Woodland Activity (1022 words)

The activity is based in a woodland which is aimed mainly to be child- led with some adult direction if needed. The activity is for four children aged four years old with two adults present. It is aimed for children of varying abilities, as there are two adults present those who feel shy or require some guidance one of the adults can facilitate and provide focused attention and support to the children who need it. The activity allows the children to work individually or with their peers if they choose to, it is open- ended and allows them to guide their own learning according to how they feel or what they want to explore. There will be a collection of resources, mainly natural to provide the children an opportunity to explore and use their imagination to create their own activity/ experience.

Role of the Adult

There are two adults present during the activity in the woods who will both begin the experience by talking to the children about the safety boundaries they should keep within which will be marked using large logs that have fallen on the ground. The role of the adults is to discuss with the children why these boundaries are being put in to place so they understand and take the information in. The main aim of the activity is to keep it child-led, which enables them to freely explore within a safe boundary that the practitioners have risk assessed prior to the beginning of the activity. The woodland environment is to be risk assessed and ensured the area is safe for the children to investigate. Whilst the adults should ensure the environment does not impose any serious harm or danger to the children, the children should also have the opportunity to measure their own risk. They should realise their individual capabilities and boundaries through individual exploration. The activity is to explore the child's creativity and encourage discovery and experimentation.

Both adults are to observe the children in how they use the resources, engage and explore their imagination in different ways, whilst also being available to facilitate if needed and answer any questions. It is important the adults allow the children to engage in their own experience unless they seek help. They should also allow the children to

interpret the materials in their own way, the practitioners should not instruct on the uses but let the children use their inventiveness.

The activity will take 2 hours, the first half of the activity is to allow the children explore within a marked area and the second half of the activity is a nature trail on a short walk to discover different aspects in the woods by allowing the children to ask questions and explore their senses. This allows the children to sightsee different insects, bugs, flowers and wildlife gaining an understanding in the natural world, having the support of the practitioners by answering their questions which will enhance their knowledge. The children will have an activity sheet each which will have four different plants on, which they can spot. The nature trail allows for curiosity, encourages discovery and experimentation.

Resources Required

- 4x wellies
- 4x coats
- 4x magnifying glasses
- Water bottles and snacks (in lunchboxes)
- Emergency contact details
- iPad
- Tar pooling and string
- Wipes
- Sticks
- 4x buckets
- First aid kit
- Mobile phone
- 4x activity sheets and pencils

Safety of Group

The practitioners have tar- pooling which will be set up at the start of the activity for the children to shelter under and will be an area they can discuss as a group about the different items they have discovered on their trail in their buckets. It will also be used to

have a snack and drink, during this time the adults should take the opportunity to continue the activity by suggesting a game such as Eye spy or build a discussion between the children by asking questions to clarify their understanding.

Areas of Learning and Links to the Curriculum

This woodland outdoor activity follows the foundation phase by allowing the children to risk take, experiment, solve problems and make decisions by themselves or as part of a group. It supports many areas of learning including; personal and social development, well- being and cultural diversity, language, literacy and communication skills, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

The activity is a rich environment to enhance the children's vocabulary, language and communication in a different context that builds understanding. It allows them to talk about what they are doing and explain the process but also elaborate with some detail and extend their ideas and imagination.

The outdoor environment provides opportunity for them to investigate and explore their curiosity about the world around them through experimentation and questioning. The activity continues to support the Foundation Phase (2015) as the children learn to care, show concern, responsibility and respect for the living things and the environment they live in. The children develop their team working skills and learn to work together, listen to each other and solve problems using trial and error methods.

The woodland environment allows plenty of physical development, building the children's vestibular, proprioception and kinesthesia systems through movement, adrenaline, the automatic responses to explore individually and focusing on what's important at specific times. For example, when the children go on their nature trail, they are using their muscles to walk, they are able to ask questions which activates their engagement and developing their balance and special awareness by walking down steps and through a river. (The Motor Story, no date).

Through physical play as the Foundation Phase (2015) says, it allows the children to understand how their bodies move, develops their coordination, fine and gross motor skills, grow in confidence and self- esteem and develop sensory awareness.

The activity also links to the new curriculum by encouraging the children to develop secure, spiritual and ethical values and have a consideration of the impact their actions have on the world surrounding them. It also encourages them to be creative and an expressive learner by having a wide range of opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding. (Welsh Government, 2017).

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Likelihood and severity	Benefit	Action to remove or reduce risk	Who?	When?	Risk Level
	Weather- cold, wet/ raining or hot and sunny.	Children shivering or dehydration/ heat stroke.	4 4	Knowledge with the weather and changes in seasons/ climate change.	All children will be wearing warm clothes, coats and wellie boots. Both practitioners to ensure children apply sun cream before going onto the trip and to wear a sun hat. All children will have their own water bottle and have access to it at all times. Tar-pooling to be set up at the start of the activity for shelter.	Children	At any time during the activity	Medium
Exploring the woodland	Uneven ground, loose branches, tree roots sticking out of the ground. Trees, branches and gorse bushes at eye level of the children. Harmful objects- glass/ litter.	Trips, slips and falls. Twisted, broken and fractured limbs. Grazes, bruises and cuts.	4 4	Encourages the children to be self-aware and develop their team work by supporting their peers. Promotes physical development and makes the children aware of the difference in surroundings.	Both practitioners to begin the experience with a clear discussion involving the children and informing them of the boundaries the children are to keep within. Risk assessment to be carried out before the activity to ensure there is no glass/ broken bottles and litter that may cause harm. Adults to supervise at all times. Both practitioners to have first aid training. First- aid kit and mobile phone with children's emergency contact	Everyone	Anytime	Medium

					details to be available at all times.			
	Missing child.	Child may go missing or get lost by wondering off.	1 2	Children gain understanding and importance of rules/ boundaries. Builds relationships and trust within each other.	Headcount to be done regularly.	Children	Anytime	Low
	Pollen, unknown allergies.	Allergic reaction	2 3	Develops understanding of where pollen comes from and the importance of it for bees etc.	Practitioners to be aware of any allergies the parents have informed them of. Any allergies such as hay fever, child to have been given an anti- histamine tablet prior to keep symptoms under control.	Children	Anytime	Low
During nature trail.	Stinging nettles, brambles ,poisonous plants. Insect bites/ stings from bees or wasps.	Irritation or rash affecting the skin.	3 3	Develops knowledge of nature and the effects of the wildlife and plants. Allows children to identify and avoid allergens.	Discuss with the children the affects certain plants have and make them aware of them. Apply first aid if necessary. Warn them not to touch/ catch bees or wasps. Discuss with the children how significant bees are for pollination and the reproduction of plants and that they should not hurt them. Practitioners to choose any area for the children to explore which has	Children	Anytime	Low

					minimal if any stinging nettles. Inspect area thoroughly and be aware of any poisonous and discuss with the children which they are. Children not to pick anything which is living or growing. Practitioners to guide children with plants they can touch to explore their senses and curiosity, such as wild garlic.			
	Sharp branches and thorns.	Children cutting themselves causing injury.	4 5	Builds children' self-confidence and knowledge in a new sensory environment. Children learn to be self-aware an understand/identify danger.	Practitioners to use first aid kit to clean wound and apply plaster to prevent infection.	Children	Anytime	Medium
Tree Climbing and balancing on logs	Impact with the ground	Broken bones, cuts, lacerations, head injuries.	4 5	Encourage self-confidence and learn capabilities within a safe limit.	Children to be instructed before the activity starts to not climb trees without supervision. Adult supervision at all times and children to only climb a maximum height of 1 meter.	Children	Anytime	Medium
Trees falling	Falling onto the children or adults.	Broken bones, cuts, bruises, head injuries.	3 4	Children learn to become self-aware in the	Woods to be inspected thoroughly before activity. If there has been a recent major storm, the	Children and adults	Anytime	Medium

				environment.	woods should be inspected by a professional to remove any hazardous trees safely.			
Dogs	Scaring or intimidating the children	Bite, upset to children.	3 4	Makes children aware of their own safety.	Dogs in the woods are unlikely to be on leads so practitioners should be aware at all times if there are any walking through the woods and to discuss with the children at the start not to approach the dogs as they may not be friendly.	Children and adults	Anytime	Low
Steep sided banks/ areas	Falling	Bruising, broken/ twisted bones	4 4	Children become aware of the natural causes and how to keep themselves safe from danger.	Activity to be done where there are no steep banks the children may fall down during experience. Whilst walking through the woods, practitioners to explain to the children the danger of them and not to go running or close by them.	Children	Anytime	Low

Issue/ environmental feature	Damage that could occur	How to lessen negative impact	Resources needed	Who is responsible?
Squashing plants during activity	Trampling the grass/ plants exposing bare ground. Losing plant life.	Set up an area which is clear of flowers. When taking the children on the nature trail keep to the walking path.	N/A	Practitioners
Snack time	Littering.	Encourage the children to recycle any waste and compost if possible, on return from the activity. For example, apples can be taken home and put on the compost heap. Picking rubbish up and putting back in the bag it came in.	Compost bin, recycling bags in nursery setting.	Practitioners and children
Nature trail	Causing damage to trees/ insects Squashing or damaging insect life. Changing site biology.	Encourage the children to explore the natural woodland but discuss with them the importance of respecting the wildlife and the surroundings. Explain to the children not to pick flowers/ plants so they understand the importance of bees needing the plants and those which there is a limit of which is why it's important to respect the environment. Allow the children to use the iPad to take photos instead which can then be used in nursery to paint and	N/A	Practitioners and children

		reflect on the activity. Remind children to be gentle with any bugs or insects they have found and to return them to where they found them after the activity.		
Branches/ wood	Breaking branches causing damage	Use the wood on the ground rather than breaking branches.	N/A	Practitioners and children

Activity Sheet

Can you find these plants?

Dock Leaves

Stinging Nettles

Bluebells
Resources

Wild Garlic

(Source: Run Wild My Child, 2018)

Emergency Contact Information

Student Name: _____ Birth Date: _____
Address: _____
Previous School: _____
**Health Data / Allergies: _____

Parent/Guardian Information:
Name: _____ Relationship: _____
Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Name: _____ Relationship: _____
Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____

Emergency Contact Information: (Others that can be reached)
Name: _____ Relationship: _____
Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Dismissal
Check appropriate dismissal: Parent Pick up ___ Bus ___ After Care ___
If parent pick-up who? _____
If bus, name of bus: _____

Does your child have any siblings in the school? Yes No How many? ____
Name: _____ Grade: ____ Teacher: _____
Name: _____ Grade: ____ Teacher: _____

Authorized to release student from school:
_____
_____

Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

(Source: Pinterest, no date)

(Source: Amazon, no date)

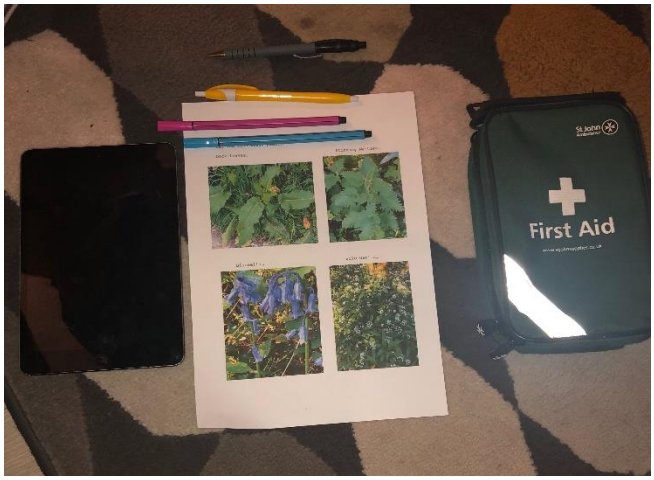
(Source: Symons, 2019)

(Source: Symons, 2019)

(Source: eBay, no date)

(Source: Target, 2019)

(Source: Symons, 2019)



(Source: Symons, 2019)

Element 4 (2440 words)

The activity was developed to encourage the children to explore their imagination, senses and discovery through the use of natural and reusable resources in an outdoor environment. As Ouvry (2003) describes the outdoor learning environment allows children to engage in fantasy play and develop a positive outlook for learning such as resilience, playfulness and an opportunity for risk- taking. The activity has been created to provide a place where children can look, feel, manipulate, listen and discover the wonders of nature which provides endless opportunities for discovery. (Tovey, 2007). This links to Piaget who believed children use the environment around them to direct their own learning, which this activity does by encouraging invention and experimentation linking to Piaget's active learning approach of cognitive development. (Halpenny, 2014). Piaget feels children should be provided with opportunities for active exploration and investigation, so they are able to create and understand based on their experiences. (Halpenny, 2014). The activity created this opportunity by the use of natural resources which children could use to their own interpretation. A report carried out by Dowdell et al. (2011) found that the natural environment is a place children can build positive relationships which allows for social development and it continually acts as a place of learning.

The woodland environment allows children to perceive and assess the risks to avoid injury by exploring their surroundings and learning what their bodies are capable of. It enhances the quality of the activity by offering a safe place to experiment but allowing the children to take challenges and risks whilst engaging with the natural environment. (Little and Eager 2010; Gill 2007).

Greenfield (2004) and Tovey (2007) emphasise the importance risk taking has on children as it enables them to try new activities and test their limits in order to develop into a fully functioning and competent person. Bilton (2010) suggests adults need to observe and allow children to resolve issues by not interfering so they learn how to resolve a dispute and also learn their capabilities of risk and the boundaries.

The Wisdom of Nature (2013) and Nedovic and Morrissey (2013) states children are becoming more limited to opportunities due to the risk implications, however by

negotiating risks this allows for rewarding and safe challenges which both increases a child's confidence, physical skills and pleasure. The Wisdom of Nature (2013) continues to discuss by assessing the risk factors, children are likely to do things within their ability and that their competence should be considered before eliminating anything that acts as a challenge for the children, through close observation adults can intervene if needed. By being attentive, children who may be in a risky situation the adults should guide a safer alternative which still allows for development of achievement and physical skills. (Dowdell et al. 2011).

Knight (2009) believes the lack of outdoor play relates to present issues of childhood obesity, behavioral issues and a lack of social skills. Children have less opportunities to play outside their homes or communities as they are increasingly using technology but also parents or legislators wanting to avoid risk. (Little and Wyver, 2008).

The activity follows the health and safety legislation standards of the school's policy, both adults present on the trip are first- aid trained in case of any accidents. A risk assessment is carried out before the children enter the grounds to ensure the environment is safe and it is the responsibility of at least one of the adults to carry out a risk assessment on the day of the activity to ensure there is no dangerous objects that are likely to cause harm. (DfE, 2018).

The children are able to develop personally and socially through experimental learning and understand those who are different, whether it be their ability, beliefs or views and grow in self- esteem and confidence by their potential and competences. (Curriculum for Wales, 2015; Sailakumar and Naachimuthu, 2017).

The second half of the activity was influenced by the Reggio Emilia learning approach where adults are facilitators of children's learning. (Rinaldi, 2011). By providing the activity sheet this relates similarly to Vygotsky who emphasised learning with the assistance of adults. (Halpenny, 2014). By giving the children pictures of different plants this allowed for a development in learning.

The resources have been carefully selected to allow interaction and exploration inspiring creativity which is motivated by this learning approach. (Gandini, 2011a; Strong- Wilson and Ellis, 2007). The nature trail allows a meaningful experience to the children as

Whitebread and Coltman (2008) discuss, this engages the children to investigate and intellectually challenges them to become active in building their own understandings.

An interesting report was carried out by Maynard et al. (2013) to discover the effects of an outdoor environment had on children who were considered underachieving. The report showed that the children enjoyed being in control of their own learning which had a positive outcome regarding concentration and engagement by the freedom of outdoors. The perception of underachieving did not mean the same outdoors when the children were allowed to direct their learning. (Bilton, 2010). This also suggests that adults have different expectations on children when they are outdoors. When children are indoors, they are expected to be quieter and have limited movement, where as being outdoors they are able to run, not worry whether they are being too loud or too messy. (Bilton 2010; Ouvry 2003; Maynard et al. 2011) This influenced the principles of the activity to allow for child- led exploration.

The learning approach to this activity has similar principles to the Steiner learning environment where it is integrated rather than subject- based. The activity was guided by some of the Steiner principles where it is important the adults do not instruct the children but if needed, they are able to guide them through imitation and example allowing learning to happen unconsciously. The children are able to understand the weight, use a variety of senses through lifting, smell and touch which can be difficult to teach indoors. They are able to use natural resources which helps to build on their imagination and creation. (Steiner Waldorf Education, 2009). This also links to Bruner who believed children should be encouraged to use their imagination and opportunity for representation of objects. (Halpenny, 2014).

This style of learning also links to the principles set by the Foundation Phase curriculum by allowing the children to explore creativity to support their learning in an enjoyable and effective approach. (Curriculum for Wales, 2015)

The activity also supports the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (2013) by using a variety of vocabulary that is not used on a day to day basis. The children can link words and phrases they have learnt in a classroom and understand the meaning by being present in the environment and connecting these to their senses, what it is like to feel, touch or smell. (Curriculum for Wales, 2015)

The woodland is full of wild garlic which has just flowered so the aroma of walking through the woods is very strong and will stimulate their senses in a variety of ways and acts as a significant talking point. The children can see what it looks like, but also the practitioners can facilitate by discussing the uses of garlic which connects the children's experience meaningfully.

The environment set up for the children allows for child- initiated activity through exploration and play using their own ideas however, the role of the adult is important to provide active intervention and guidance allowing progression in their learning. By both adults observing they can support a child at their stage of learning but also help to enable progress their learning through facilitating where appropriate. (The Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009)

However, as Duffy (2006) suggest, by intervening in a process of imagination and creativity it can spoil the children's natural creativity by adult input and viewpoints. By intervening too early, adults may impose unrealistic or inappropriate expectations which do not meet a child's developmental stage. (Duffy, 2006). This links to Piaget according to Duffy (2006) who believes creativity is an area of cognition relying on intellectual ability and to move onto the next stage children need to be actively involved in experiences to develop.

Conversely, Vygotsky (1978) believed in the importance of a more knowledgeable other where children who are going through a potential level of development need the support of someone who is more competent. This leads onto Bruner (1975) who used the term 'scaffolding' which is the adult's role to provide support appropriate to their developmental level. Therefore, the main role of the adult is to observe and allow for child- initiated experiences and learning but also be available for facilitating and providing guidance if a child asks for it, or if a child is not engaging and would benefit from support.

The role of the adult is ensuring the environment is full of rich experiences and well planned to incorporate appropriate resources. (Wood and Attfield, 2005; Willan, 2011). The woodland provides for plenty of stimulation, challenge, flexibility developing both fine and gross motor skills. (Hodgman, 2012).

The experience being carried out in the outdoor woodland environment provides the children with many health benefits. Margaret McMillan who realised the importance fresh air had on children's health is an example of the need for outdoor space in regard to the health benefits. (Bilton, 2010). Her work focused on the physical, intellectual and emotional development of a child and the value outdoor environments support children's health and wellbeing which impacts their quality of life. (Gallick, 2009).

As Bilton (2010) suggests, growth, development and maturity are enabled in a supportive environment where children can learn to refine and improve their motor skills, develop coordination, balance and body awareness.

Having access to nature, The Wisdom of Nature (2013) believes children are more resilient to stress and are less likely to have behavioral disorders.

The practitioners provided a few resources that were reusable from the children's home or classroom and the rest of the resources were to be explored in the woodland. Many logs, broken branches, stones, and leaves were already on the floor providing imaginative development. As Bayley and Broadbent (2008) argue, the use of open- ended materials stimulate play allowing children to interpret the objects into their own meaning.

It also means the resources do not have a specific function which does not limit the experience or be controlled by an object. The children are able to adapt them according to their level of understanding. (Bilton 2010; Rushton and Larkin 2001). This was an important aspect of the activity to not provide many resources as the great thing about nature and the woodland environment is all the resources are present ready to be used.

By allowing children to engage in a positive experience this may enable them to make good decisions in the future regarding the natural world and its resources learning respectful attitudes. (McKnight, 2010). This leads on to the Education for Sustainable Development Global Citizenship (ESDGC) principles the activity has built on to encourage the children to respect the environment and take care of it.

The experience that has been created in the woodland environment provides an active involvement relating to the (ESDGC) in many areas by encouraging positive attitudes, values and behaviours. The resources are mainly natural which are already in the woodland. The adults are to discuss with the children beforehand that no sticks or wood

is to be broken off the trees, as there are many resources already on the ground that can be easily accessed and used. This links to the protection of the natural environment within the ESDGC. The resources which are plastic, such as the buckets are re-useable plastic. These have been bought in by the children which have been used many times, therefore are not being wasted and singly used.

During snack time, the practitioners discuss with the children the rubbish is to be put back in the bag and taken back to the classroom where it can be recycled, and any left-over food is used for compost in the garden which limits the amount of waste. It is the duty of the practitioners to follow on with this in the classroom and encourage the correct procedure to enforce meaning. This builds understanding, what the children's actions have in regards to waste and consumption and to be mindful of the materials being used. By being outdoors children experience the health benefits it has on them. The activity builds on the understanding of climate change by being outdoors and experiencing first-hand the weather changes with the seasons. It encourages the children to respect the environment, take care of themselves and their peers and discover the nature of their world. (DCELLS, 2008a)

The Foundation Phase Framework (2015) facilitates the ESDGC by supporting children holistically developing "their skills across the curriculum, building on their previous learning experiences and skills" DCELLS (2008b:4).

Both the Foundation Phase and the ESD feel the relationship with the parents and child's community should be incorporated during projects which can be done together to support a child's learning. (Davis et al., 2005 and Curriculum for Wales, 2015). By asking for reusable resources from the parents and them allowing their children to be a part of a nature trip creates a relationship that understands the reason for recycling and the benefits the outdoors has in widening a child's experience and understanding of the natural world.

The adult's role was to set up the shelter, whilst leaving the rest of the resources on the ground for the children to discover. However, building the shelter is something very exciting and for some children a new experience. Therefore, next time the adults can take a step back in creating the shelter and allow for the children to explore ways of building

one and what works and what doesn't. This would have been a good team building and problem-solving activity by working together with their peers and listening to each other whilst also developing individually in many ways. Building the shelter takes up some of the time of the activity, so an idea for next time would be too extend the time of the experience to ensure the children do not feel rushed due to a small time frame.

The activity helps children to gain first- hand experience and knowledge of nature supporting their development holistically. It provides a variety of opportunities to explore and develop physically, emotionally and cognitively. The children are able to acknowledge their emotions through dealing with frustration and self- control, build on social skills working together with their peers and becoming healthier and stronger individuals. (Sailakumar and Naachimuthu, 2017).

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