
Outdoor Learning
Presented by Bobbi Rae



(Kaplanco, unknown)

Outdoor learning involves using a variety of outdoor environments, making use of the variety of natural resources to directly learn from. The purpose of learning outdoors is to increase a pupils activity levels whilst proactivity supporting and developing the learners approach and understanding of a subject in a variety of environments and nurturing their connection with the natural world. (*Institute of outdoor learning, unknown)*

By having different areas of learning it provides pupils with the opportunity of practicing existing skills and developing new ones in a practical manner. (*Estyn, 2016)*

Outdoor schools not forest schools as there is a commitment to taking the whole curriculum outdoors. Outdoor schools are always a form of forest schools, but forest schools are never outdoor schools.

WHAT PROMPTED MY RESEARCH INTO STRUCTURED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES?

In 2019 I worked as a learning support assistant in a year 1 class in a primary school within Swansea. The class had 25 students aged between 5-6.

Whilst working in the school I observed the children working in the classroom and outdoors, and found that learning outdoors increased the class engagement levels.

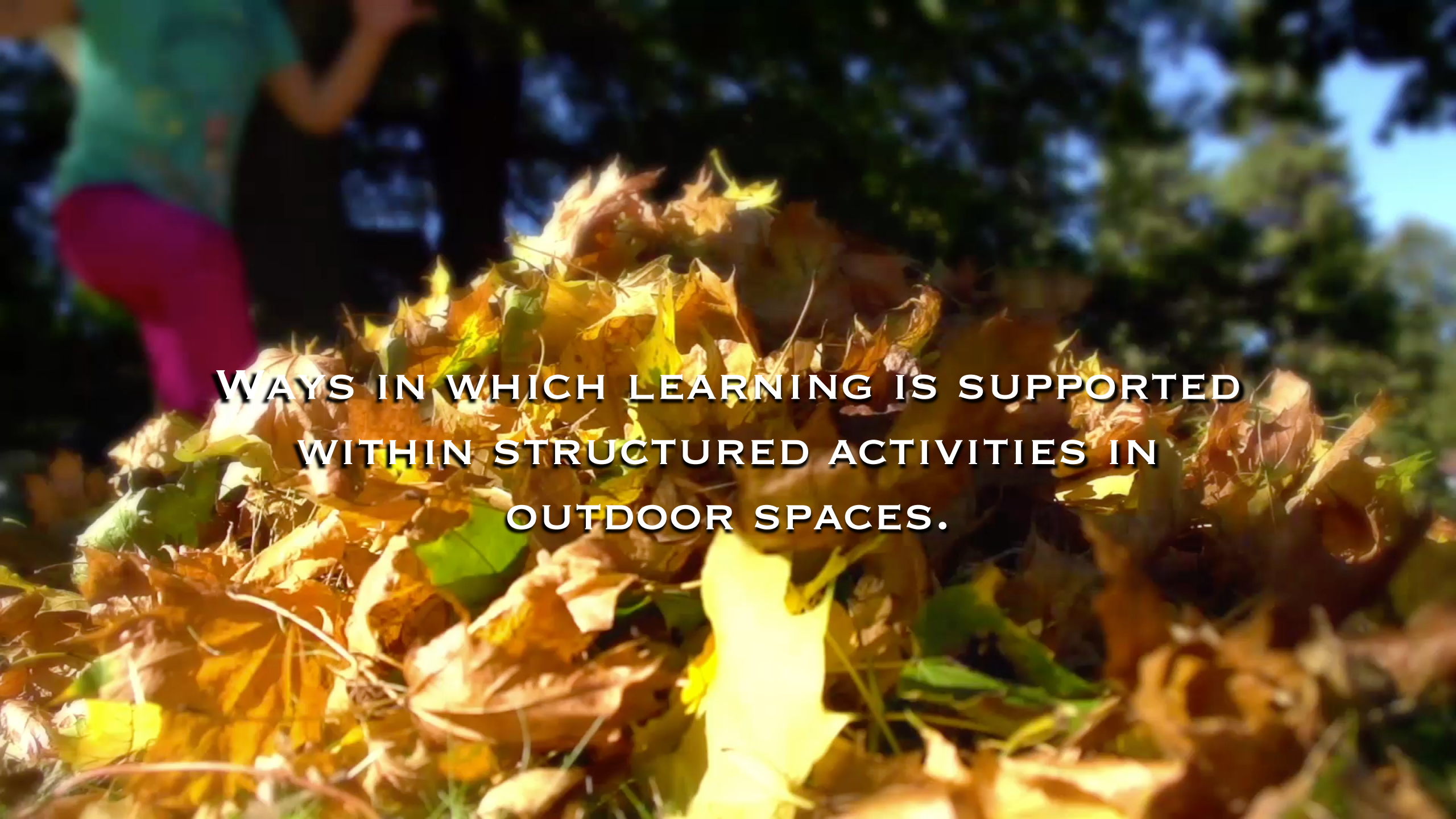
I also visited a school that has weekly timetabled outdoor learning to 'develop self-esteem, confidence, independence, team-building, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment through the unique method of outdoor learning." *(School prospectus 2019, p.32)*

As my placement was with the foundation phase, during my visit I was provided with information on how the school integrates the curriculum into outdoor learning and how this is supported across the school through appropriate activities.



The head teacher expressed that if in Britain's first area of natural beauty cannot deliver a successful and Sustainable approach to the curriculum in outdoor learning then who can?




Ways in which learning is supported
within structured activities in
outdoor spaces.

WAYS IN WHICH LEARNING IS SUPPORTED WITHIN STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES IN OUTDOOR SPACES.

Example activity – After discussing the history of Egyptians, the children collected natural materials in a woodland, and made Egyptian jewellery.

During this activity they looked at the thermal properties of the materials and considered how they could also be used. Further materials were sought to make a raft that could float on the lake.

- During this one activity a range of the curriculum was covered.
- Having a focus or particular stimuli engaged the children in thinking and learning about the theory and then practically applying their knowledge, demonstrating their learning.
- By incorporating theory and practical it developed the children's critical thinking skills and allows linking of understanding and different subjects to occur in one session.

BENEFITS

- Cannot be directly linked, however the Estyn (2019) report for the outdoor school noted that attendance and levels of attainment had increased since the outdoor learning sessions had started. Develops self-esteem and confidence
- Increased levels of concentration and engagement with the learning materials.
- Job satisfaction
- Positive effect on mental health and well-being (*Marchant, 2019)*

(Cbtnuggets, 2018)



HOW WILL DATA BE COLLECTED?

METHODOLOGY

3 random students at a high, intermediate and low ability would be selected to be monitored and recorded.

The children would be observed during two separate indoor and outdoor learning sessions. Observation ensures that it can be recorded as it occurs, providing accurate data.

The recorded information would then be reviewed and compared with current literature on ways in which learning is supported within structured activities in outdoor spaces.

- Interviews to both pupils and teachers asking open and closed questions about their experiences learning indoors and outdoors.
- Focus groups would allow pupils to express their opinion of outdoor learning sessions, whilst actively demonstrating their social skills within the group.
- This will provide the research project with qualitative and quantitative data to analyse.



LIMITATIONS OF CHOSEN RESEARCH METHODS

- Interviews – timely, subjective, no anonymity.
- Focus groups – timely, subjective, no anonymity.

Qualitative research does not provide an understanding of the cause and effect. Although an in-depth account provides an account of why the individual thinks outdoor learning has enhanced or decreased their learning, but cannot be concluded on.

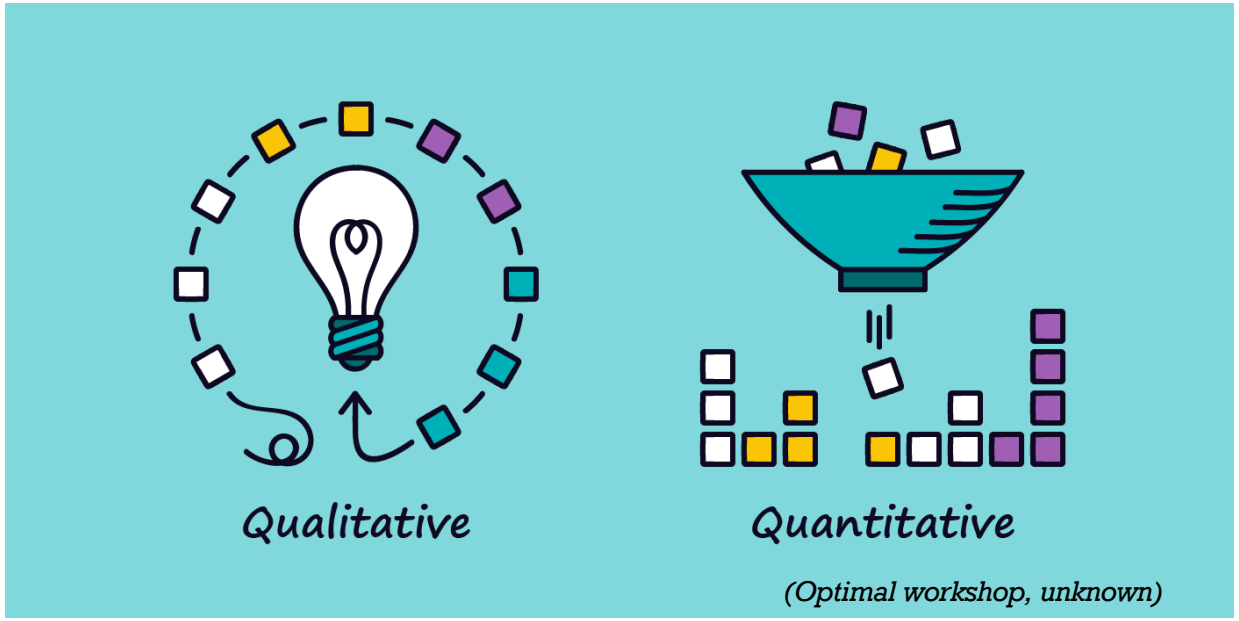
Observations will provide a detailed account of what interaction is occurring and levels of engagement with the subject, but do not measure every variable which would provide an accurate account on what specific part has greater impact on all learners. *(Sumeraki, unknown)*



This project will predominantly use qualitative data to analyse the impact of structured activities in learning outdoors.

This will provide evidence of how and why structured activities outdoors are having a positive impact on a holistic level.

The quantitative data will provide a structure on what questions will be asked in the interviews and in focus groups. (*Save the children, unknown)*



(Optimal workshop, unknown)

ETHICS

- So that the health and safety of children are wholly considered in a learning environment the following are to be addressed:

  Fire procedure

  First Aid

  Risk assessment to be completed of location

  Adequate supervision

  The learners skill level and maturity

  Natural hazards

Consent forms will need to be signed so that parents, teachers and children's are aware of any risks involved.

In 2012 the health and safety executive noted that when structuring and providing outdoor learning experiences it is not about eliminating the risks but to properly assess and teach them about observation, assessment and health and safety. (*Learning through landscapes, unknown)*

Focusing on risk alone can create an aversive situation where anything can be subjectively unsuitable.


WHY ARE THE RISKS RELEVANT?

ANYTHING ELSE

Further consideration would need to be made about funding and the resources of schools as this would impact what activities could be facilitated.

Considerations would need to be made of how often the schools involved in the research engage in outdoor learning.

Literature that I would refer to during the research –

HAPPEN Swansea – Health and Attainment of Pupils involved in Primary Education Network
Up to date research of outdoor schools.

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