skills develop children's "*symbolic thinking*", which provide opportunities for children to understand the mathematical and scientific facts of life (Tovey, no-date & Gull et al, 2019).

The Welsh Government (2023, p7) and Bilton (2010, p164) agree with the Froebelian and Reggio approach and also discusses the benefits outdoor learning has on children's development both academically and holistically. However, highlights how practitioners would need to "*embrace*" these opportunities and ways of teaching in order for it to work effectively. White (2013) states that while planning for outdoor provision or learning, can work in parallel or extend indoor learning, it is also important that practitioners understand how it also differs. Bilton (2010, p165) discusses how, through cautious planning, observing and later evaluating how the resources were used and what occurred during the session, improves future outdoor sessions for the children. This is further supported by the Froebelian approach, which discusses how practitioners working in partnerships with the communities and parents, help establish a greater understanding of the children's learning, alongside being "*co-players*", who enrich, guide and support children's intentions (Tovey, no-date and Waite-Stupiansky & Cohan 2020). Continuing the Froebelian approach adds the importance of providing uninterrupted play, which is child led and nurturing for the development of curiosity in which to extend their learning even further (Tovey, no-date). This demonstrates the fundamental role practitioners play in providing effective provision within the outdoors, through the use of open-ended resources and questioning, building on the interests of the children, to encourage engagement within their learning, whilst always facilitating and interacting (Machan, 2016). Gold and Elickers (2020, p3) continue to discuss the importance of interactions through playing and adult-guided play, in offering opportunities for mathematical and scientific language to be used, whilst developing design and engineering skills. Through this it encourages children to form effective relationships

and respect for others, alongside learning how to communicate and explain their ideas, working towards two of the four purposes in the Curriculum for Wales (Pacey Cymru, no-date). Ryder-Richardson (2013) further supports practitioners' involvement, by stating practitioners should join in and play alongside the children in order to model language, ask questions, whilst introducing new techniques, ideas and skills. Robertson (2017) suggests settings to place notices or having pocket size key mathematical or scientific values, words or phrases for all staff to have or see, will provide consistent flow of vocabulary or key words or phrases for the children to learn through repetition. Through these skills practitioners can build an understanding of areas where engagement is high, to whether it provides challenges or if it enhances children's development, whilst also helping to identify the areas needing improvement (Richardson, 2013, p53 and Bryce-Clegg, 2015, p104). Strategies like this support the zone of proximal development theory by Vygotskys, which put emphasis on children gaining cognitive skills through interaction. Vygotsky also believed having knowledgeable practitioners, who can give guidance and scaffold children's development, through a child led approach, whilst understanding what children can do independently or identify when they need assistance is vital is scaffolding their learning (Mcleod, 2025). Unfortunately, not all practitioners enjoy the outdoor environments and dislike feeling cold, wet or struggle with the risk factors or how to interact with the children in these environments (Bilton, 2020, p8-9). Tovey (no-date) states how practitioners who are anxious can input their own anxieties on to the children, which then impacts the children's development. Other reasons for the dislike of outdoor provision, could be due to a lack of personal experience outdoors or environmental knowledge, making them less confident to facilitate children's learning (Bilton, 2020, p8-9). Bilton also highlights how some practitioners dislike it due to staffing issues or spaces being too small for the number of children. Then there is also the issue of safety concern by parents and senior staff, which all have an impact on outdoor play being effectively implemented (Bilton, 2020, p8-9).

In relation to the research mentioned above, it is clear to see how beneficial outdoor provision is to children's holistic development. The Froebel approach has created a beneficial structure for outdoor provision, which is currently within the Welsh curriculum today. However, it also demonstrates how knowledgeable practitioners who fully understand children's development, along with how to support and challenge their abilities, whilst being invested in their interests can further enhance their mathematical and scientific skills. Robertson (2017, p21) writes how practitioners showing enthusiasm and enjoyment in the areas of math's and science, can disperse the negativity around these subjects in later life.

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