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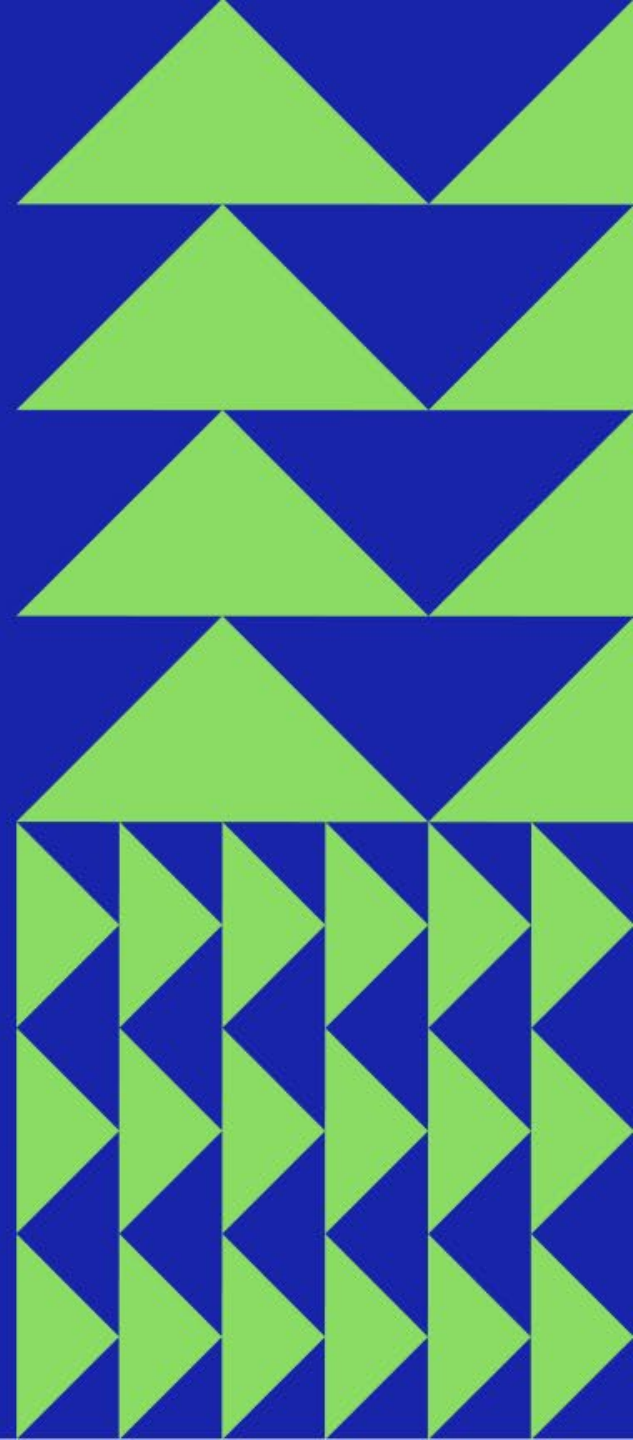
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# Outdoor Learning in primary schools: Practice, challenges and opportunities

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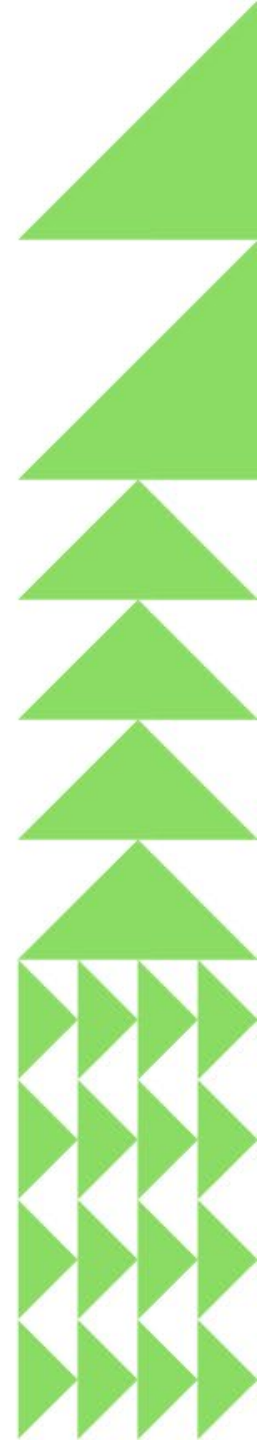


# Personal perspective and values

- Formal education as a framework for equality, diversity, inclusion and entitlement
- Importance of learning outdoors for children and young people
- Evidencing the value of outdoor learning to support teachers and educators, and inform policy and practice

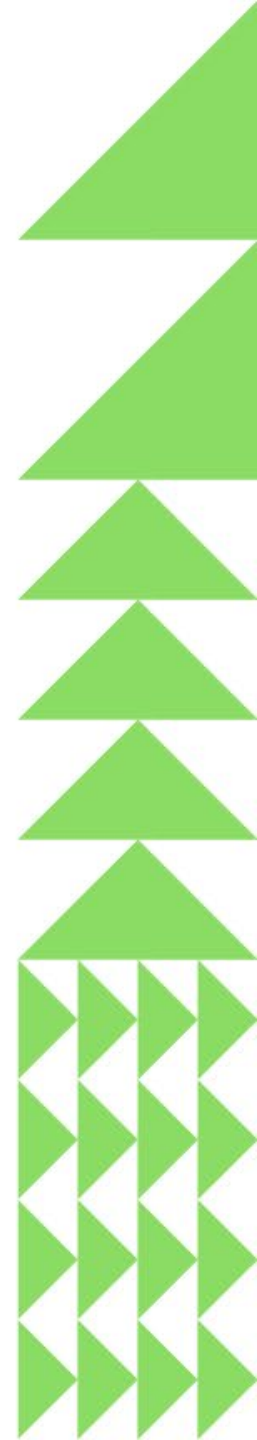


From this ...





# To this ...





and this ...





# It's not new



Charlotte Mason (1841 – 1923)

believed in learning

- through play
- through observing and examining the natural world
- through experiencing materials
- through great art
- through writers and great stories
- through building on previous experiences

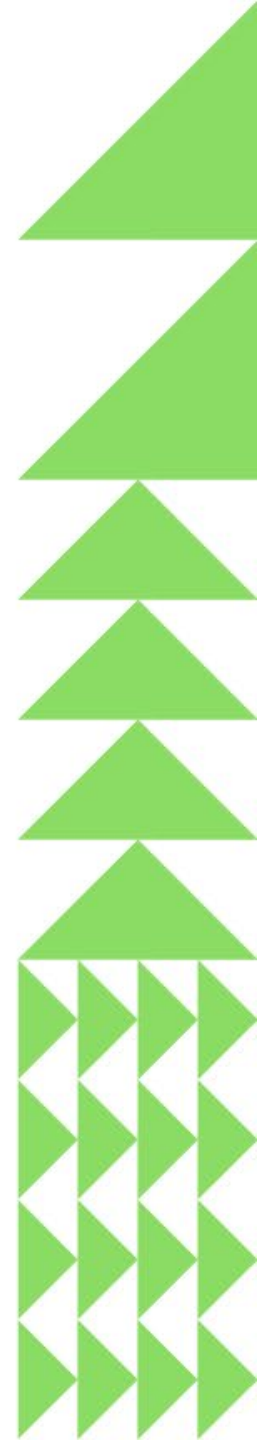








Students working with children



# It's not easy

views here [ow.ly/oOyN30o099q](https://ow.ly/oOyN30o099q)



**SEND provision in Cumbria will be inspected next week.**

Parents and carers have between Monday 11 and Tuesday 19 March to make their views known.

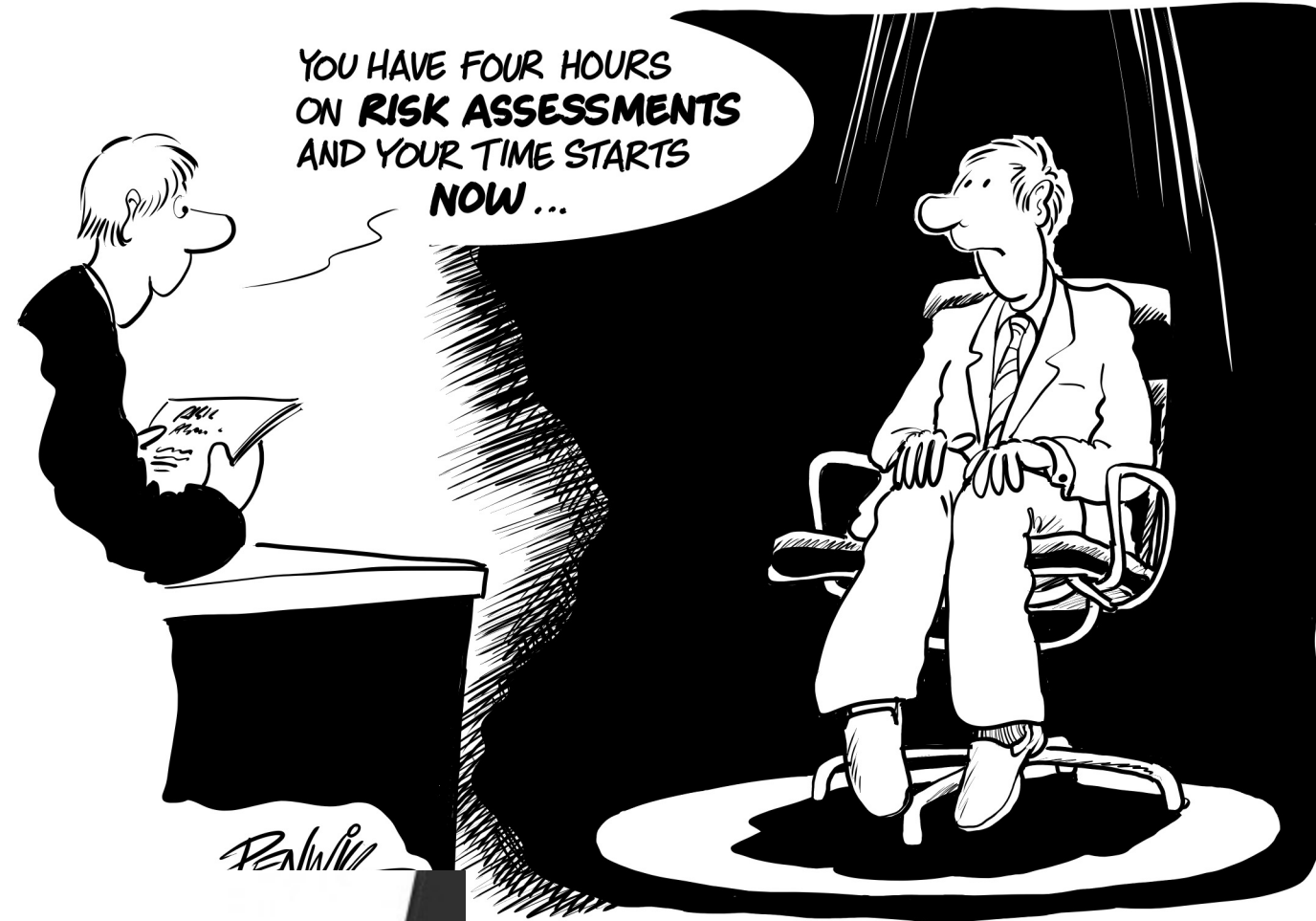


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**Ofsted** @Ofstednews · 3h

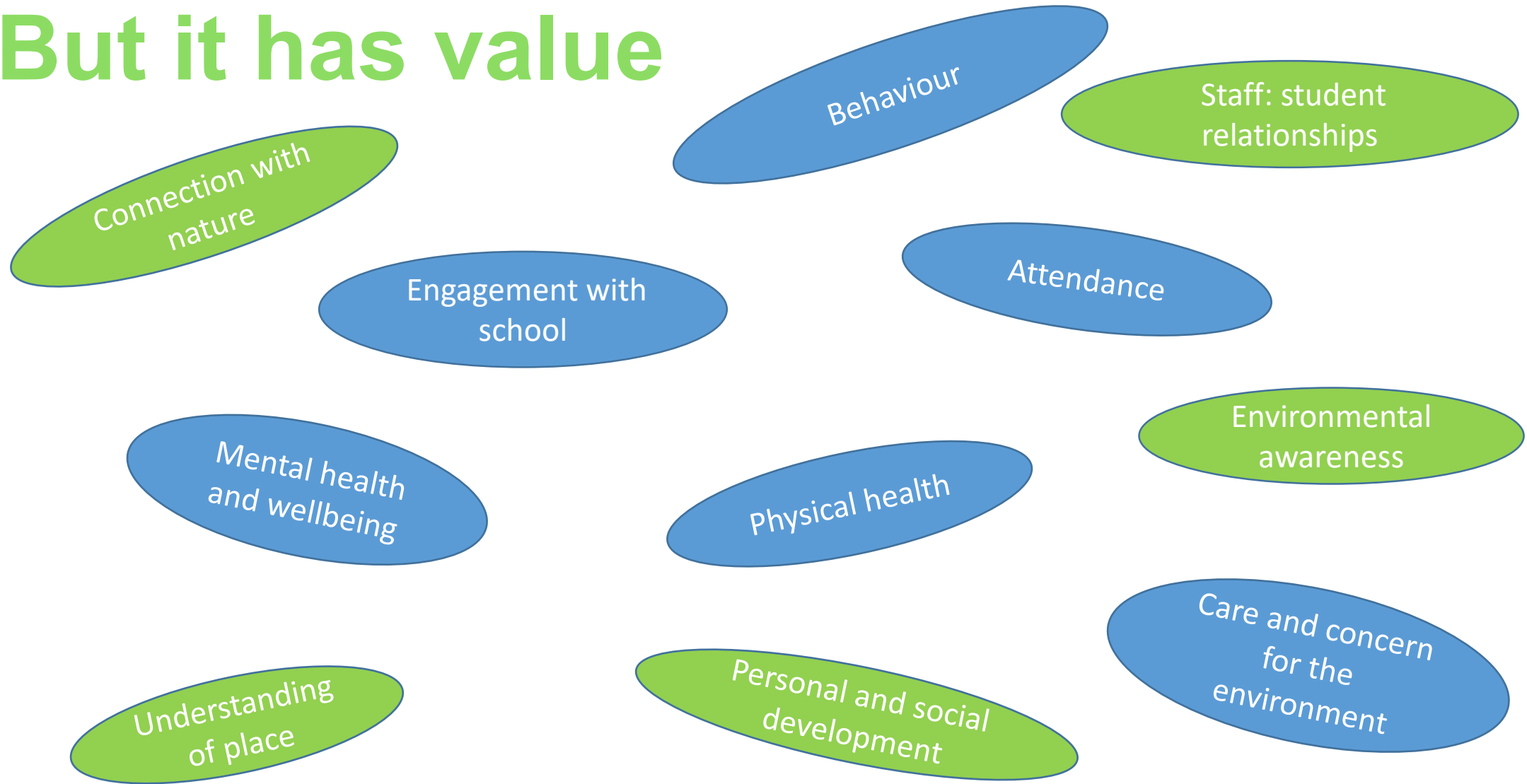
Schools in London aren't supported well enough when it comes to dealing with knife crime and need to be included in strong multi-agency partnerships - read our press release [ow.ly/p9Oa50n1h0s](https://ow.ly/p9Oa50n1h0s)



The National Curriculum in England Framework document



# But it has value



DEFRA, 2018



# There are opportunities

Outdoors as a  
creative space

Teacher values  
and confidence

Place-based  
learning

Relationships

Defra, 25 YEP

Physical activity

Personal  
development





# and more opportunities

The Aztecs  
Anne Frank

Speaking & listening  
Team building

The earth & space  
Forces & motion  
Pneumatics  
Rivers  
Our environment  
Healthy minds, healthy bodies  
Ourselves  
Living things and their habitats  
Local and world forest studies  
Imaginary worlds

Frank

Team build



# Pedagogy

Memorable

Experiential

Ownership

Creative

Exciting

Enabling

Challenging

Progressive

# and challenges

- Time
- Cost
- More important priorities
- Space
- Expertise
- Performativity
- Curriculum
- Risk management, ratios
- Outdoor clothing
- ...
- ...



# Rationale for research

- Gap in knowledge about how teachers see the outdoor classroom; how and why they are using it (Rickinson et al, 2004; Hawxwell et al, 2019)
- More research data needed on evidence of practice and interventions on types and volume of activity (Fiennes et al, 2015)
- Better understanding needed of breadth and depth of outdoor learning practice to encourage the development and use of good practice and raise the value placed on outdoor learning (Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL), 2018)
- Opportunity to explore change over time (22 years) with different curricula & governance





# Method

Replicate surveys of state primary schools in England  
1995 (n=61) and 2017 (n=40)

Postal questionnaires completed by teachers about outdoor  
education/outdoor learning provision in their schools

Response rate overall of 40% ( 60%, 1995; 20% 2017);  
Replicate response rate: 11%

## Differentiation of phases

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (0-5 yrs)
- Key Stage 1 (KS1) (5-7 yrs)
- Key Stage 2 (KS2) (7-11 yrs)

## & locations

- urban
- suburban
- rural



# Analysis

Descriptive analysis of quantitative data for order and variation  
(ranking questions, closed questions)

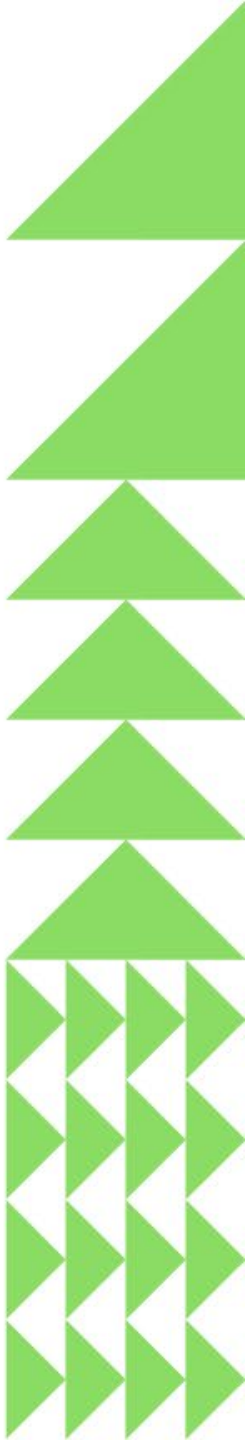
Thematic analysis of qualitative data, codes and themes  
(open responses)



# Locations



Rank	1995	2017
1	Playgrounds (95%) [n=58]	Playgrounds (88%) [n=35]
2	Day visits (87%) [n=53]	Day visits (83%) [n=33]
3	Local area – built (79%) [n=48]	Residentials (78%) [n=31]
4	Other school grounds (74%) [n=45]	Other school grounds (75%) [n=30]

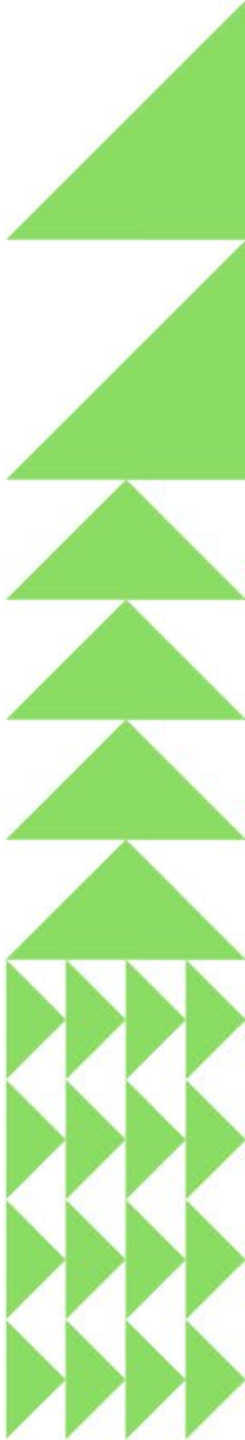




# Curriculum areas



Rank	1995	2017
1	Geography (100%) [n= 61]	Physical education (83%) [n=33]
2	Science (95%) [n=58]	Science (80%) [n=32]
3	Environmental education (93%) [n=57]	Geography (78%) [n=31]
4	Outdoor education (75%) [n=46]	PSHE (70%); Environmental education (70%) [n=28;28]

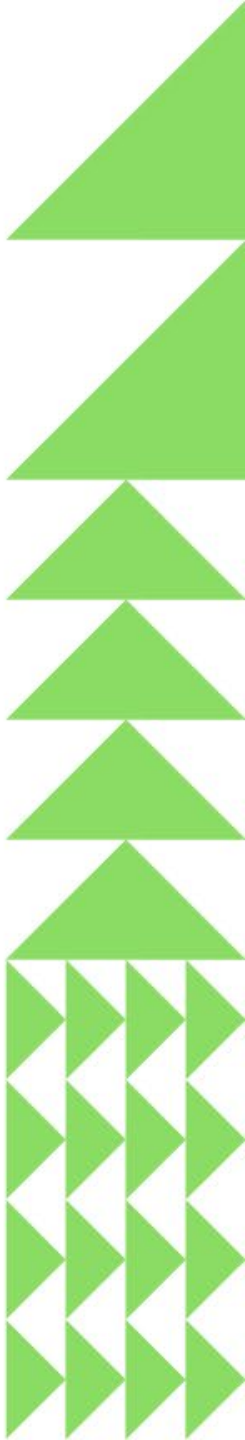




# Stated teacher expertise



	1995	2017
Yes	53% [n=32]	41% [n=16]
No	47% [n=29]	59% [n=24]

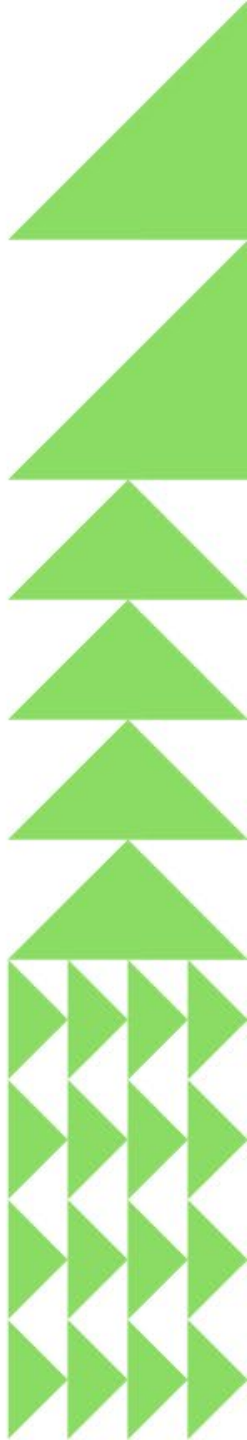




# Outdoor learning as optimum



Rank	1995	2017
1	Environmental Education/Nature	PSE including teamwork
		Physical Education/Physical Activity





# Policies or curriculum change helping or hindering outdoor learning?

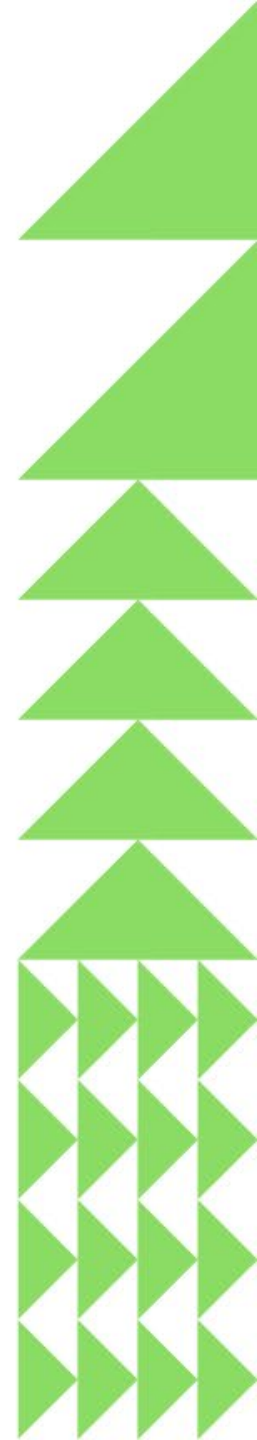


**Helped**

**Leader training, Forest School,  
access**

**Hindered**

**Budget, paperwork, buildings**

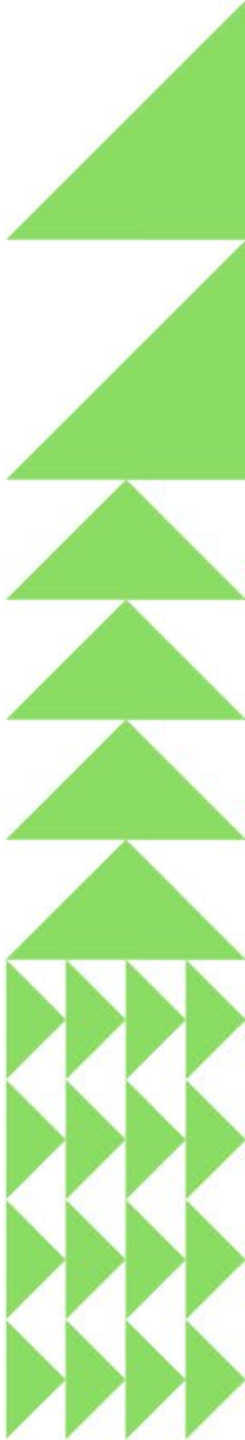




# Factors influencing provision



Rank	1995	Diff. in mean rank	2017	Diff. in mean rank
1	Expense		Time	
2	Time	0.08	Expense	0.28
3	Weather	0.44	Expertise	0.28
4	More important priorities	0.57	More important priorities	0.46



# Place of outdoor learning in the curriculum



Rank	1995	2017
1	A subject/approach to learning in its own right	Included in PE as outdoor and adventurous activities
2	Included in PE as outdoor and adventurous activities	For personal, social (and health) education
3	For personal, social (and health) education	A subject/approach to learning in its own right
4	Taught through geography	Taught through geography





“Life is not computer generated or all about social media, it’s about ...”



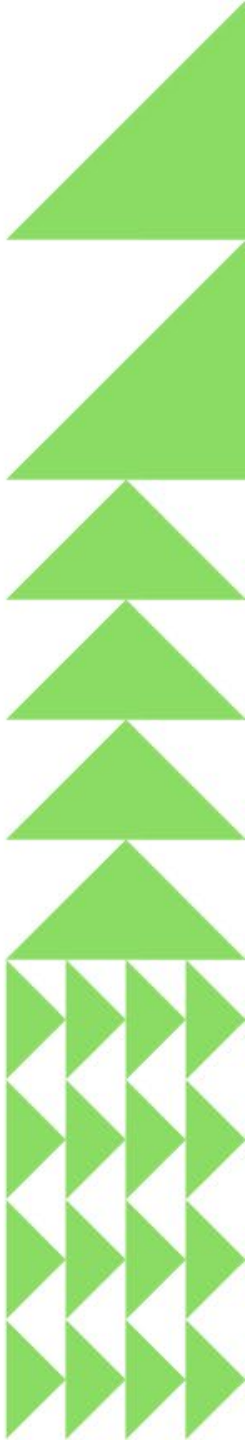


“...connecting with people face to face ...”





“...connecting with environments ...”





“...getting dirty ...”



“...experiencing real things and making memories.”





# Comparative studies

**Expense** was highest ranking barrier to teaching outdoor education (Zink & Boyes, 2006). Is this because teachers choose to travel to facilities or expertise at a distance from schools? (Remington & Legge, 2017)

Teachers report a desire to implement 'out of school' learning but '**financial** arrangements' and 'fitting the activities into the **syllabus**' are major constraints (Füz, 2018)

Positive teacher attitude but barriers are bureaucracy, lack of **time**, rigid curriculum, safety & risk assessments, lack of support, **cost** (Nemitsa, 2017)

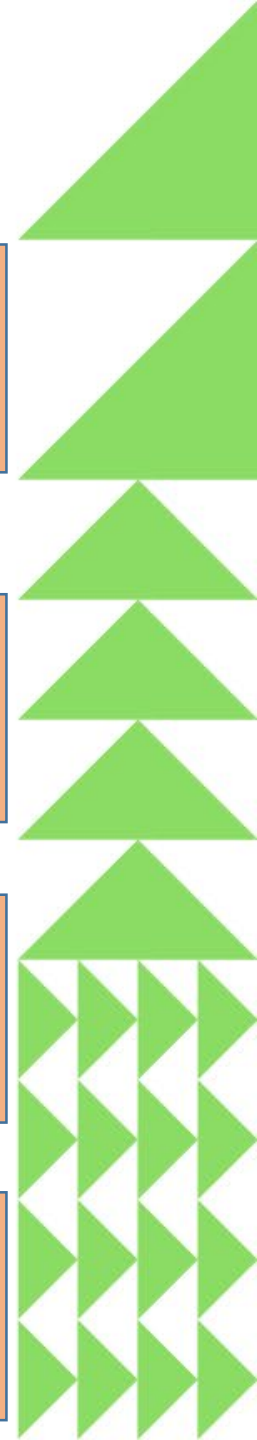
Dyment (2005) found barriers of teacher confidence & expertise, requirements of school **curricula** and wider curriculum reform (as Rickinson et al, 2004) and competition from other curriculum areas

New  
Zealand

Hungary

Cyprus

Canada



# Good practice – making it happen

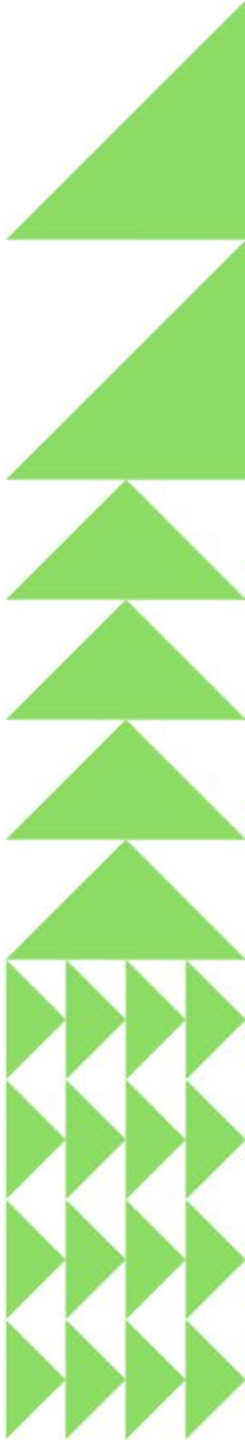
The strength of teachers' values and beliefs

“We believe that children often learn better outside the classroom. The factors do not hinder us. We aim to be outside as much as possible.”  
(rural)



“We take the learning outdoors at every opportunity.”  
(urban - no expertise declared in this school.)

“There are no factors that would prevent us from learning outside - we would find somewhere.” (rural)





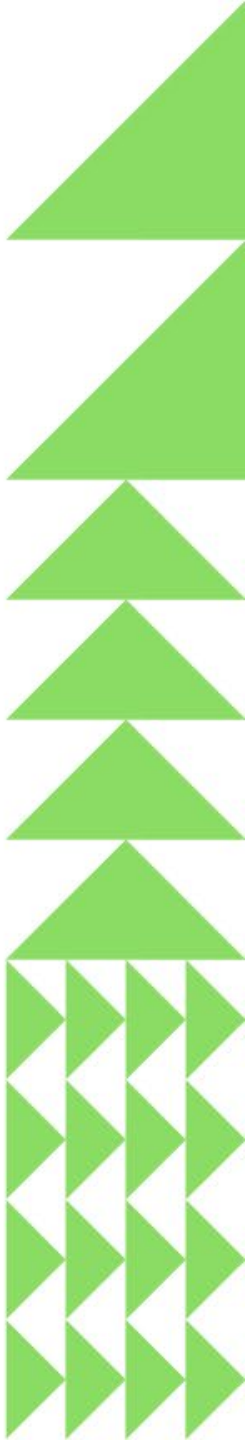
# Good practice – making it happen

## An open approach to curriculum interpretation

“I think outdoor education is an approach to delivering a range of curriculum objectives across all subjects.”  
(rural)



“Our aim is to provide interesting, exciting and experiential learning in every subject - a visit, trip or visitor every topic/subject.”  
(urban)



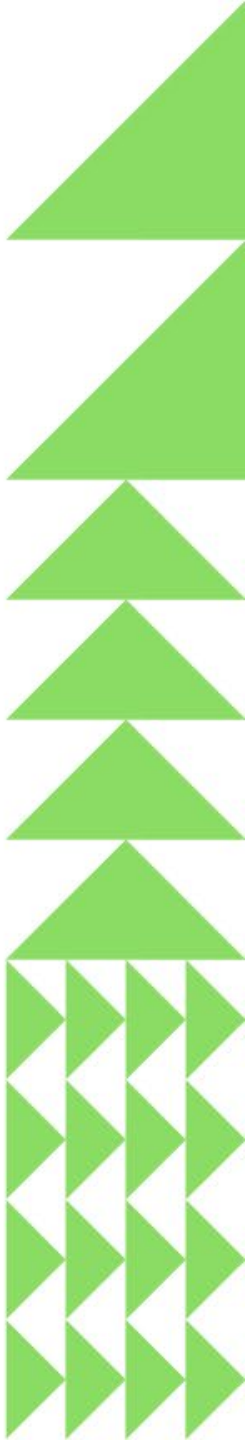


# Good practice – making it happen

## A suitable location

Well-resourced, safe, accessible

“In EYFS we use the outdoors every day and encourage the children to take the learning from inside to the outdoor areas. E.g. baking - mud kitchen. PE - bouldering wall.” (rural)

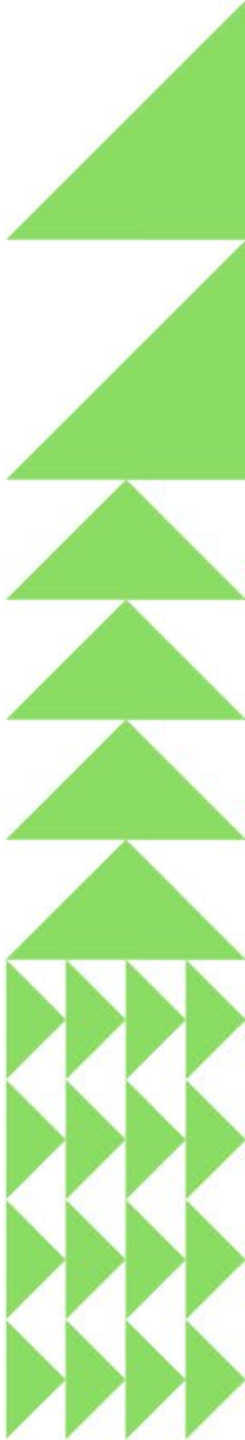




# Good practice – making it happen

## Culture of risk benefit

“Risk assessments and paperwork have previously restricted use of the outdoor area around school. EYFS team effort has made it possible over the last few years”. (suburban, SEN/D school)





# Good practice – making it happen

## Positive initiatives

School clusters

‘Step Outside’  
quality mark

Forest School

‘Forest Fridays’

Beach School



‘No Child Inside’  
‘Every Child  
Outdoors’  
‘CIDIO’

‘Grandparents  
Gardening Week’

Natural Connections  
demonstration  
school





# Summary of research

- Schools are continuing to use their playgrounds and day visits as locations for practice
- Proportionate increase in residential visits in 2017
- Teacher expertise in schools had decreased by 2017
- Major challenges and barriers to implementation of time and expense remain similar in both years.
- Teachers no longer see outdoor education as a subject in its own right but as part of the physical education curriculum ('outdoor and adventurous activities'); Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners report an enabling curriculum for outdoor learning.



# Enabling good practice

Five key ingredients for successful outdoor education in primary schools:

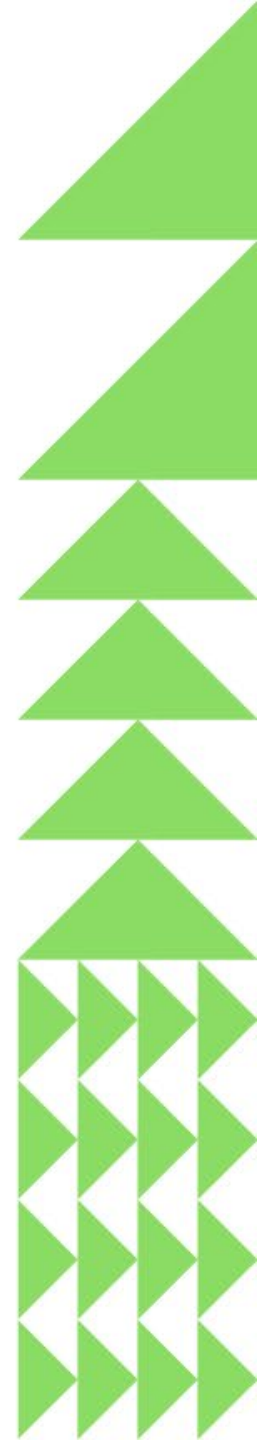
- the strength of teachers' values and beliefs
- an open approach to curriculum interpretation
- the importance of suitable locations
- a culture of risk benefit
- positive initiatives







Thank you





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