

Little Green Fingers Gardening Club

Helping each other grow!



(Bing, nd)

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What is it?



(Structural Learning, nd)

This is a mobile gardening club that visits primary schools to involve children to explore the outdoors and learn how plants, flowers and vegetables grow, and learn about the wildlife and minibeasts that we meet on our gardening journey together.

Who am I?

My name is Sharon Davies and I have years of experience working with children of all ages. I have a Level 3 in Childcare and presently working towards gaining an Early Years in Education degree. I work currently as a teacher's assistant in a nursery setting in a primary school. At the beginning of the last school year, I volunteered to support the children in our newly founded school council. One of our goals was to set up a communal school garden, which all the different year groups from the nursery to the oldest in year 6, to take part in planting and growing different types of flowers and vegetables. This has been an enormous success and has inspired me to reach out to other nursery settings and primary schools for them to have a chance to take part in this fulfilling adventure. Whilst doing this gardening club theorist Froebel has influenced me as he was also a great believer in the outside being an amazing place for children to develop and learn new things (Tovey, 2022).

Who is this for?

This gardening club is aimed for children between the ages of 3 to 11 years, this club will hopefully open doors for the children in different ways. Such as, some children unfortunately do not have the luck of owning a garden in their homes. So, sadly will not have experienced any form of gardening whether it being a potted plant or flowers in a

vase. Also, children might have not had the opportunity to experience the countryside, woodlands and forests and feel connected to nature.

In this club the focus will not be mainly on flowers and plants but also vegetables, so therefore children will be able to learn about new vegetables that they may not have the chance to at home. We will discover and learn about all the mini beasts that we meet when gardening too, as in what mini beasts come out in which weather more and where do we see them. The children will also learn about climate change and how important it is and environmental sustainability.

Teachers are also welcome to take part in this adventure also, as this will link to themes of the new curriculum and includes the four purposes (Welsh Government, 2022a). Which aims to support the children in becoming healthy, capable, ambitious, confident, and informed valued members of their community. As the Welsh Government (2022a) is promoting outdoor learning, this is a great opportunity to bring the lesson outside.

What Are the Benefits of a Gardening Club?



(Jungseed, 2020)

First, fresh air and being outside can be a tremendous boost to the children's health and well-being. It also will help them burn off energy, and gardening is a good and exciting way to promote a healthy lifestyle. As the vegetables that they grow will be picked, washed, cooked and eaten by the children, this will promote healthy eating. Plus, being outside, having fun whilst learning will have a good impact on their sleep quality at night. Gardening will also help children appreciate nature and as they grow into adults, and they will become more environmentally aware. They will start to understand the weather and how the changing climate affects all living things around us, including not only the vegetation but also insects, animals and any other living being.

Welsh Government (2022) The Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings also believe that children being outside can help with their learning and development skills, as follows: -

- **Gross Motor Skills Development:** these are the muscles in the body that children use when they walk, run, jump, and helps them with their balancing, coordination, and physical strength.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** these are the small muscles that are used to achieve control and precision like planting seeds and handling gardening tools.
- **Sensory Skills Development:** The outdoors will allow the children to explore different smells, sights and feel different textures.
- **Cognitive Skills Development:** This is the ability to receive information, consider the outcomes, plan and problem solve.
- **Social Skills Development:** The ability to share, using manners, cooperating with others. How their emotions can affect others and learn to regulate.
- **Language and Communication Skills Development:** Listening to other children, being polite and learning new vocabulary. Using eye contact and gaining confidence in speaking out in a group setting.



(Holistic Development, nd)

What am I going to provide?

As I have worked in a school environment, I know first-hand how time consuming it is to start and maintain a project, so my role in this whilst actively working with either the head teacher, or the appointed school member of staff. I will do all the leg work in readiness for the gardening club to begin. I will be the one to contact the relevant people for their support and help, ask local businesses for donations, contact relevant websites for grants and set up fundraisers.

I will also check the site where the garden will be situated to see if it is suitable and make sure the correct equipment and materials are ready for the children.

How will I contact schools?



(Sector 45, 2015)

Firstly, I will visit the nursery settings and primary schools with my plan and have an informal conversation with the headteacher of what I am offering. The next step would

be to go into the school in a formal visit and see each year group individually, here I will be able to explain more in depth about what I would like to create with them. Also, I would donate to each class a welcome pack which consists of a plant pot, soil and seeds, and a short questionnaire with yes or no answers. Hopefully this will give them the enthusiasm to want to join. I would like to visit the schools a couple of times so that the children would get used to seeing me and start to feel comfortable in my presence. When the school is on board, I will meet with the school lead to see where they would like the communal school garden to be situated. I would also plan for the gardening club to meet and when all members are present, I will ask them to draw a plan of what they would like their garden to look like.

What materials and equipment will we need?

To start the gardening club, we will need:

- Enthusiastic children.
- An allocated site for the garden.
- Plan of the garden site.
- Spades, Rakes
- Buckets and watering cans.
- Small wheelbarrow.
- Child and Adult size gardening gloves.
- Various plants and seeds for flowers and vegetables

How do we pay and promote it?

With the school's permission I will use the name of the school to obtain donations to help, as I visit local businesses in the school's community which are suitable to this project and explain what we are planning to do.

Also, with the school's permission, I will use any social media that the school uses to promote the club to gain interest and investment. This will be done using the Data Protection Act 2018.

Some schools will hopefully already have some equipment which I will check to make sure they are suitable to use.

The newly chosen gardening club members can also suggest to the school some fundraising ideas to help with cost of materials.

I will also apply to a variety of grants and loans such as: -

- Local Councils in their areas for funding. (Funding Wales, 2024).
- National Lottery Awards (School Funding Service, 2019).
- Apply to Tesco, Co-op and Morrisons and other supermarket chains in the local area.
- Learning through Landscapes (Local School Nature Grants, 2024).

In my research I found that larger companies would supply materials and equipment for an annual fee (Royal Horticultural Society, 2024a).

Also, in some schools the only gardening children do is whatever the teachers can link to a theme, for example, grow cress in a pot.

As this gardening club would be a community interest company, and it would only be on a voluntary role basis, I would not be taking a salary. Any profits that are made will be going back straight into the gardening club to buy any further equipment and materials that are needed in the future.

The Future

In the future when our gardening clubs have been up and running for two years, I have been thinking of expanding the garden and going down the route of forest schools. I believe that children should not be stuck in the classroom all day every day, they should be outdoors in all kinds of weathers and experience it all. Davies (2017) believes that forest schools support children in all areas of their development, and promotes children's well-being by encouraging them to be more active and to enjoy fresh air. But to start, if I can inspire one child and support him or her on their developing learning journey, I will be overjoyed.



(Forest Schools, 2023)

Part 2 (b)

Critical Analysis of a Mobile Gardening Club

This paper will critically analyse the advantages and disadvantages of an Entrepreneur's extra-curricular activity (after school) mobile gardening club for children based in early year settings or primary schools.

Welsh Government (2022b) says that the new curriculum promotes outdoor learning, as this will support the children to grow into healthy, capable, and valued members of their community. Also, Welsh Government (2022a) says that being outdoors and engaging with nature and environment can promote children's holistic development, and build up a mindfulness of the natural world. Additionally, Theorist Froebel believed that the outside was beneficial to children as it would promote holistic development (Tovey, 2022). Furthermore, Ouvry and Furtado (2019, p. 24) say that when a child is outdoors, the environment plays an important part in the learning developmental values of the child. However, Welsh Government (2023) says that some practitioners would rather teach indoors as they see outdoors as a time to play. Additionally, Dijk-Wesselius et al (2020) says that some practitioners were apprehensive of leaving the safety of the classroom.

Dillon (2017, p. 181) says that outdoor learning whilst in general is effective, there are some disadvantages, such as lack of confidence in teachers, time limit and how it links to the new curriculum. Also, Dijk-Wesselius *et al* (2020) says that Practitioners found children harder to manage being outdoors and outdoor learning more complicated.

Additionally, Dillon (2017, p. 181) says that there is a lack of resources, materials, and support for practitioners. Furthermore, Austin (2017) also says that practitioners are conscious of finding the time and where to fit in gardening in their daily timetable. Therefore, practitioners will start to

feel under pressure to produce the necessary work and eventually become exhausted and must take time off work (Creagh *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, in addition to lack of time (Diaz *et al.*, 2019) says that practitioners also have inadequate support to take on additional work, they also have little confidence in their own gardening skills. Welsh Government (2023) says that for practitioners should be trained and at a skilled level to confidently administer outdoor education.

Data taken from research for this paper revealed that in present day education, children would only plant cress in a plastic pot, if it linked to the present theme. However, Davies and Hamilton (2018) believe that if practitioners have a wider range of training courses for educating the children in gardening, this could be on par with the indoor education. Whilst larger companies such as The Royal Horticultural Society (2024b) provide a variety of courses on gardening for a fee, unfortunately in the new curriculum this is not the case.

Another barrier for practitioners to bring the lessons outdoors is health and safety, some practitioners may think that the children are not capable of being outside because of the risks it might entail (Davies and Hamilton 2018). However, Harper (2018) says that children that are outdoors, and learning about nature are characteristically known for their balance of risk-taking. Forest schools and gardening is an environment that risk is intrinsic, yet injury is at a minimum (Harper 2018). Additionally, Mahoyok (2015) states that results from research about risk and safety for children in the outdoors, showed that children who do not go outside as much as they did many years ago are more influenced by not only the risks, but the fear of risks also. However, Sandseter *et al.* (2017) believes that risk taking should be seen as life lessons for the unforeseen. Children need to make mistakes as it is crucial for them to learn and reflect and be able to progress in their development (Sandseter, 2017, p.113).

As this gardening club will be supported by volunteers, another hindrance is the number of visitors to the school, also disclosure and barring checks for the visitors (NSPCC 2021). However, Welsh Government (2022c) says that each school setting should have their own safeguarding policies in place and each visitor to the school should be aware of the policies. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2022c) says that if a person will be a regular visitor or volunteer to the school, the school can apply for a disclosure and barring check free of charge as the school is employed by an organisation (UK Government nd). Additionally, Harding (2018)

says that when there are too little volunteers, another challenge is that there is no time to train staff effectively.

Solly (2022) says that children only need to go outside for fresh air to boost their holistic development, that being outside will help with the children's health and wellbeing. Furthermore, the Horticultural Trades Association (nd) says that children are spending too much time playing online games or watching television. Additionally, some children could not recognise different species of birds and insects. However, Horticultural Trades Association (nd) says that being outside whether gardening or just playing helps children with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Gardening promotes the strength of children who are not academically inclined (Horticultural Trades Association nd).

Learning Through Play (2024) says that theorist Piaget believed that children who play and learn outside embody all learning developments and become more conscious of their environment.

Elliot (2019) says that children want to experience all types of weather, whether it is rain, snow, or wind, unfortunately the practitioners do not discuss this with the children and determine themselves that the weather is not suitable to go out in. Furthermore, UNICEF (nd) says that every child has a right to fresh air, so children should spend as much time as possible in green and natural settings. Additionally, Hyun Oh (2023) says that practitioners believe that poor weather conditions such as rain and wind play a big part in the children to venture outside. Furthermore, Hyun OH (2023) says that practitioners also believe that sunlight and hot temperatures are a barrier to being outside as children only want to stay indoors in the cool.

Conclusion

Currently there is much information on climate change and the environment, on how the present and future generation can help. Getting involved with gardening and the outdoors is the best way forward for children. It will help them learn and recognise the situation the world is in now.

The mobile garden club even though starting off small has so much potential to expand. It could go on to more primary schools in other towns and areas. Eventually expanding to Forest schools that are proper educational primary schools, not like Forest schools that are around now. That just are just for training and development for groups of children, practitioners, and families.

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