

Section one



(Source: Google images, 2021)

Section Two

Feature 1 – Trees

Children can explore the textures of the bark and leaves and group different colours and patterns, which will enhance scientific and mathematical concepts such as exploring shapes and their understanding of colours as they learn to group, match and discover patterns of the leaves and bark. Further activities such as natural art pictures will incorporate conceptual understanding, as well as creativity skills. They may attempt to climb, which will use physical force and strength. Many children may use the trees as shade during sunny weather, or as a hiding place whilst playing with their peers, which initiates mathematical concept of height and width; with the tree being a selected place to hide and shelter. Children will often question how and why things grow on trees, such as leaves, acorns, pinecones, branches, fruit, and the diverse types of trees to explore. Scientific links with trees can be made, by educating children on the importance of trees being living organisms and how they help us to breathe, due to the production of oxygen. They can learn about habitats such as birds' nests, which are in trees and where paper comes from and the importance of recycling, which saves trees for these purposes. Adults can facilitate further learning on these topics by including books, or iPads with visuals within the outdoor learning area. Adults can arrange activities such as litter picking, to reinforce the importance of keeping outdoor environments clean, so that animals and other living things have safer habitats.

As pictured, the logs can be used for sitting on, building, or as steppingstones, which will require force, balance, resistance and vestibular sense. Beneficial links with climbing logs and trees, strengthen children's physicality, as they play and discover different heights and gradients and learn about energy, which links with science and mathematical development. This activity has physical benefits as they learn to stretch and move around, whilst being outside in the fresh air. Materials and ropes can be provided by the

adult, for children to build a den between each tree, or hang a washing line as part of their play. This sparks creative and imaginative development, as children will be thinking about how to construct a den and the materials they will need to use. Building a den also encourages teamwork and benefits their social and cognitive development; as children learn to verbally communicate with each other, to create the result. Adults can encourage and provide resources for the activities, whilst observing to ensure that the children are safe. Experiential learning such as this, links with guidance by The Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning Handbook. (Welsh Government 2009).

Feature 2 – Plants and Animals

Curiosity of Lifecycles can be explored as well as habitats. Children may wonder what animals live in the outdoors, especially in the forest. Books can be incorporated for learning about bugs and plant life as well as magnifiers to support scientific learning. Children will be able to understand that the outdoors is a natural habitat for many living things and nocturnal creatures can be explored. Adults can provide additional resources such as glue, paint and paper, for the children to create natural pictures, using the resources they find. Loose parts spark inquisitiveness as children ask questions about the different variables and make links to living things, such as acorns and leaves falling from trees. Linking with progression steps 2 and 3 of Curriculum for Wales Science and Technology guidance, (Welsh Government, 2020), as children begin to predict phenomena and search for answers in relation to science and nature.

Photosynthesis can be explained to children, as they question how plants and trees grow and what they need to grow. The importance of water as an element and how it assists nature, such as rain and rivers, can also be discussed. By identifying processes and connections, children will be able to transfer mathematical skills to play and activities, identify steps to complete the task or reach a solution, select appropriate equipment and resources such as wellies, appropriate clothing and shelters, use knowledge and practical experience to inform estimations and to select and use relevant number facts and mental strategies. (Curriculum for Wales, 2022).

Children like to pick flowers and leaves from trees, plants, and from the ground. This initiates awe and wonder as they can feel the different textures and senses such as touch and smell. Adults can arrange planting activities for the children to plant seeds for flowers, fruit and vegetables. This will incorporate science and mathematical skills as they will learn about the process of growing different things and to calculate the number of resources needed to do so. Measuring volume of water can also be included as an activity where buckets, and jugs can be provided by the adult, as well as watering cans to water the flowers and plants.

Discovering bugs can spark a child's curiosity, as they are often fascinated when they find different creatures; understanding the roles of insects such as bees, which link with pollination, plants, and flowers, provides beneficial links with science, as they understand that there are other living things, besides humans; which play important roles in nature. Adults can explain the importance of respecting nature and its purposes. Magnifiers can be included, as well as the construction of a bug hotel.

Feature Three – Loose Parts

Loose parts enhance fine and gross motor skills and provide opportunities for children to repeat schemas, encouraging growth in several areas of development; as they can use them to theoretically think and problem solve, enhancing mathematical concepts and imaginative thinking. Mathematical development can be enhanced as children can find, collect, measure and sort loose parts such as pinecones, shells, sand, grass, mud, sticks, acorns, stones, leaves and more; as well as scientific aspects such as textures of the natural resources and how they grow. Discovering loose parts provides children with a sense of discovery and sparks imagination as they may use them to make potions, or as part of their role play if they are playing 'shop' which can include the natural resources as items to buy and sell, or stones as money, linking with foundation phase outcomes 2 and 4 of the Curriculum for Wales: Foundation Phase Framework (2015).

Building dens and loose parts, can support the five mathematical proficiencies as stated by Curriculum for Wales (2022), which enables conceptual understanding, logical reasoning, strategic competence, fluency and communication using symbols. Children can

calculate variables such as sticks, tarpaulin, string and pegs, to ensure that they have enough resources that are suitable for building dens; whilst understanding the importance of effective communication between their peers and teamwork. This activity also supports imaginative play, as children can use their creation as a role play area.

Section Three

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	Woodland	Date:	23 rd September 2021
Assessor:	Talia Pejic	Review date:	23 rd April 2021

ACTIVITY	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
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Using logs as steppingstones	Learning about balance and resistance. Understanding of heights and different surfaces, as well as physicality, strengthening muscles as they move from each log. Physical development when stretching to move and balance. Developing vestibular sense as they walk on uneven surfaces.	Losing balance, falling over, cuts, bruises, splinters, sprains.	Children	Informing the children of the potential risks prior to entering the outdoor environment. A balancing game can be played to ensure that the children know how to balance; Adults can model how to balance, using their bodies such as putting their arms out. Ensuring that children are wearing appropriate clothing and suitable footwear, to prevent further risks and to allow flexibility of movement. The texture of wood and splinters can be explained to children in order to prepare them, should they get one. Gloves can be worn to minimize the risk.	L
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Exploring the outdoor area in different weather conditions	Awareness of different seasons, changes in the weather, different temperatures. Recognition of different surface textures and effects on the ground, trees, and any outdoor equipment when it is, or has been raining. Understanding risks such as slipping due to wet surfaces such as logs, leaves, gradients, or any additional equipment that may be added to the area such as bikes and scooters. Learning resistance and how to maintain	Exposure to the sun could cause sunburn, heat stroke or dehydration. Trees and branches could fall, due to high winds- causing head injuries or even death. Cuts, bruises, due to slipping. Extreme changes such as being too hot or too cold could lead to hypothermia or hyperthermia. Children may become distressed or uncomfortable due to being wet or cold.	Children and Adults	Checking and monitoring the weather via met office, to prevent taking the children out in stormy conditions or high winds. Explaining different seasons and weather conditions beforehand so that the children are aware of appropriate clothing, such as wellies and waterproofs, warm clothing in autumn and winter months; ensuring that they do not overheat in summer weather, checking with parents that consent is given to apply sun cream either in the setting or asking parents to apply it before they enter the setting. Ensuring that a first aid kit is present whilst in the area and that consent forms and risk assessments have been completed. Adult supervision and observations continuously throughout the duration of the activity, to ensure that the	H
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	safety to prevent accidents. Awareness of appropriate clothing to wear suitable to weather conditions, such as waterproof clothing and wellies if it is wet and muddy outside, or sun hats and cooler clothing if it is hot and sunny. Recognition of the different plants, flowers and vegetation that grow and changes in leaves and trees during the different seasons.			safety of each child is paramount. Ensuring that water is easily accessible, and that shades and shelters can be put up during different weather conditions.	
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Exploring Living things, such as, plants, trees, insects, animals and habitats.	Opportunities to explore the life cycles of plants, animals and insects. Exploration of different habitats and learning to understand the importance of respecting the woodland area and nature. Awareness of other living things in the environment and ensuring that they are not destructive of habitats. Development of fine and gross motor skills, using tweezers, magnifiers, and containers to find and collect loose parts.	Stings from nettles, or insects. Allergies to different fruits, plants, or insects. Children may pick up hazardous materials such as broken glass and bits of rubbish. Children may lose the group they are in as they may wander off to explore a different area.	Children and Adults	Ensuring that parental consent is given before activities and checking if plasters can be applied, or any medicine is required, such as EpiPens, allergy wipes, inhalers or relief medicine should a child receive a sting, bite, or eat fruits such as berries. Adults will discuss and create rules which the children must agree to before they enter the woodland, such as not putting anything in their mouths, picking up bugs or animals and not being destructive of the habitats or plants. Whilst ensuring that the children know that they are not allowed to leave their groups or leave the area without an adult or adults' instructions. A class register will be present as well as labels with the children's names and group names on so that they can stay in their groups and not wander without consent. The children must be respectful of the area and	M
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	Recognition of different fruits which may grow on the trees or plants. Exploring healthy eating and nutrients, linking with science.			adults will ensure that the children are aware that any litter is put into a rubbish bag and not left in the woodland area. Preparing the children with knowledge of the activity subject and what to look out for. Explaining that living things such as nettles or insects may sting them. Visuals can be displayed prior to the activity. First Aid kit will be present in case of any incidents.	
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Building dens and shelters	Physical development – strength to bend, stretch, gather, carry and build using materials. Developing conceptual mathematical understanding, by thinking about the materials needed to construct the dens/shelters. Developing social and cognitive development and teamwork skills.	Cuts, splinters from wood, trees and sticks, head injuries should the den collapse - bruises.	Children	Adult supervision, ensuring that children are aware of the possible risks and intervention if needed. First aid kit present.	L
Scavenger Hunt for loose parts/collecting materials	Development of Fine and gross motor skills as they may use resources such as tweezers, magnifiers, containers and so	Cuts, bruises, splinters, stings from nettles. Sharp objects such as litter, glass, plastic and rubbish which	Children	Ensuring that children are aware of sharp objects and loose parts not to touch or collect such as rubbish, glass, or other sharp objects. Gloves can be worn whilst collecting loose parts, to prevent splinters and cuts.	M

	on, to collect the loose parts. Physical development as they bend and stretch to find and collect loose parts, such as stones, acorns, sticks leaves and so on. Development of schemas, mathematical links, by counting, sorting and making patterns.	may be in the area.		Adult supervision and a first aid kit present.	
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Section Four

As pictured in section one, the woodland is an enabling, discovery-based environment, where children can be active learners and have first-hand experiences of discovering nature and science; through exploration of the different features which link to science and mathematics, such as high affordance and loose parts, which encourages links with the natural world. The environment and surroundings can impact a child's development. The woodland can positively impact a child's physical health as they are exposed to fresh air and natural surroundings. The physical health benefits of outdoor learning and activities are proven to be vast, as the outdoors stimuli will enhance and enrich a child's learning environment, such as sounds, weather, textures and scents; in accordance with The Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning Handbook (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009), which also states the benefits of experiential learning and how the outdoors plays a vital element in children's well-being. Beneficial links between outdoor play and science and mathematics include the understanding and exploration of nature's purposes and recognition of how to take care of the outdoors; as supported by Rivkin (2000), who states that outdoor spaces help children to develop caring and positive attitudes towards nature and the environment. Adults can support this by encouraging children to take care of the outdoors, by ensuring that rubbish is collected and that they are careful of where they step and what they pick up, in case they are destructive of natural habitats.

Benefits of providing young children with challenging outdoor learning environments include risk taking, which allows children to discover risks and to learn resistance, which will enable safer play. As mentioned in section three, there are several risks and benefits which impact a child's learning and development. The listed activities, provide opportunities for children to learn about their physicality, strength, speed, and agility. Ouvry, (2003), states that children need to be exposed to risk, to allow them to explore and develop. The role of the adult would be to explain the activities to the children beforehand so that they are aware of what to do and the safety procedures, ensuring that the area has been checked and risk assessed before the children enter. It is essential that the adult provides enough resources for the children to find and to supervise the activity. Questioning their knowledge and understanding will enable a child to relay information which they have reciprocated.

By the Adults allowing the children to independently discover risks, supervising with minimal intervention, they will learn how to manage the risk of future outdoor play. Examples of this would be a child losing balance whilst stepping on the logs or falling over uneven ground. This will be beneficial to their development, as they will learn resistance, which will allow them to freely discover and play in different environments, where they can learn and discover different challenges, through adventurous play, whilst providing a balance between risk and safety, supporting vestibular sense and movement, and also proprioception, as supported by Early Years Wales (2018), which states that the vestibular system helps to assist a child's coordination, balance, process of sensory information and the development of body awareness.

The natural materials will add authenticity to the outdoor activities, as children can explore and question nature and the purposes of the objects, which links with Science and Knowledge and Understanding of the World. Natural materials can be reused for educational purposes which will ensure environmentally friendly learning; and will teach children that they can be creative and learn without relying on manufactured materials. In accordance with Ranheim (no date, cited in community playthings, 2021), natural loose parts can motivate a child's learning and can have a lifelong impact, as these resources will always be free to find and source outdoors, and mathematical skills can be modelled, such as encouraging children's thinking by talking about what they have found and where they

found the materials. Tucker (2014), supports this by discussing his opinions on natural resources, stating that aesthetic resources such as acorns, provide potential for cross-curricular and creative activities and they can be used for a range of mathematical activities. Outdoor learning facilitates fine and gross motor skills such as direction, active learning, concept development and recognition of length and distance, as supported by Montessori (1907, cited in mariamontessori.org, 2021). Furthermore, Every Child Matters Framework (Working with Kids 2017) along with The Foundation Phase Framework (2015), advises that children should be provided with a range of suitable resources which will enhance their learning.

Environmental and seasonal changes can impact outdoor learning. An example of this would be leaves changing in Autumn and Winter months, the different textures of the leaves which have fallen, different flowers which bloom in the summer months and springtime, such as blossom trees and the attraction of more insects such as bees and pollination. During Autumn months, there will be more loose parts to discuss, find and collect for activities. Such as conkers and different coloured leaves. Moreover, Nicholson (1971) displays variables not only consist of loose parts, but surpasses open-ended materials, by encompassing phenomena, consisting of gravity, sounds, senses, worlds and concepts. It is important for adults to understand that the outdoors can benefit a child's learning, simply by them being outdoors and exploring all senses.

Therefore, Piaget (no date, cited in verywellmind, 2021), believed children to be little scientists, constructing knowledge from the world around them and that they should play active roles in their learning, as this will assist their knowledge and understanding of the world. He suggested that highly intricate thinking, requires visualisation skills such as seeing to understand and developed a theory of cognitive development, which states the significant role of object permanence; also, the importance of visuals, which help children to gain mental representation of objects, allowing them to recognise and understand their existence, even when out of sight. The woodland resources will help children to connect conceptual understanding, of mathematics, science and numeracy. Harlen (2001), also supports the development of children's knowledge and understanding of concepts and what they have previously learned from experiences and the importance of extending their concepts and development through new experiences. Adults providing a stimulating

outdoor environment, will echo these theorists' views on enhancing science and mathematical understanding. Benefits of the adults supporting and encouraging children's mathematical development, will lead to increased potential for future job opportunities, in accordance with National Numeracy (2012). When developing early science, mathematical and numeracy skills, children can benefit from participating in their learning, by adults facilitating activities to ensure that positive attitudes towards these subjects are portrayed; as supported by Froebel (no date, cited in Tovey, 2013), who perceived children to be creative, curious, and active learners.

According to Reid (2016), research shows that interaction between young children, practitioners and family members, can support a child's numeracy development. When adults use metacognitive talk, it supports a child's development by encouraging them to be inquisitive and stimulating, enquiring minds. An example of this would be if the adult was to say "oh, look, it has started to rain, how are we going to keep ourselves dry outside?" This provokes a child's thought process, enabling them to think of a problem-solving response. This is an example of adults supporting children during outdoor activities, with minimal intervention.

The Curriculum for Wales guidance (Welsh Government, 2020) believes in providing children with a balanced and broad education; aiming to encourage schools to develop their own curriculum, which promotes national and individual well-being. Adults who follow and apply this guidance, through planning and setting up activities in safe and enabling environments; whilst enabling a holistic approach, will assist in promoting challenges for children's mathematical concepts and skills.

Adults who use metacognitive talk for child-led activities and self-directed play, allow a child to independently think and respond; this is linked to sustained shared thinking. By the adult and child working together to problem solve, they combine thoughts and resolutions. Sustained shared thinking influences a child's learning and development (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002). Adult modelling will support children with making links to science and mathematics, by encouraging skills such as problem solving, decision making and curiosity. Rogers (2006), echoes this by stating the importance of problem solving in the industry and how it is the core of

mathematics. Metacognition enhances mathematical learning, due to interventions which result in improved outcomes. Collaborative metacognition develops from both group and individual processes, according to Smith and Mancy (2018).

According to Vygotsky (1978), play supported by adults, provides children with opportunities to play active roles in their learning, through modelling activities. This enables the development of cognitive and social skills. By adults supporting and encouraging a child's curiosity, through instructing activities such as asking the children to build specific items using loose parts, or to find certain items within the outdoor space; it enhances an inquisitiveness of their surroundings; and encourages them to think about the process of construction. However, The Foundation Phase Framework suggests that children between the ages of 4-5 years, should be able to engage in learning activities and have a more independent approach to learning, with minimal adult intervention and they should be encouraged to choose activities independently (Welsh Government, 2015). This is echoed by Bruner (1974, cited in Nursery World, 2016), who suggests that children benefit more from independent learning methods. An example of this would be when children discover play and intrinsic motivation.

By the adult allowing child-initiated play, the children will feel that they can relax and explore without any obstacles, such as completing tasks which have been instructed through adult intervention with a duration of 20-30 minutes for each group; an example of this could be a treasure hunt to find the listed items as part of their work. Children may feel unaccomplished as they may not find all the listed items within the set time period, therefore; the adult must enable self-directed play; allowing a child's freedom of discovery. The Reggio Emilia Approach (Reggio, no date, cited in daynurseries 2021), supports the assistance of developing science, mathematical and numeracy concepts, as they provide children with exploratory play activities, with real life experiences and resources, supporting holistic development. The woodland area as pictured in section one, has plenty of natural resources for children to explore. This is beneficial for their development, due to children questioning the science of nature. The additional resources that adults may provide, such as magnifiers, pots and pans, books, rulers, string, tarpaulin, or pieces of fabric materials, will enhance a

child's learning and will further facilitate science and mathematical development. Activities can be adapted to suit different age groups and abilities.

The activities as listed in sections two and three can be devised such as measuring, cooking, bug and treasure hunts, which stimulate cognitive and creative development. Mathematics and Numeracy Curriculum for Wales (2019), suggests that practitioners ensure that children are provided with exciting, challenging and accessible mathematical activities, in order to develop mathematical proficiencies, purposes of the curriculum, and positive dispositions. Natural materials such as sand, mud and water, support mathematical development by exploring quantity and volume, building dens or sculptures, estimating weight and change of objects and recognising capacity. Adults can use these examples to support children's mathematical development. These activities and resources support the neurological development and executive functions of young minds, according to MIND (2015).

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