

Task 1 - **Photograph**

(Source : Dobson, 2022)

Task 2 - **Learning Story**

This photograph provides endless possibilities for open-ended play, due to the different aspects of the trees, fallen branches and additional foliage areas at the rear of the image.

These areas provide windows of opportunity for children to explore both mathematical and scientific concepts such as, different wildlife and their habitats, life-cycles, gravity, perception, height and width of the tree, sorting leaves into similar sizes or colours and how many branches are attached to the trunk of the tree. Sensory activities such as bark rubbing, foreging, flower and bird spotting can also be explored.

During this session, a selection of loose parts which can be included within the childrens play will be provided. These will include two den kits and two explorer bags. Within these kits will be items such as tarpaulins, ground sheets, mallets, tent

pegs, ropes, magnifying glasses, clear plastic pots with lids, paper, crayons and additional items.

During this learning story, the weather is cold but dry and the participants include a mixed group of eight, four-year-old children and two members of staff. One of the eight children is a non-verbal autistic girl named Holly, considerations have been put into place due to her aversion to certain rough textures, to overcome this Holly will be wearing gloves.

9.00 am

Arriving at the setting, the children were advised to remain in their outdoor clothing and each individual was provided with a waterproof suit and wellingtons. Members of staff provided assistance to the children to ensure that they were prepared for the outdoor activities. When primed ready to leave, children were instructed to 'Buddy Up' with a friend to walk down the uneven path to the wooded area at the far



(Source : Essex Mums, 2022)



(Source : Muddy Wellies Gardens, no date)

end of the school perimeter. Layla immediately locates her friend Jaydon and they instinctively hold hands (Connecting Schema) to walk the short distance.

9.15 am

On entering the woods, four of the children instinctively ran over to the tree, where they started to climb its lower branches. Dividing into smaller groups, the other children started exploring their surroundings. Audible squeals of joy could be heard, from a group



(Source : Twinkl, no date)

investigating the fallen branch. Ben ran over excitedly, "Miss, Miss,



(Source : Mishra, 2023)

look what I got?" I crouched down to enable eye-to-eye contact. Taking this opportunity, I asked Ben what he had found and where. Ben opened his hands to show me what was concealed within, it was a small black beetle. He smiled, took my hand, and led me over to a small group of children who were eagerly parting the leaves with twigs from under the fallen branch. "Come and see!" he said excitedly. Within the damp soil, the



(Source : Dobson, 2022)



(Source : Solly, 2016)

children had located various insects, such as worms, beetles, and woodlice. Deciding that this would be a prime opportunity to introduce the topic of mini-beasts and their habitats, I suggested that they may like to use the magnifying glasses to take a closer look at their findings. By providing them with the ability to take a closer look at the body structure of the insects, we were able to

discuss how many legs each insect had, and how many different body features they could distinguish. Layla responded, "I've found a worm! I can see a head and a body, but it hasn't got any legs!" I acknowledged this fact and proceeded by asking "How does a worm move if it has no legs?", Robert replies, "It wriggles! It wriggles like this!" and moved his body in a corresponding way. Sophie screams, "Ahh, it's a spider! I don't like spiders!", to prevent upsetting Sophie further, I encourage her to stand up and ask her, "Why don't you like spiders, Sophie?", she replied "They've got too many legs and they run fast!". Ben stands up alongside Sophie, "Its ok Sophie, you run faster!" and he sprints off doing a circuit of the tree. Sophie still looks extremely anxious with the encounter with the spider, but was soon distracted by a butterfly flying past her in



(Source : Tverdokhlib,

close proximity. She promptly picks up two large leaves and pretends they are her butterfly wings as she spins around in circles (Rotational Schema).

10 am

Jaydon and Luke rummage through the large storage box, whispering excitedly. They retrieve the tarpaulin, mallet, and rope, and hastily dragged them towards the two fallen branches (Transporting Schema). Both boys looked at the items in front of them and discussed how they could make a den. Seizing this occasion, I stood just to the side of Jaydon and Luke,



(Source : Dobson, 2022)

to observe their discussion. They individually took a length of rope and laid each one on the floor alongside each other. Luke looked at Jaydon and stated, "Mine's bigger than yours, let's use mine!". I asked Luke how he knew that it was longer than Jaydon's, Luke explained " I counted how many steps mine was, I counted 8 and



(Source : Early Years Educator, 2020)

Jaydon's was 6!" Jaydon stepped forward using his fingers he started to count "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Eight is more than six, Miss!". I enquired how Luke and Jaydon were going to create their den, Jaydon explained that "I'm going to climb up the big tree and tie my rope around it, then Luke is going to put the sticks together and tie the rope." Jaydon starts to ascend the tree, "Wow, you look small from

up here!" he laughed (Orientation Schema). Luke looked concerned, I enquired if he was ok, he replied "Miss, can you help me? I can't tie rope and the sticks keep falling!" Discussing further, I introduced the concept of angles and discussed that when the branches are lent at a greater or lesser angle, that the structure of the den would change or fall down. They used this opportunity to test this theory, after

numerous attempts, they finally grasped this basic concept, constructing a simple den (Enveloping and Connecting/ constructive Schemas).

10.45 am



(Source : Dobson, 2022)

Hidden within the rear part of the wood, Ffion can be seen initiating in individual play. She has located a stick and is rotating it in a shallow puddle, standing to the side, Holly can be seen watching. Ffion approaches Holly and offers her the stick, "Holly, you come and do it! The water goes round and round!". Holly refuses the stick. I

approach the girls and ask Ffion, "What happens to the water if you turn the stick the opposite way?", she carries out the action. She looks up at Holly and myself and states, "It goes the other way!", she then asked, "Miss what would happen if I just put the stick in and not turn it?". I encouraged Ffion to try and see what happens, Holly slowly comes closer (Rotating Schema). Ffion lifted the stick and brought it down quite quickly, causing a splash. Holly took a step backwards. Ffion shrielled with excitement, "Look, look! There are waves like the sea! 1,2,3,4. There's four of them!". I introduced to the girls the ripple effect concept, explaining that



Source : (Serpette, 2018)



(Source : Pngtree, no date)

"When the stick enters the water, it disturbs or breaks the water's surface, this causes the water to be pushed away in ripples." "What do you think would happen if you put your finger into the puddle?" Ffion lent down and places her index finger into the water, exclaiming that, "The water's cold!" Small ripples formed across the surface of the puddle; Ffion smiled

happily. Holly stepped forward with a pebble and dropped it into the water, Ffion watched the large splash, and stated, "The ripples are bigger and there's lots of them!" (Trajectory Schema).

11.15 am

The session has come to an end, and the children are instructed to form a line with their 'buddy'. During the return walk back to the setting, we discuss everything that has been discovered on our adventure in the wood. The children were provided with the time and opportunity to reflect and share their experience with others within the group. On returning to the setting, the children removed their wet weather clothes and hurried off to their chosen area of learning, to expand on their outdoor experiences.



(Source : Sayer, 2023)

Task 3 -

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	A Walk In The Wood	Date:	19 th September 2023
Assessor:	Linsey Smith	Review date:	19 th March 2023

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.

Experience exploring outdoor space in photograph	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity	Hazards and associated risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Exploring and Discovering Autumn and its effect on a natural environment.	Investigating basic scientific concepts such as water movement and life cycles. Providing curiosity opportunities for children to ask why, what, and how questions. Exploring concepts and comparing seasons and weather. Discussing seasonal characteristics such as temperature changes and the changing colour of the natural environment. Enabling children to use their sense to explore their environment. Stimulating the immune system and aiding in a child's wellbeing.	Slippery surfaces can cause slips and falls, muddy and wooden areas in particular. Hypothermia can be caused due to wet and cold conditions and children dressed in inappropriate clothing. High winds can provide opportunities for injuries from fallen branches or for individuals being blown over. Foreign objects being blown into eyes. Consumption of poisonous plants.	Children and Adults	Ensure all children follow the golden rule of not running in a new environment. Precautions must be taken by checking the weather forecast for weather warnings, such as high winds, heavy rain, or cold temperatures. All participants must be dressed appropriately for the weather. Including items such as gloves, hats, scarfs, layers of warm clothing, and waterproof coats and trousers. Wellington boots or walking boots with good grip must be worn in the outdoor area, to prevent slipping.	L

Experience exploring outdoor space in photograph	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity	Hazards and associated risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Walking on uneven ground e.g., grass and leaves.	Development of spatial awareness, co-ordination and balance (Proprioception sensory processing & Vestibular sense). Physical development by improved muscle and bone strength. Provides opportunities to explore different textures e.g., grass, mud, or leaves.	Possibility of participants slipping and falling due to uneven surfaces and hidden trip hazards, such as hidden holes, roots, stones or sticks. Accidents such as these could cause cuts, abrasions, sprains, breaks, or fractures and injuries occurring to the eyes or head.	Children and Adults	Pre checks of the area carried out by staff to remove hazards or to determine a safe area by means of boundaries. All children should follow the golden rule that they should walk until they become comfortable with the environment in which they are in. Access to a complete first aid kit and a fully trained first aider.	L

Experience exploring outdoor space in photograph	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity	Hazards and associated risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Tree, mossy and damp areas whilst mini-beast hunting	Germ exposure can assist in a healthier immune system. Sensory play activities develop a child's emotional health. Curiosity of the environment can develop a child's scientific, mathematical and problem-solving skills.	Infection can be caused by cuts and abrasions being contaminated due to soil excavating, playing in bushes, with branches or handling insects. Hidden obstacles can cause a trip hazard in which an individual could fall and injure themselves. Possibility of injury due to falling branches or trees. Putting worms, insects, and other items into their mouths.	Children and Adults	Staff must call out pre checks of the area to determine the area is safe. Any hazards must be removed, or a designated safe area must be sectioned off, by means of boundaries. Participants should be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Staff should reinforce the 'Golden Rule' of not eating or putting things in their mouth. Staff should explain to the children the dangers of eating items such as moss, mud, and stones. Provide wet wipes and sanitiser to wash hands after activity, until participant have the opportunity to wash their hands properly on returning to the setting. First aid kits should be available to the first aider, it should contain items such as antiseptic wipes, plasters and a bag to dispose of waste.	L

Experience exploring outdoor space in photograph	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity	Hazards and associated risks	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk after precautions RATING: L/M/H
Tree Climbing	Provides a natural environment for a child to develop their fine motor skills and problem-solving skills. Enables a child to take risks in a relatively safe environment, by pushing their boundaries out of their comfort zones. Encourages a child's creativity and curiosity through imaginative play. Assists in the development of a child's proprioception sensory processing & Vestibular sense, by enhancing the child's coordination, balance, and spatial awareness.	Possibility of injuries such as cuts, scrapes, splinters, sprains, or possible breaks caused by falls or trips.	Children and Adults	Staff must be vigilant at all times. Access to a first aid kit must be available at all times. Assessable areas should be checked for hazards which can cause accidents. Appropriate footwear should be worn at all times.	L

Task 4- Academic Evaluation

Recognising the importance of play, Froebel, believed that it is a child's main principal way of learning within the early years (Wilson and Green, 2023). Expanding further on Rousseau and Pestalozzi's theories, that children should be permitted to be children, they should be given the ability to play, learn from nature and to be given opportunities to engage in real life experiences (Joyce, 2012., and Brock et al, 2019). Froebel gave credence to the importance of a child's physical involvement and control of their own learning in a child-led learning environment. This theory is supported by Piaget's belief that play, plays an integral part to a child's development, stating that play has the ability to encourage a child's cognitive and language development (Tovey, 2017a., Pound, 2018., and d'Ascoli and Hunter, 2022).

Tovey (2019) explains that providing children with opportunities to play outdoors, facilitates the right set of circumstances for a child to develop their ability to set challenges, boundaries and become aware of their personal limits within their play (Tovey, 2017b). Outdoor play enables a child the freedom to reduce stress by letting off steam, increases a child's mental wellbeing and helps to develop physical fitness (Tovey, 2019). Watts (2020) and Cree and Robb (2021) considers emotional and physical connection with the natural world and the outdoors, necessary in a child's learning and development (Anggard, 2016). This is endorsed by Froebel, Pestalozzi, and McMillan's recognition for the need for children to access freedom of space, movement, and fresh air (Joyce, 2012., and Knight, 2013) and UNCRC Articles 31 & 13, whereby a child has the right to have a freedom of expression and play (WOHM, 2023., and UNICEF UK, 2010). Allocating time for outdoor play each day, enables the child to build up their immunity through exposure to different environments and conditions. Due to the strengthened immune system, these children have a reduced sickness rate (Marais, 2021., and Early Years Alliance, 2023).

Playful Childhood Wales (2018) discusses that when children are provided with outdoor play opportunities, they are able through self-initiation, to manipulate their environment to develop their imagination and creativity skills (Johnson and Watts, 2019), develop their coordination, concentration, and balance (Featherstone and Bolton, 2013., and Humberstone et al, 2018). White (2020) discusses this further by stating that, due to this natural terrain, children are able to move freely, promoting

the development of both their vestibular and proprioceptive senses (Bruce, 2010). By enabling freedom of movement, permits a child to coordinate their eye movement, the direction of their head and utilise both sides of their body at the same time. This allows the child to gain information needed to assess their surrounding area, develop their coordination, balance, and spatial awareness (White, 2023).

Within this natural environment, children are provided with scenarios to develop their problem-solving skills, to explore their understanding of the world and develop their vocabulary (Anderson et al, 2017). Playing outdoors enables children to experiment and explore in natural surroundings, promotes an individual's social skills, and provides freedom for cross curricular learning (Pound, 2018., and Welsh Gov, 2019) Blackwell (2015) explains, that when a child has the ability to access outdoor learning, such as a Scandinavian or Forest School program, due to its deliberate holistic design, it enhances a child's wellbeing, confidence, and resilience (Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2017., Knight, 2013., Einarsdottir and Wagner, 2006., and, Cree and Rob, 2021). Marais (2021) articulates that when individuals spend time in nature, there are numerous proven health benefits, these can include a reduction in hyperactivity in children who suffer with ADHD (Cooper, 2014., and Watkins, 2022). Stating further, that scientific findings have established that a reduction of cortisol levels in the brain of children with ADHD, occurs when the child spends time outdoors. When cortisol levels are decreased, it enables the child to retain focus, reduces anxiety and regulates the child's emotions (Marais, 2021., and Waite, 2017)

Montessori, Steiner and Malaguzzi, all take outdoor play to promote positive risk-taking within their approaches. In providing situations in which some risk is present, it permits children to extend their knowledge and opportunities to gain new skills (Issacs, 2015., Thornton and Green, 2014., and Bright Horizons, 2020).

Navigating new environments, enables theories such as Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' to be applied, by aiding children to overcome difficulties to achieve their final outcome (Reunamo et al, 2013). Providing learning experiences to overcome challenges, can improve a child's confidence and overall growth mindset and self-awareness, by developing an understanding of their personal limits. Montessori and Steiner, believed that it is a child's natural instinct to actively explore their surroundings, where there may be possibilities for them to take risks and

overcome challenges (Joyce, 2010., Merrick, 2022., and Little et al, 2021).

Concluding that, allowing a child to take risks without teacher intervention, enables children to create unique and imaginative conclusions about their environment and themselves. (Bilton et al, 2017., Pound, 2018., Knight, 2013., Sando et al., 2021., and Bilton, 2023).

By awakening a child's sensory capabilities to the awe and wonder within the natural environment, can peak their curiosity to explore and make sense of this natural habitat and world encompassing them. Providing ample opportunities to introduce mathematical and science concepts, in addition to cross curriculum learning (Sargent, 2016a). Rogers et al (2007) states that there is a natural connection between mathematics and science, explaining that scientific phenomena require mathematics to understand scientific concepts, organise and analyse data, and that science concepts provided abstract mathematical ideas with concrete examples (Campbell et al, 2021., and Cooper and Elton-Chalcraft, 2022). Additionally, by gaining scientific and mathematical knowledge through play, promotes not only a child's mathematical language, but also awareness to their own thinking process and general social and communication skills (Brenneman et al., 2009, Keith, 2018., and Sargent, 2016b).

Vygotsky and Piaget both recognised that the role of the adult is essential in providing the child with the environment and fuel to spark a child's initial idea. Both theories support the use of social interaction in providing the means for learning (MacBlain, 2022., Early Education, 2012., and, Brown and Patte, 2013). Piaget's view of early years education argues that all children are 'lone scientists', independently learning and developing through self-directed physical interaction with their environment. (Halpenny and Pettersen, 2014) This is supported by Dewey's belief that the interaction between a child and their environment, enables learning through trial and error, and experimentation (Ultanir, 2012). Piaget observed that children used information gained through exploring the world and environment around them to build schemas. These schemas are behaviours such as repetition, concealing objects or moving objects, demonstrated by children as they try to discover how things work (Halpenny and Pettersen, 2014). Athey (2007) discusses these natural behaviours further by stating that when a child's interest in an object or concept are sparked, these repetitive natural behaviours develop a pattern (Louis et

al, 2013). The above-mentioned schemas can become multi-layered, whereby several different schemas may be formed when a child's thinking process develops. Encouraging opportunities for the child to make connections, stimulate experiences and ideas, should be supported by the curriculum and by learning through the medium of experimentation in play (Athey, 2007).

The new curriculum of Wales supports a child-centred pedagogy, emphasise on adults being skilful, interested, and observant 'enablers'. Providing children support in an emotionally safe environment, whereby a child's feelings and behaviour can be express and regulated in a positive way (Tinney, 2023., Wainwright, 2021., and, Williams, 2022). Practitioners should encompass and support the natural curiosity of the child in a joyful learning approach. When observing children engaged within their play, practitioners should be aware and take opportunities of the naturally presented teaching moment. (Wales Council for Outdoor Learning, 2021, Welsh Gov, 2009, and Welsh Gov, 2014) By observing children within this natural environment, practitioners are able to develop an understanding of what interest's individuals have and allows adaptations to be made to provide a greater learning opportunity (Frost and Sutterby, 2017., and, Protheroe, 2022). Bruner and Vygotsky discuss the importance of adults supporting and scaffolding a child's learning, by providing new concepts and resources to enrich their play (Sarikas, 2020., and Gonulal and Loewen, 2018). Supporting this further, Gibson's affordance theory, discusses that children's affordance includes both the child and their environment, and that each affordance is relevant and unique to every individual (Waller and Waters, 2017., and Giesecking, 2014). Additionally expressing that a child's world is perceived beyond objects and spatial relationships but includes the possibilities of a child perception of an action on an object. To fulfil a rich learning environment, Nicholson (2023) recognised that it is the responsibility of the practitioner to provide a variety of natural and man-made loose parts. Believing that by providing loose parts, it enables children to develop cross curricular skills including the understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts (Williams and Stevens, 2019., Sargent, 2015., and Robertson, 2017). Nicholson observed that when children are provided with loose parts, children were equipped with the means to follow their curiosity and follow their interests. This curiosity, encourages children to construct, investigate, deconstruct, and discover things out by themselves (Williams and Stevens, 2019).

Although there are numerous benefits of outdoor learning, practitioners could face a number of challenges. These can include a lack of outdoor space and appropriate clothing; risks of outdoor learning; meeting curriculum demands; behaviour management; and a lack of confidence (Constable, 2014). These challenges can be overcome by reviewing the outdoor space available, consideration must be taken to utilising spaces such as fences, hedges and walls. In addition, partnerships with local community groups and accessing local green spaces can be established (Brundrett, 2022). Due to the unpredictability of the weather, parents should be informed about the settings wet weather policy and the requirement of supplying appropriate clothing (Brundrett, 2022). Children who are ill-equipped, should be provided with appropriate clothing from lost property or from donations. Some parents fear the risks of outdoor learning activities, as they have no personal experience of this type of learning, to overcome this challenge, parents should be provided the opportunity to participate in an outdoor activity. Prior to the new curriculum for Wales, practitioners found difficulty in associating outdoor learning and the curriculum (Wales Council for Outdoor Learning, 2021). However, the new curriculum provides opportunities to extend the learning environment into the outdoors, providing real-life situations where children can apply their knowledge and problem-solving skills in a natural environment (Welsh Gov, 2019., and Welsh Gov, 2022). Previously, practitioners believed that outdoor learning failed to provide written evidence of a child's learning (Brundrett, 2022). However, the new curriculum acknowledges that, knowledge gained through practical outside learning, can be exhibited in their understanding of a concept and in their future work. Some practitioners abstain from outdoor learning, due to their fear of behaviour management and a lack of confidence in their own ability (Mart and Waite, 2021) Although the majority of children prefer to be in an outdoor learning environment (National Childbirth Trust, 2021), some children can experience fear, sensory overload or have a negative outdoor connection due to past experiences. To overcome this, practitioners need to build a positive relationship with the children within their care, and like all new activities, new boundaries and responsibilities should be discussed with the children (Dijk-Wesselius et al, 2020). Settings should consider providing training for their staff and a support network of other experienced outdoor teachers should be built, to create an effective learning environment.

In conclusion, although there are obstacles that can influence a settings decision to embrace outdoor learning, these can easily be overcome by prior planning, training, and setting up a community support network. Outdoor learning is an essential part of a child's development and can provide numerous positive outcomes both holistic and educational. When presented with loose parts, children are provided with the means to expand their curiosity, to experiment, and to use scientific and mathematic concepts in a play environment. Encouraging children to experience positive risk taking, promotes a child's health, wellbeing, confidence, and vestibular and proprioceptive senses. By understanding theorists such as Froebel, Piaget and Malaguzzi, and by having a greater understanding of the new curriculum for Wales, practitioners can provide enabling environments for children to grow.

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