I acknowledge the use of AI Tool Microsoft Editor on 6th- 28th September 2024 to proofread my ECEY5005/C portfolio.

1.Spelling and Grammar
2.Immersive Reader

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Awe and Wonder ECEY 5005/C

Section 1

(Source: Evans, 2024)

This is a woodland area within the grounds of a village primary school.

Section 2

Visiting the woodland are 16 children from a funded non-maintained, setting, aged 3-4 years on a 1-8 ratio with 2 practitioners. The area's access is determined by a school timetable, which allows different classes to explore the area at various times.

The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, highlights the value for children to experience the outdoors. Providing a sense of freedom, with the opportunity to explore and investigate open natural spaces, while promoting children's holistic development (Welsh Government, 2022a).
When children visit the woodland, they can navigate independently or within a group. Children can play freely, forage and experiment with natural materials. Incidentally, developing mathematical skills by counting leaves, twigs, fern cones or acorns. Options to compare size and shape or examine textures and patterns are available. During the early years, play creates a principal part in the development of numeracy and mathematics. To resolve problems and make connections, exploring ideas when working with others (Welsh Government, 2022c).

(Source: Google images, 2024)

Enabling adults could introduce comparisons in simple terms, “is it the same or different?” This would be an ideal opportunity to engage in sustained shared thinking. The practitioner would ask open-ended questions to encourage the children’s thinking. This could prompt further investigation, giving time for the children to answer or ask their own questions. The enabling adult would use the (OWL) technique, observe, wait, and listen. According to the curriculum for funded non-maintained

nursery settings, children's communication is enhanced by an adult who can model good communication skills, engage in sustained shared thinking (SST), using open-ended questions effectively, to support thinking (Welsh Government, 2022a).

Further provisions would be provided to extend learning, such as recycled materials like egg cartons, yoghurt pots and boxes. These provide different forms of vessels for children to collect woodland materials and transport them to different areas or to explore and compare their findings. While foraging, scissors give the children the opportunity to cut short or long lengths of grass, leaf stems and wildflowers, promoting fine motor skills and hand and eye co-ordination. Children can also use their senses to explore the wildflowers and leaves, by examining the contrast in texture and smell. Measuring tapes or rulers show length in metric terms, introducing children to numbers in a written form. Crayons and paper could be used for mark making, through bark and leaf rubbings, providing terms like rough, smooth, even, or uneven, which could be discussed.

The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, states that children should be provided with opportunities to explore using their senses, enhancing curiosity that develops understanding of the world around them (Welsh Government, 2022a).

The log area in the centre of the woodland provides scope for children to climb different heights. Developing balancing skills like walking along the length of a log or moving from one tree stump to another. Using gross motor skills through physical movement such as jumping, hopping, or climbing. These mathematical and scientific concepts can support children with schemas, providing opportunities without interruption and limitations. For instance, a child with an orientation schema, who likes to climb, can be facilitated by freely climbing trees, logs, and experiencing different ground levels. This will offer fulfilment for the child, viewing the world through different directions and perceptions, having the freedom to do this by turning themselves upside-down.

(Source: Bing images, 2024)

The supporting practitioner should allow risk taking, as it is important for children to develop their resilience and confidence, while learning about their limitations. Within the curriculum for funded non-maintained nurseries it is acknowledged that adults should show respect for children, by supporting their choices and decisions (Welsh Government, 2022a).

There is opportunity to discuss tall and short, big, and little, enhance the sizing concept by introducing medium or middle sized. When children jump from various levels, they will be exposed to different ground textures and sounds. Wet or dry grass, moss, mud, crispy or damp leaves. This promotes descriptive language in conversation, this should be supported and encouraged by the adult. Another scientific concept that could be discussed is force and gravity, engaging with children when rolling, pulling, pushing, and repositioning the logs. The practitioner could suggest rolling logs down uneven ground or uphill, asking open-ended questions like “what do you think will happen?” “How far will the log travel?” The children may be challenged if the logs are large or heavy, they might choose to work collaboratively or persevere individually. At this point, the practitioner should observe and encourage play using scientific terms such as speed, thrust, friction, and gravity to develop an understanding of what these terms mean and what impact these actions have. Bruner highlights how the Scaffolding theory impacts children positively. In practice, children learning new concepts need support from others, which include practitioners and peers. Through sharing knowledge and role modelling, children are exposed to enriched learning experiences.

(Source: Bing images, 2024)

When manoeuvring logs, children may discover different insects and habitats. Providing magnifying glasses and bug catchers, can encourage children to investigate independently, using their senses to explore and study the insects. To enhance curiosity, factual magazines and books could be provided for children to look at and evaluate comparisons or similarities. The Practitioner should give the children ample time to examine the insects by using their senses and only intervene where appropriate. This gives opportunity to ask questions and discuss their findings with their peers or the practitioner, extending their understanding of how to care for living things. The practitioner could develop children's knowledge about living things by introducing life cycles, discussing biological changes, cause, and effect, whilst learning about the world around them. Developing proficiency in caring for our environment, exploring, and extending numerous scientific concepts. The Curriculum for Wales highlights the requirement for children to be offered opportunities to explore their environment, whilst encouraging them to develop curiosity and problem-solving skills (Welsh Government 2022c).

(Source: Bing images, 2024)

Making a bug house –collecting various materials from the woodland to house insects. Working together as a team to make the large structure. The practitioner could promote active conversation, what will live there? What will happen to the insects in different weathers? This will extend learning experiences and strengthen knowledge. The children will experience problem solving, through working out how to form the initial structure of the bug house, choosing and foraging for suitable materials. Evaluating if they are stackable, considering if the materials are strong enough to hold the weight and size of each layer. Once the bug house is erect, the children may begin to examine the structure forming opinions, contributing additional ideas, identifying any issues that can be improved or resolved. This can be achieved individually and collaboratively, utilising critical thinking skills. Within practice, this relates to Vygotsky's theory The Zone of Proximal Development.
Vygotsky emphasises intellectual development occurs through others' interaction and influence. The practitioner could suggest re-creating a bug house within the setting garden. The children could relive the experience that was enjoyed. Completing the task successfully previously, could positively impact the children's outlook. When revisiting the re-creation, children could further their knowledge by reflecting on trial and error. This area would have a significant impact to children's learning about the natural environment. With daily access, nurtured by the children through hands-on experiences, would provide a maintained, exploratory area for caring for real-life in a natural environment. According to the curriculum for non-maintained nursery settings, creative contributors connect and employ their knowledge and skills to create ideas and products (Welsh Government, 2022a).

(Source: Google images, 2024)

Part 3

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	Woodland area in a village primary school	**Date:**	10th September 2024
Assessor:	Michelle Evans	**Review date:**	1st April 2025

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
Children can explore the woodland area freely. Promoting independence.	Freedom to explore within a safe and secure environment which promotes holistic development.	Poisonous plants Fungi (mushrooms) Poisonous when ingested. Nettles Brambles Allergic reactions Children leaving the woodland area and access other parts of the school grounds.	Children	Encourage hand washing after exploring the woodland area. Staff to discourage anything being put into mouths and supervise closely. Registers will be completed and taken to the woodland. Staff to be allocated 8 key children each, these will not change during the whole visit to the woodland area. Staff to always be vigilant when supervising their key children. Regular headcounts will take place. Staff will ensure all school gates are securely closed and will only be opened with staff fob access. Prior to the visit children will discuss boundaries and expectations Staff to complete health and safety checks before each session, to include removing any foreign objects or animal faeces from the area. A First Aid kit will be taken to the location. Staff to ensure this is fully stocked and everything is in date. Staff need to be informed who the First Aiders are prior to the outing.	Low

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
Children can climb trees, walk along logs, jump from various levels. Use physical movement freely. Experience the world around them from different angles and levels. Experiencing different weather conditions in the outdoors.	Freedom to explore within a safe and secure environment which promotes holistic development. Providing opportunities to explore scientific and mathematical concepts while risk taking, creating inventions in ways that are desired by the children. Children can start to develop an understanding of various ground textures and how they feel. developing their proprioception. Children can develop an understanding of the seasons, the changes that happen and how this effects our environment. Discovering what is suitable to wear in different weathers.	Falling from a height causing harm. General trips and falls due to uneven ground causing small injuries. Colliding with peers. Adults and children may slip, trip, or fall, causing minor injuries such as scratches grazes bruising sprains or broken bones Children wearing unsuitable clothing or inappropriate footwear which is not weather appropriate.	Children and adults	Allow children to take reasonable risks. Staff to monitor high climbing. Assist children who are less confident or physically challenged. Encourage children to take their time whilst encouraging independence and making decisions. Intervene when inappropriate behaviour occurs through supervision. In extreme weather conditions staff to evaluate time scales by reducing visiting times. Parents are informed at the enrolment process that the children have access to the outdoors daily. Ensure all children are dressed appropriately for weather conditions. Provide spare garments such as waterproofs, coats, hats and gloves. In the warmer weather ensure sun protection has been applied. Ensure staff are also appropriately dressed as this is important to role model. Staff also need to be comfortable in the outdoor environment.	Low

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
Children have access to additional resources such as scissors, transporting vessels, and magnifying glasses as well as loose parts. Additional resources can extend learning experiences and enhance learning and development.	Children having access to additional resources such as loose parts with enhance the learning experience and provide choice and independence. It also encourages creativity and promotes imagination. Enriching social interaction, and communication skills when working collaboratively with others. Manipulating large objects during play helps develop gross motor skills, while exploring smaller loose parts can develop fine motor skills and strengthen hand and eye co-ordination. This method of play promotes child-led play and explores open ended opportunities that are based on the children's own ideas and interests.	. When children use scissors, they may hold them incorrectly or misjudge how they are cutting which can cause minor injuries. Loose parts may break during use or investigation. There is a chance that this may cause injury.	Children	Practitioners will provide high quality resources that are suitable and age appropriate. Any damaged resources will be removed and replaced. When children use scissors, staff will supervise and intervene if they are not being used appropriately by role modelling how to use them effectively. Practitioners will support children throughout play by facilitating rather than directing. Encouraging exploration and experimentation in a safe way and environment.	Low

Part 4

Child learning is intrinsically linked to the sense of well-being, freedom and enjoyment that children achieve from being in an outdoor environment, Waite (2011). Wilson (2018) emphasises the importance of playing in natural environments to enhance holistic development in the early years. Learning through Landscapes (No date) states experiencing the outdoors is not an addition to learning, but a way to intensify learning by allowing children to explore activities in a natural and exciting way. Providing real-life exposures that are inclusive, giving practitioners more opportunity for all children to be together sharing experiences. Ryder-Richardson (2013) agrees with this and believes that the outdoor environment has qualities different from the indoors, offering children experiences on a larger scale. This can provide nurturing experiences while allowing children to explore, promote a sense of well-being and allow multisensory experiences using the whole body. The Curriculum for funded non-maintained settings states supporting a holistic approach in the outdoors will help children connect to their learning experiences (Welsh Government, 2022a).

Children need time to explore the outdoors frequently, this gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment. In the outdoors children have access to natural materials and characteristic features, that encourage children to explore, investigate, communicate, and encourage self-directed play. Providing interaction with nature outdoors is beneficial for young children in all development areas, Wilson (2018). According to White (2011) children require enabling adults that understand the possibilities of being in the outdoors, the enriched results that can be achieved during outdoor learning. Adults are integral to children when experiencing the outdoors, as children need

enthusiastic enabling adults that are engaged and display a positive attitude. Active role modelling, facilitating and making the most of the outdoors, will benefit child-directed play. (Wilson, 2018 p.45) agrees with this and believes children have an innate sense of curiosity to explore; however, they need an engaging adult who is supportive, encouraging, to motivate their sense of wonder. Bilton (2010) suggests for the outdoor experience to succeed, adults must interact with the children, work together, while facilitating needs. Cohen and Waite- Stupiansky (2019) state the world around us is constantly evolving and as children explore and engage with nature, mathematical and scientific concepts can develop. Through talking about topics such as weather and life cycles, exploration, experimentation and problem solving. When these skills are supported by adults, learning can be enhanced, and curiosity strengthened, Cohen and Waite- Stupiansky (2019). Curiosity about science and technology leads us to ask questions about the world around us. By being encouraged to use logic, evidence and creativity, learners will be supported to inquire into and apply scientific knowledge to further understanding of how our world works (Welsh Government, 2022b).

Froebel highlighted the importance of children playing outdoors, by accessing real-life, first-hand experiences that support learning and understanding (Froebel Trust, no date). According to Tovey (2012) having time to play, children develop perseverance and communication skills, this helps practitioners to gain understanding of children's emerging ideas of why and how things work. Sisson and Lash (2017) state nature-connected play experiences can be limited for some children due to living in urban locations, or because adults who influence the children's life, feel that it is not important. The decrease in outdoor

play is concerning, as time spent outdoors allows children the opportunity to develop relationships with nature, practitioners, and others. The outdoor environment offers a wonderful opportunity to play freely without interruption. Additionally, Moser and Martinson (2010) point out that undisturbed outdoor play, provides essential conditions for children's play and learning. They emphasise the importance of children being given space to explore, which supports holistic development.

Practitioners should promote metacognitive talk as children interact during play. This encourages children to challenge themselves and build resilience. Metacognitive skills can also help children manage feelings and increase self-esteem. When children are confronted with difficult challenges, it can be easier to give up. However, with encouragement, using metacognition can help a child from saying, "I cannot do this!" To "I can do this". Practitioners can help children learn metacognitive thinking, by asking open-ended questions, giving time and space to reflect (Jacobson, 2023).

Loose parts can be a variety of items that children choose to use, such as natural items that they collect or everyday items. By utilising loose parts during play, children can engage in their interests, develop curiosity, and investigate in their own way (Play Scotland, no date). The most useful resources are usually aesthetic, with possibilities for creative and cross-curricular opportunities. Natural objects like acorns, conkers, and shells. When presented in bags, boxes, or baskets, children can use these for various mathematical activities, which can provide meaningful links with other learning areas. It is key for the practitioner to provide a varied range of interesting resources, including same and different for recognising comparisons, sorting, and counting. Ensuring the activities

available to the children are purposeful. The concept could be as simple as observing and handling a pinecone, or counting the number of twigs that will fit inside a bug house. The practitioner needs to carefully plan and consider how to facilitate counting, to enhance learning experiences that are attractive and meaningful (Tucker, 2014). The curriculum for funded non-maintained settings state, children are naturally inquisitive and develop an understanding of mathematical language, concepts, and abilities through multi-sensory play and authentic experiences (Welsh Government, 2022a). Tovey (2012) states when providing loose parts, it is crucial for practitioners to value and facilitate such play, children can create and use imaginative skills enhanced by the enabling adult. Gorrie (2021) refers to (Nicholson,1971) stating in his practice there is a need for loose parts to include “space forming materials”. Gorrie (2021) also highlights in the early year's settings; practitioners tend to use small aesthetic loose parts, for sensory experiences and mathematical concepts such as sorting and line making. Generally, larger loose parts are not considered or used regularly. Children thrive in large open spaces and have an inherent need to make areas their own. Creating spaces like these into forts, dens, and caves by building and working together with peers Gorrie (2021).

Affordances provide opportunities and possibilities that the environment offers. It lets our bodies interact with the world around us (Davy, 2019). According to White (2016) physical development in young children is about the sense of oneself, objects, and others in the space around them. It involves the growth of good control and co-ordination in large and small movements, becoming able to move safely and confidently in a range of ways. To comfortably negotiate

the environments, they live in. It is also about the increasing ability to manipulate materials and objects, becoming able to use tools with ease and enjoyment. It is about feeling good in your body, good about yourself, and secure in the world White (2016). The curriculum for funded non-maintained settings, supports this, as experiences can include children's own choices that occur from local or current interests. It should support holistic child development, helping children to make connections across their learning experiences (Welsh Government 2022a).

According to (NHS, no date) The vestibular system tells us where our body is in relation to gravity, where it is moving to and how fast. The nerves that control our vestibular system are in the inner ear, which tell our brain what direction we are moving in. There are two types of receptors in the vestibular system, the first one is the semicircular canals that inform us about head movements. These help us to stabilise our balance, it keeps the eyes focused and prevents feelings of anxiety or being overwhelmed when the body is moving. If this function is not working effectively, there might be a struggle with balance, moving two sides of the body together or having difficulty with smooth eye movements. The second receptor is the otoliths, which helps in relation to gravity, it tells us the speed we are moving whether it is fast or slow. When this system is not working properly, a child would struggle to stay upright or be fearful of movements. Encouraging movements like sliding, wobbling, or jumping will exercise the vestibular system (NHS, no date).

Adventurous play can offer children new experiences and learning opportunities that can help to build character and self-esteem. Risk benefits should be prioritised and evaluated by completing risk

assessments (Gill, 2010). Risk taking incorporates children making choices, based on previous experiences and traits which highlights the necessity for children to be given opportunities for outdoor play. This enables children to experiment in their own way and take the lead (Little and Eager, 2010). The curriculum for funded, non-maintained nursery settings in Wales supports this as it encourages children to explore what they can do with their own body, testing their capabilities and challenging themselves (Welsh Government, 2022a). Moser and Martinson (2010) emphasise that Norwegian children spend a significant amount of time outdoors, in all seasons and weather conditions. Scandinavian practice is more open-minded to risky play and inspires children to take their own risks whilst participating in activities like climbing trees. Waller, *et al*. (2010) touched upon the rapid decline in the opportunities for play outdoors and highlight, that English speaking countries tend to focus more on academic learning for children.

The new Curriculum for Wales recognises the advantages of learning outdoors, it considers it has unlimited benefits for both children and practitioners. Therefore, it includes outdoor learning as a primary factor of effective child-centred learning pedagogy (Welsh Government, 2022d).

To conclude, practitioners should offer opportunities for children to experience a sense of awe and wonder which promotes curiosity about the world, motivating them to explore (Welsh Government, 2022d).

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