

Outdoor learning in secondary schools in Wales

Tom Basher - Partneriaeth

Background



Tom Basher



Y llwybr - Dysgu awyr agored



Taking learning outdoors
Eg. Rich tasks taught outdoors



Developing physical skills
Eg. Team building games
Orienteering

National Awards
Eg. John Muir
Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Offsite adventure
Eg. Activity centres
Residentials

Nature based learning
Eg. Forest / Beach Schools
Natural Resources Wales



Providing opportunities throughout the year to develop the 4 purposes



It is difficult to define outdoor learning, too broad a definition can become meaningless, whilst too narrow a definition may fail to account for the wide range of activities and locations encompassed within the term. French et al. (2023, p. 7) in their evaluation of the state of outdoor learning in Wales, cite the definition from The Institute for Outdoor Learning report (Anderson, 2021, p. 1) of ‘an umbrella term for **actively inclusive facilitated approaches that predominantly use activities and experiences in the outdoors** which lead to learning, increased health and wellbeing and environmental awareness’.

The ‘Welsh way’, outdoor learning within the primary curriculum: a ‘fringe add-on or mainstream pedagogical practice’? (2024); Cheryl Ellis, Rosy Ellis, Laura Dobson, Sheena O’Leary and Andrea Williams - Wales Journal of Education - <https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.26.2.10>

Teaching and learning in the outdoors: the current state of outdoor learning in schools in Wales (2023)

A study by Williams and Scott (2019) aimed to determine why secondary schools were not using outdoor learning regularly. The themes that emerged from the study **include risk assessment requirements, weather, workload and time pressures, flexibility, behavioural challenges, assessment, and challenges with defining the concept. The study concluded that knowledge and skills about how to implement outdoor learning, personal development, and fluidity of movement all impact teachers' use of outdoor learning facilities.** Policymakers and schools should consider these, especially in response to the inconsistent messages Teachers receive about what outdoor learning looks like at schools.

[Teaching and learning in the outdoors: the current state of outdoor learning in schools in Wales](#)

THE FOUR PURPOSES

All our children and young people will be healthy, confident individuals who:



Getting started

Introduction to Curriculum for Wales guidance

Introduces the four purposes, what's new, why it's changing and who the curriculum guidance is for

Assessment arrangements

Guidance and information for designing assessment arrangements within a school curriculum

Summary of legislation

Explains the legal status of the curriculum guidance, the proposed legal duties on schools and what these mean in practice

Continuing the journey

Guidance to support schools with a common set of expectations, priorities and supporting information for curriculum design

Designing your curriculum

General guidance for designing your curriculum across all areas of learning and experience

14 to 16 learning guidance

Forms part of the Curriculum for Wales Framework statutory guidance

Curriculum for Wales

Areas of learning and experience



Expressive Arts



Health and Well-being



Humanities



Languages, Literacy and Communication

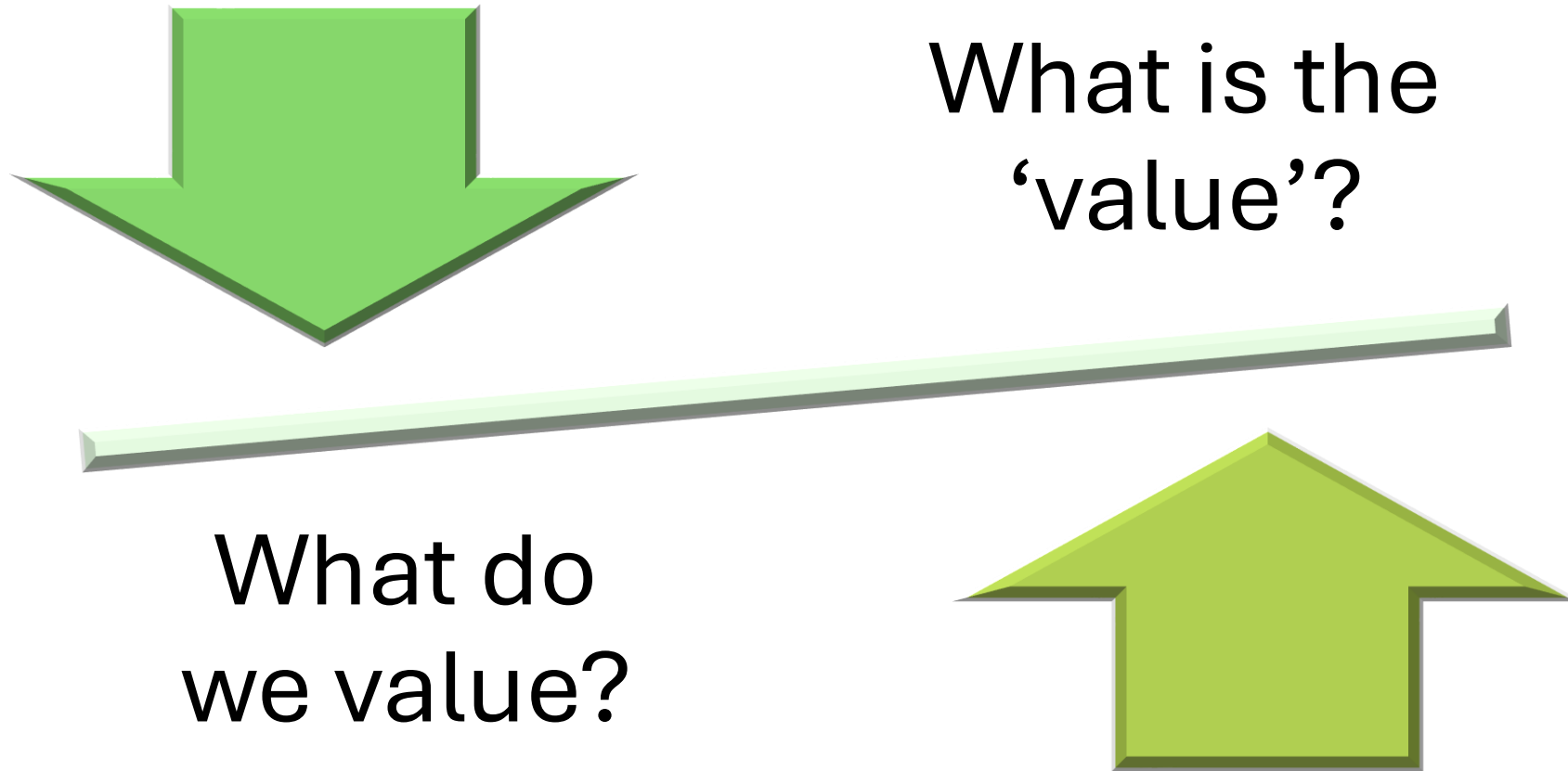


Mathematics and Numeracy



Science and Technology

What is the purpose of education?



Cynnig profiadau a chyfleoedd hamdden a dysgu gydol oes yn yr awyr agored sy'n gynaliadwy ac yn gyfrifol er mwyn creu Cymru gydnherth ac iach.

Wrth gwrs mae Cymru yn fan hamdden a dysgu awyr agored blaenllaw gyda'r Cymry ac ymwelwyr yn ogystal yn ymfalchio yn ei mannau naturiol ac unigryw gwyrdd, glas a thanddaearol. Gyda'i thirwedd, cefn gwlad, yr arfordir, cyrsiau dŵr, planhigion ac anifeiliaid, diwylliant a threftadaeth, cymunedau sy'n estyn croeso cynnes a gweithlu medrus dros ben yn cyfuno i ddarparu cynnig hamdden awyr agored enwog Cymru.



Outdoor Alliance Wales Manifesto 2026



Cynghrair Awyr Agored Cymru Manifesto 2026



Delivering sustainable and responsible outdoor recreation and lifelong learning experiences and opportunities for a resilient and healthy Wales.

Wales is a world-class outdoor recreation and learning destination. Its unique green, blue and underground natural spaces are valued by the people of Wales and visitors alike. Its landscape, countryside, coastline, water courses, flora and fauna, culture and heritage, welcoming communities and highly skilled workforce combine to deliver Wales' renowned outdoor recreation offer.

Economy & Community

The outdoor activity tourism sector **contributes a total net impact of £1.619 bn annually and supports 31,278 jobs (21% of all tourism jobs in Wales)** (Miller Research 2023). Its workforce is primarily made up of sole traders, SMEs and micro businesses, providing safe, effective, and uniquely Welsh products. Continued sustainable growth of the outdoor sector and its workforce relies on investment into the outdoor sector and the rural & coastal communities in which they exist, as well as addressing their needs across the Government's legislative agenda.

Cynnig profiadau a chyfleoedd hamdden a dysgu gydol oes yn yr awyr agored sy'n gynaliadwy ac yn gyfrifol er mwyn creu Cymru gydnorth ac iach.

With gwrs mae Cymru yn fan hamdden a dysgu awyr agored blaenllaw gyda'r Cymry ac ymwelwyr yn ogystal yn ymfalchïo yn ei mannau naturiol ac unigryw gwyrdd, glas a thanddaearol. Gyda'i thirwedd, cefn gwlad, yr arfordir, cyrsau dŵr, planhigion ac anifeiliaid, diwylliant a threfladaeth, cymunedau sy'n estyn croeso cynnes a gweithlu medrus dros ben yn cyflwyno i ddarparu cynnig hamdden awyr agored enwog Cymru.

Ynghrair Awyr Agored Cymru
Manifesto 2026



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Education & Lifelong Learning

Outdoor experiences expand horizons beyond traditional learning environments. Outdoor learning positively impacts attainment, health, and well-being when integrated effectively into a well-planned educational programme. We believe outdoor learning should be an integral part of the Curriculum for Wales and lifelong learning opportunities, accessible to all.

We call for:

- Every child and young person in Wales **to participate in at least one funded residential visit to an outdoor education centre** during their school career.
- Schools, colleges, and **universities to deliver outdoor learning experiences through their curricula, supported by schemes such as the Adventure Learning Framework.**
- Outdoor learning pedagogy and adventure education **to form part of initial teacher education programmes** and the national professional learning framework.
- Schools, colleges, and universities to be able to access a range of outdoor learning training opportunities within the professional learning framework alongside centralised resources on platforms such as Hwb.

The 14 to 16 learner entitlement



Not all of the learning and experiences within Years 10 and 11 need result in a formal qualification. However, schools may wish to provide courses of study that lead to a qualification to support learner progress. Where schools do want to use qualifications to support curriculum provision of wider learning and experiences, they are encouraged to continue to use the Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) up to September 2027. **This is when the Skills Suite (comprising skills for life and work qualifications and the personal project)** will replace the SCC and will continue to provide support for this provision.





LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS

- [Outdoor Learning — Ysgol Bro Dinefwr](#)

OUTDOOR LEARNING



YR ARDD ODYSGU

The Learning Garden

14-16 offer

For all?

For alternative provision?

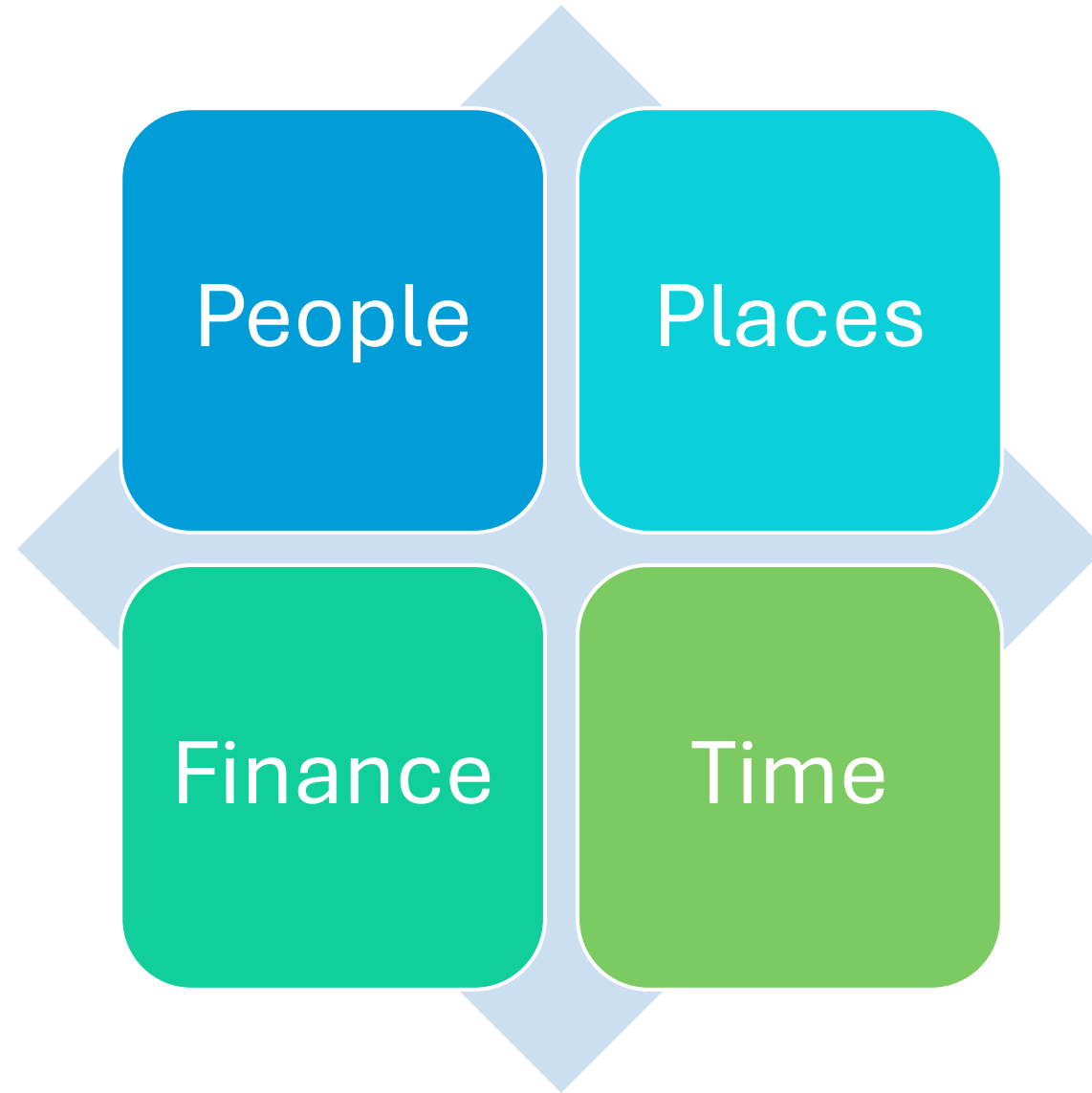
What does 'good' look like?

Developing an outdoor curriculum in preparation for Curriculum for Wales that develops pupils' knowledge and skills as well as supporting their well-being.

Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni is a bilingual 11 to 18 comprehensive secondary school maintained by Ynys Môn local authority.

[Developing an outdoor curriculum in preparation for Curriculum for Wales that develops pupils' knowledge and skills as well as supporting their well-being - Estyn](#)

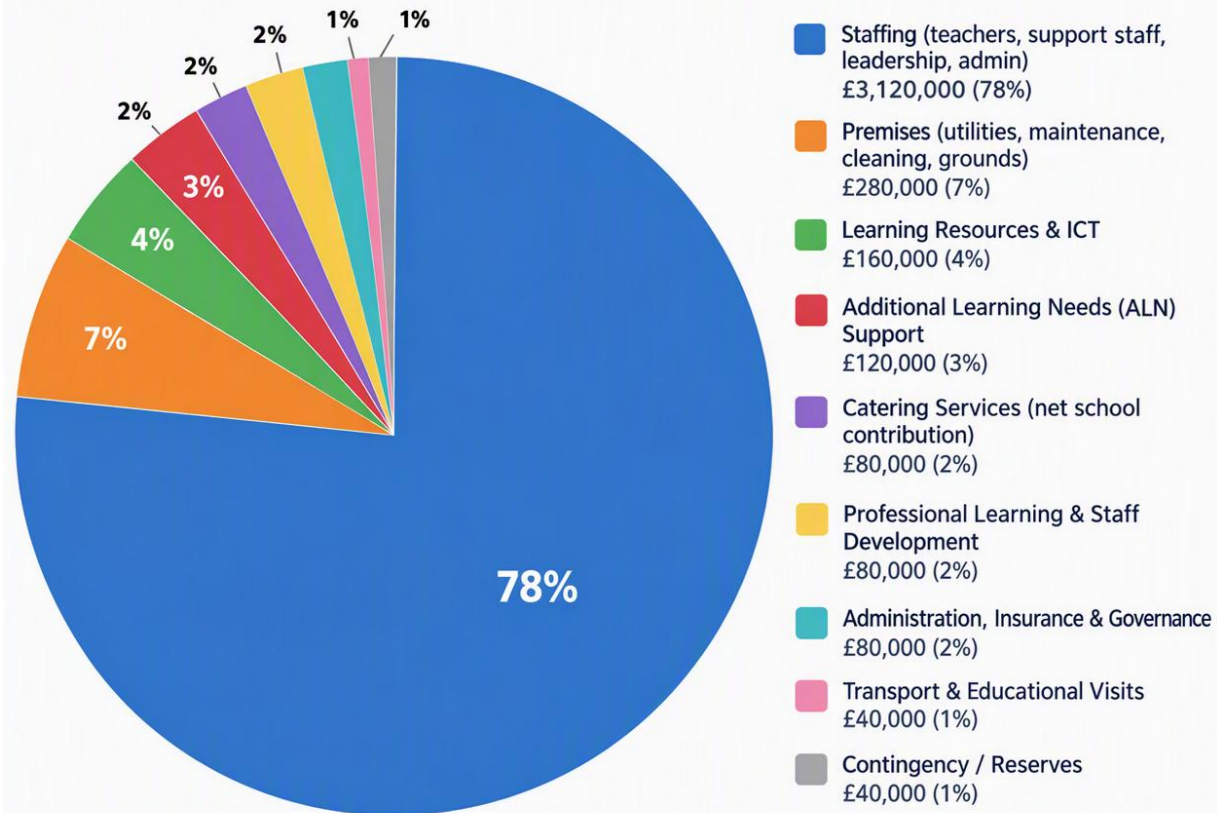
Opportunities and Threats



Category	Amount (£)	Percentage
Staffing (teachers, support staff, leadership, admin)	£3,120,000	78%
Premises (utilities, maintenance, cleaning, grounds)	£280,000	7%
Learning Resources & ICT	£160,000	4%
Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Support	£120,000	3%
Catering Services (net school contribution)	£80,000	2%
Professional Learning & Staff Development	£80,000	2%
Transport & Educational Visits	£40,000	1%
Administration, Insurance & Governance	£80,000	2%
Contingency / Reserves	£40,000	1%
Total	£4,000,000	100%

Hypothetical Expenditure Breakdown Large Secondary School (Wales)

Total Budget: £4,000,000



Total Budget: £4,000,000 (100%)



*"Investing in our people, places and resources
to support every learner to achieve their potential."*

Why is provision of a co-curricular offer ‘better’ in private schools?



OUTDOOR EDUCATION, FUN AND ADVENTURE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Fun and adventure outside of the classroom rarely feels like hard work and can leave students with lifelong memories. That is why we fully encourage utilising the great outdoors to experience and enjoy new activities and challenges.

From making the most of the school's extensive outdoor facilities and indoor climbing wall, to exploring the local area and beyond, our activities and opportunities are designed to promote and develop wellbeing, students' personal responsibility, resilience, decision-making and leadership skills, whilst highlighting the importance of collaboration and the wider benefits of working as part of a team.

D of E in a secondary school setting

Scenario

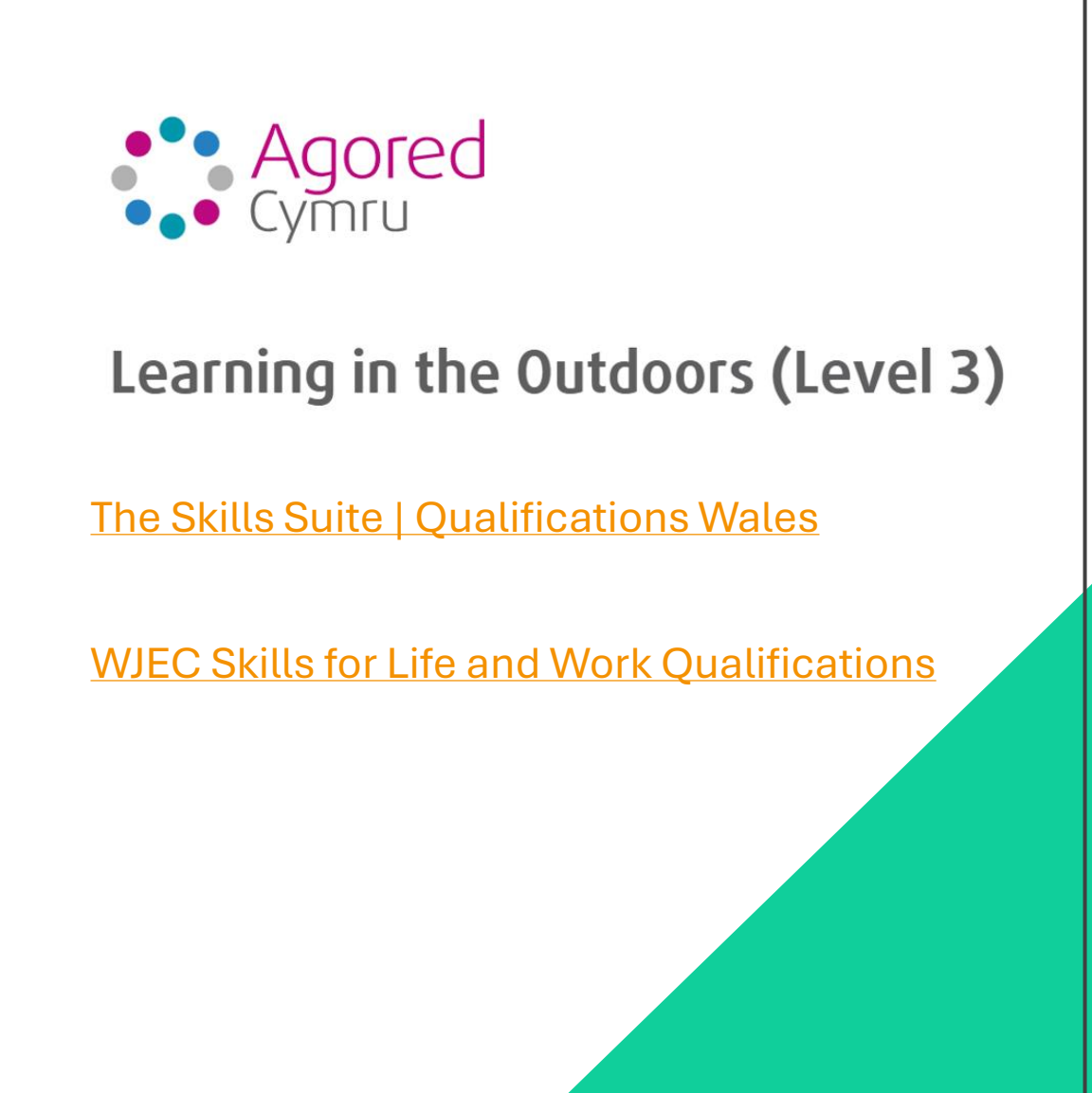
- 2 male leaders - DofE Leadership training / Hill and Moorland Leaders / Minibus driver training completed
- 1 male teacher volunteer – Basic First Aid qualified
- 3 female teacher volunteers – 2 with First Aid qualification
- Time available in the curriculum – zero hours
- No school minibus – 17 seater minibus hire through LA

30 X 15 /16 year old students registered for the Bronze Award

What are some of the potential issues?

Is this sustainable?

14-16 offer



Learning in the Outdoors (Level 3)

[The Skills Suite | Qualifications Wales](#)

WJEC Skills for Life and Work Qualifications



Search qualifications - Results

Current Search Criteria:

- Qualification title = Outdoor
- Include all qualifications = No

[Export to CSV](#)[Refine criteria](#)[Export with Performance Points to CSV](#)[Export with Performance Points Details to CSV](#)Show entries

	National Qualifications	QW Approval/Designation no.	Ofqual QN	Qualification level	Qualification type	Qualification title	Eligible for public funding	
▼	X	C00/0364/2	600/1770/3	Level 3	Occupational Qualification	1st4sport Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Outdoor Programmes 1st4sport Diploma NVQ Lefel 3 mewn Rhaglenni Awyr Agored	✓	View

• Search qualifications – Results

