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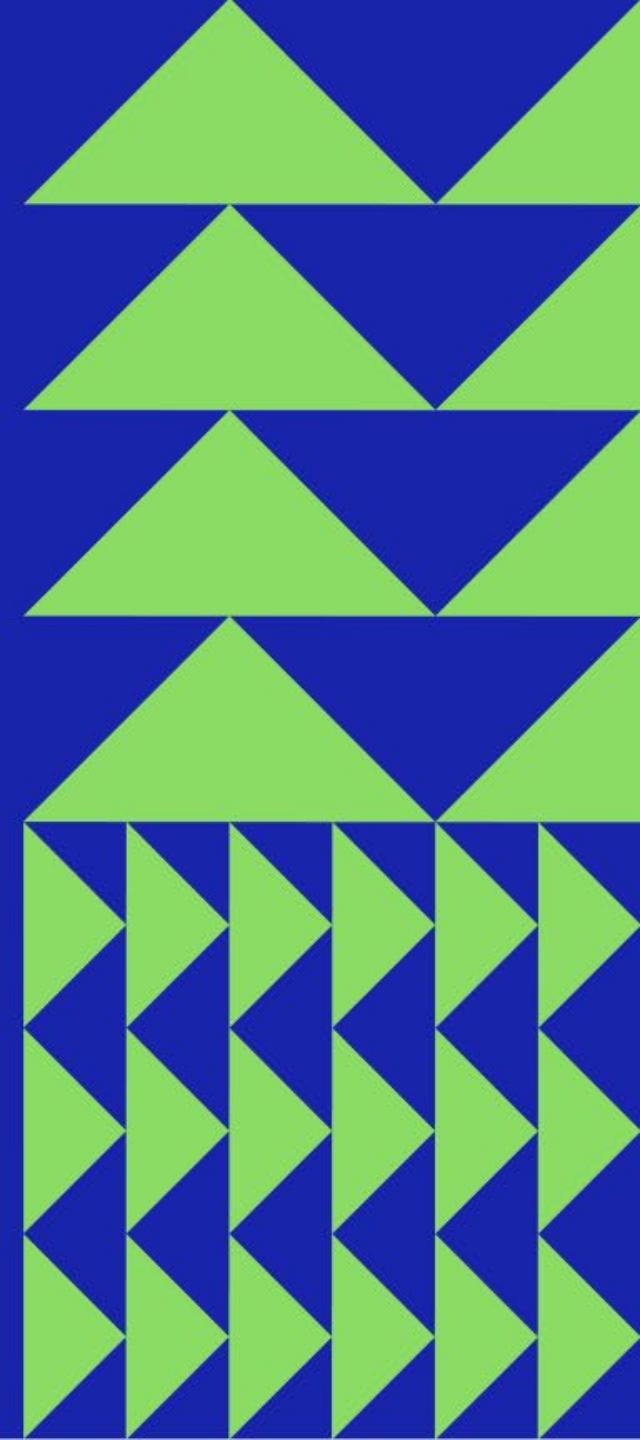
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Outdoor Learning in primary schools: Practice, challenges and opportunities

Dr Heather Prince

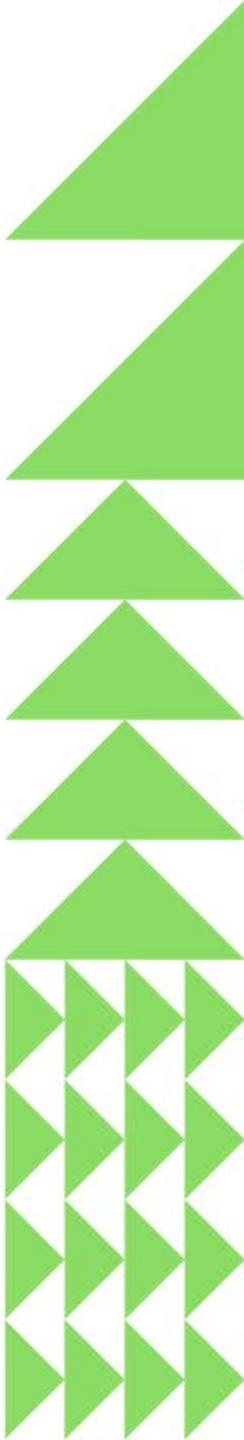
Associate Professor in Outdoor and Environmental
Education

University of Cumbria, Ambleside Campus

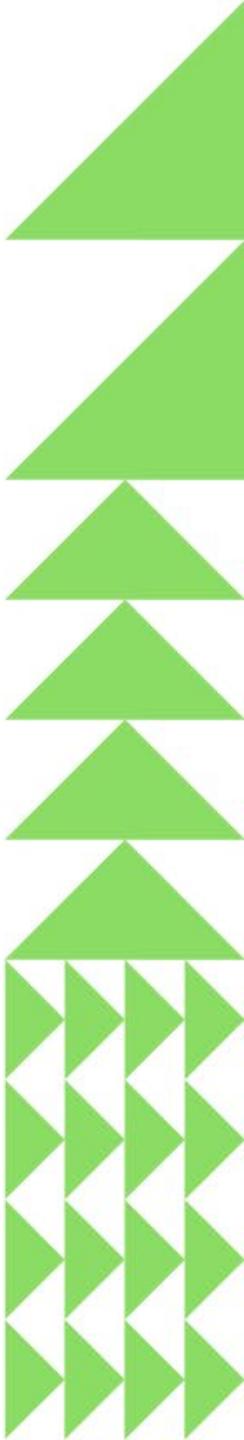


Personal perspective and values

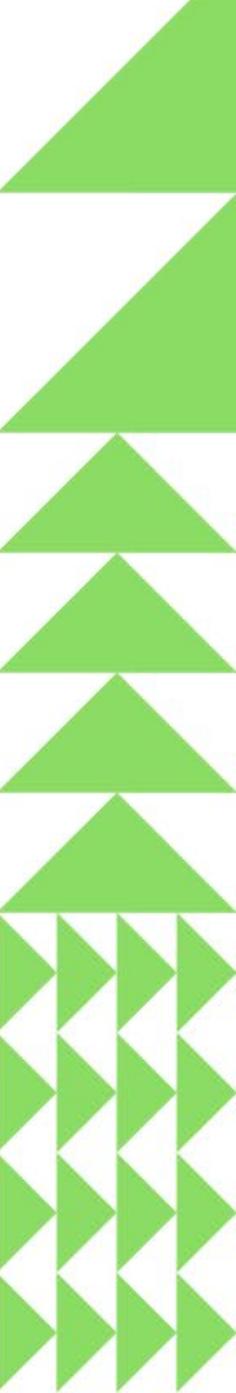
- Formal education as a framework for equality, diversity, inclusion and entitlement
- Importance of learning outdoors for children and young people
- Evidencing the value of outdoor learning to support teachers and educators, and inform policy and practice



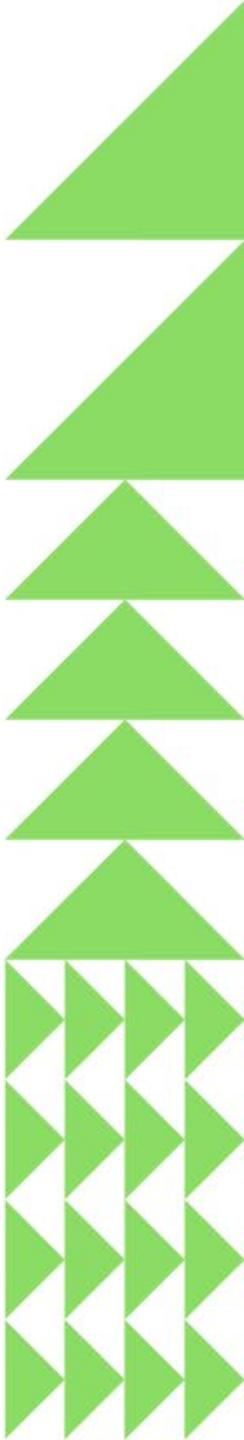
From this ...



To this ...



and this ...



It's not new

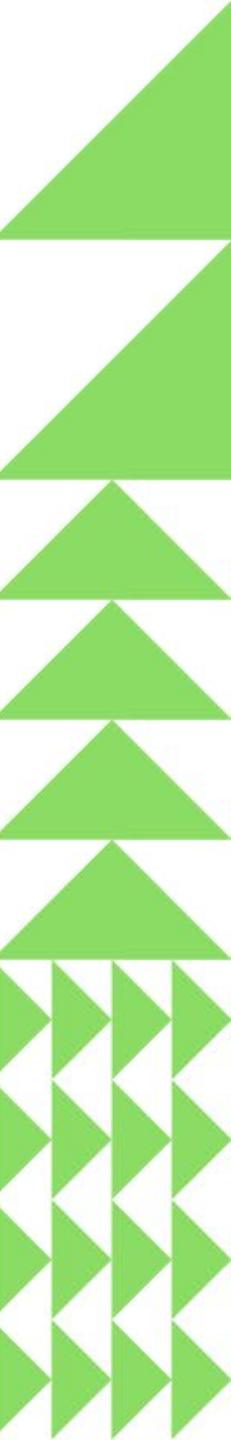


Charlotte Mason (1841 – 1923) believed in learning

- 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



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

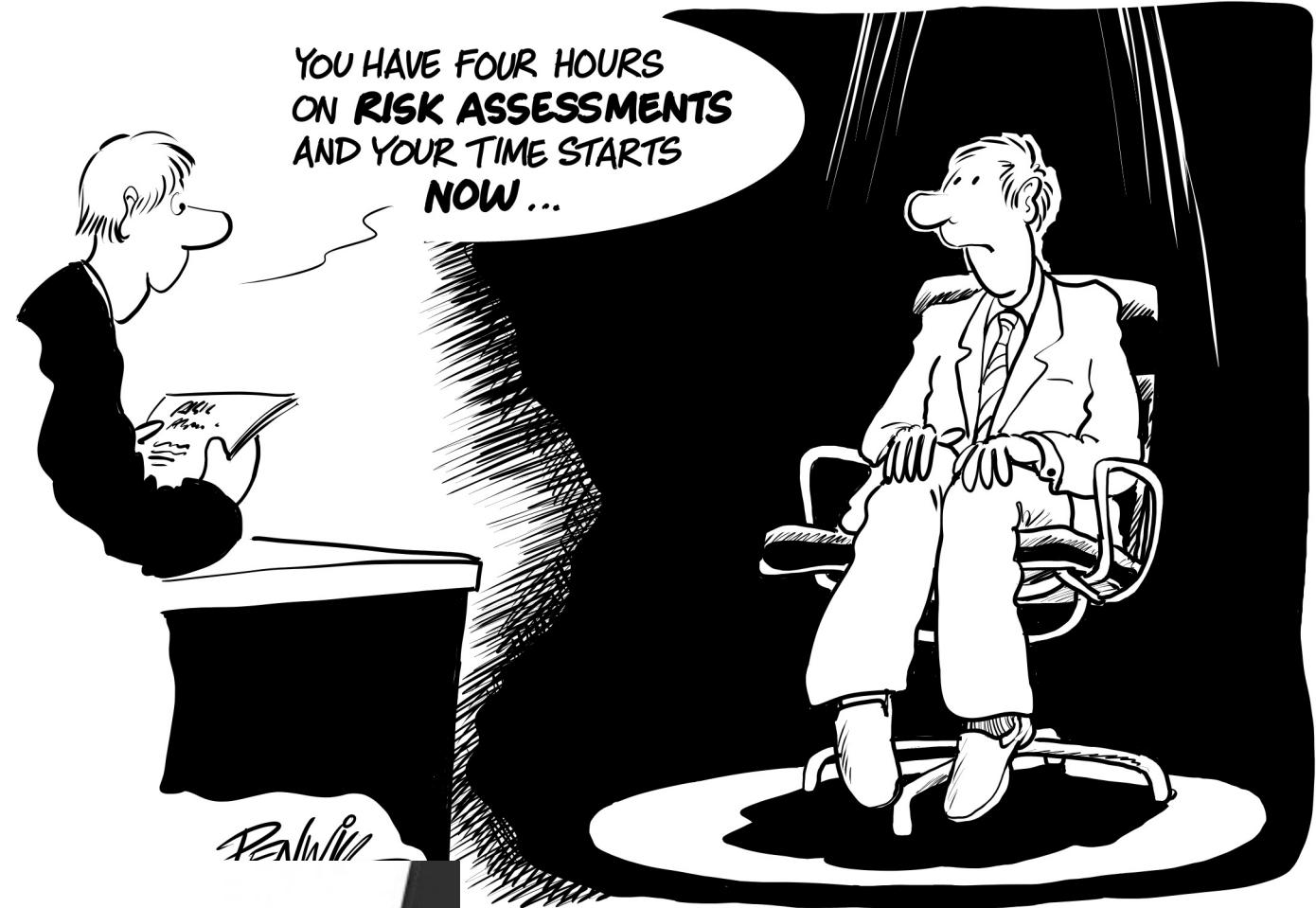
Schools in London aren't supported well enough when it comes to dealing with knife crime and need to be included in strong multi-agency partnerships - read our press release ow.ly/p9Oa50n1h0s



I for Education

The National Curriculum in England
Framework docu...

YOU HAVE FOUR HOURS
ON RISK ASSESSMENTS
AND YOUR TIME STARTS
NOW ...



But it has value

Connection with nature

Engagement with school

Mental health and wellbeing

Understanding of place

Behaviour

Staff: student relationships

Attendance

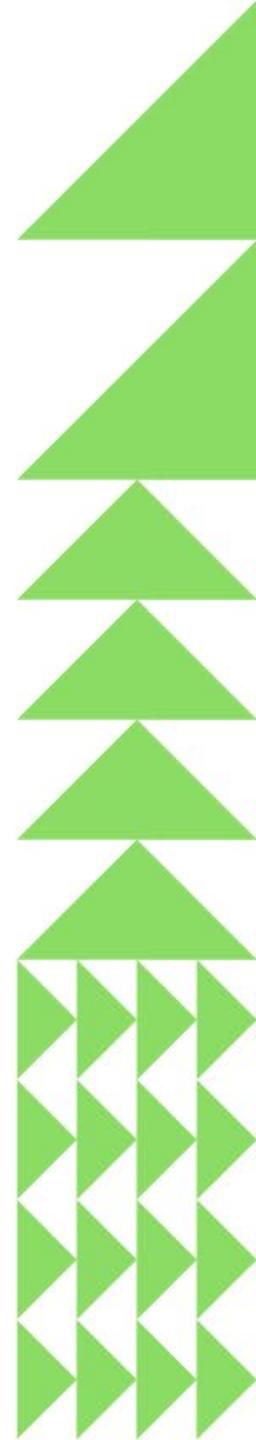
Environmental awareness

Physical health

Care and concern for the environment

Personal and social development

DEFRA, 2018



There are opportunities

Outdoors as a creative space

Teacher values and confidence

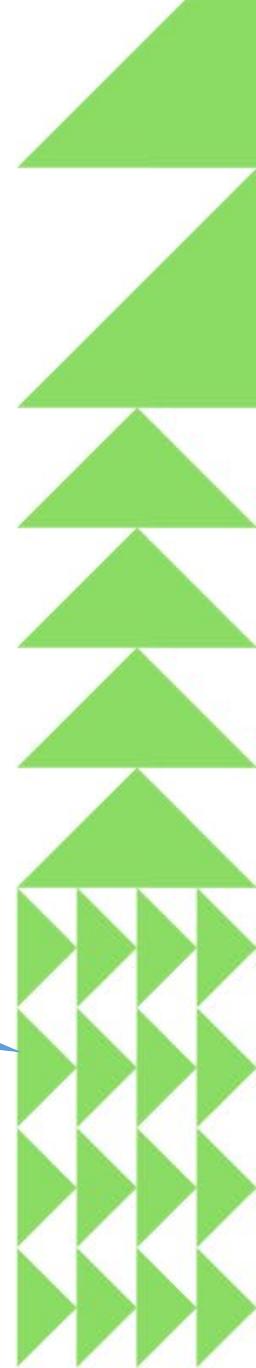
Place-based learning

Relationships

Defra, 25 YEP

Personal development

Physical activity



and more opportunities

The Aztecs

Anne Frank

The earth & space

Forces & motion

Pneumatics

Rivers

Our environment

Healthy minds, healthy bodies

Ourselves

Living things and their habitats

Local and world forest studies

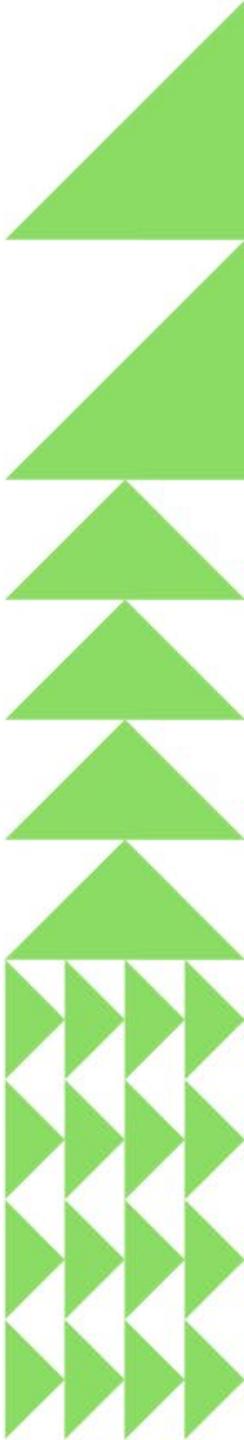
Imaginary worlds

Speaking & listening

Team building

Frank

Team build



Pedagogy

Memorable

Creative

Enabling

Experiential

Challenging

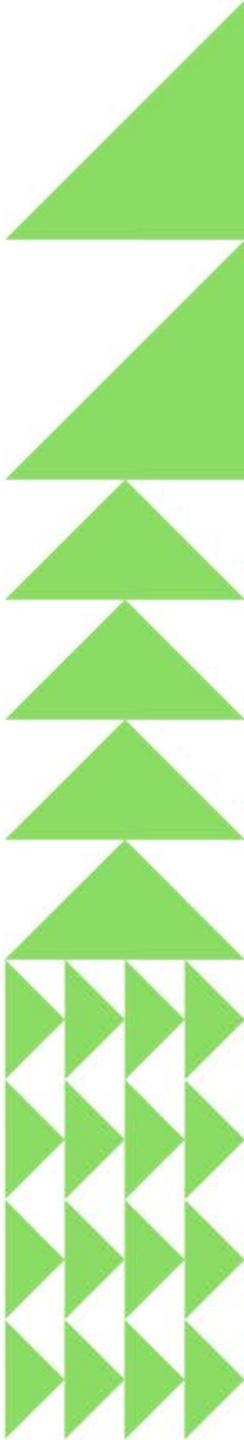
Exciting

Progressive

Ownership

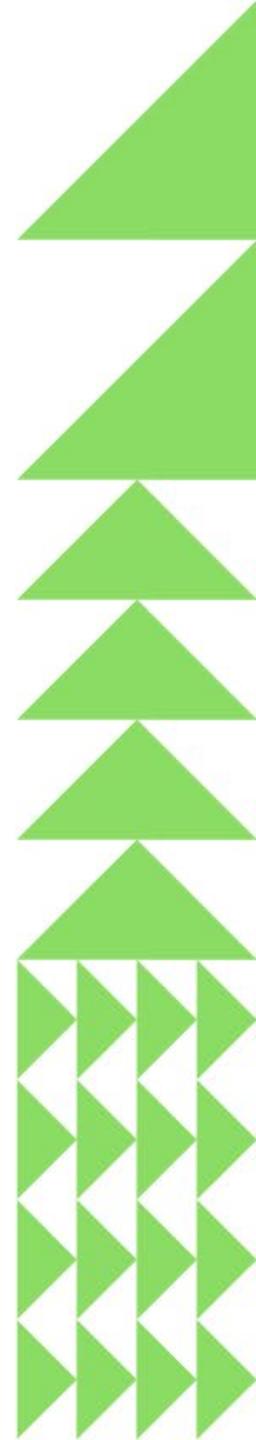
and challenges

- 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)

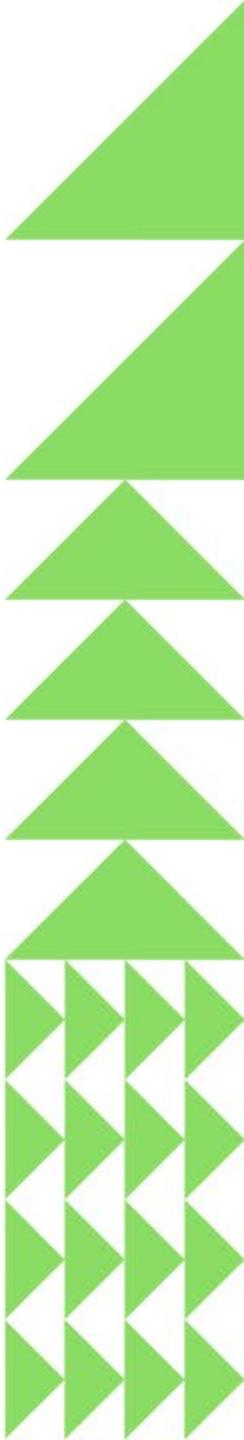
& locations

- urban
- suburban
- rural

Analysis

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

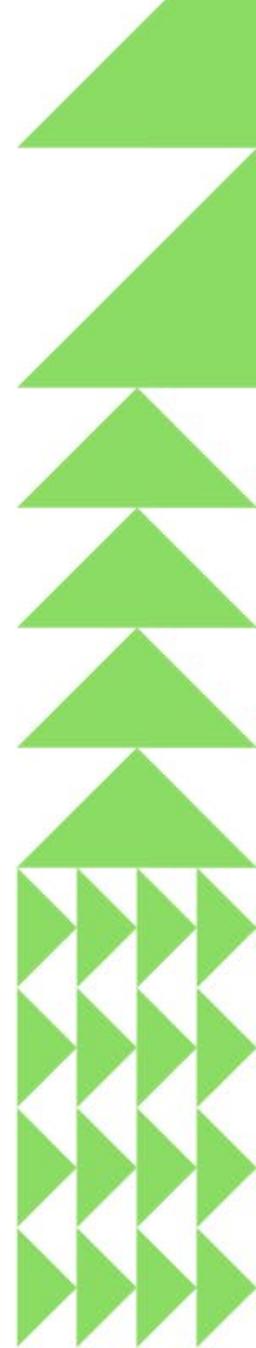
Thematic analysis of qualitative data, codes and themes
(open responses)



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]	Residential (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

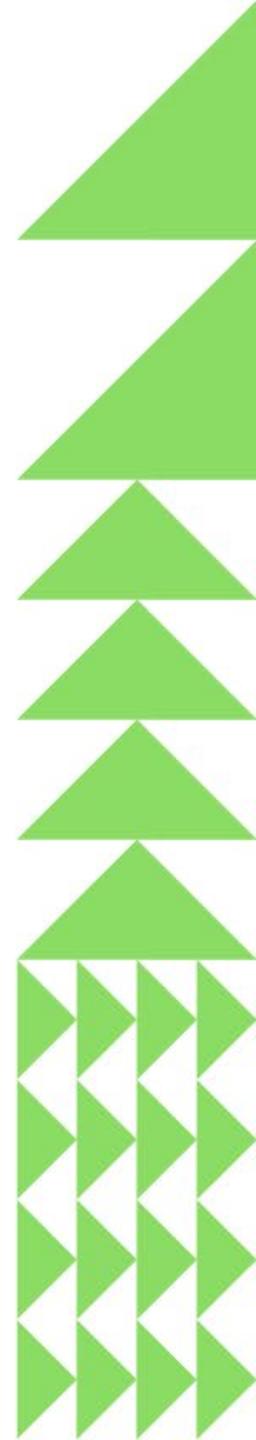


Rank	1995	2017
1	Environmental Education/Nature	PSE including teamwork
		Physical Education/Physical Activity

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

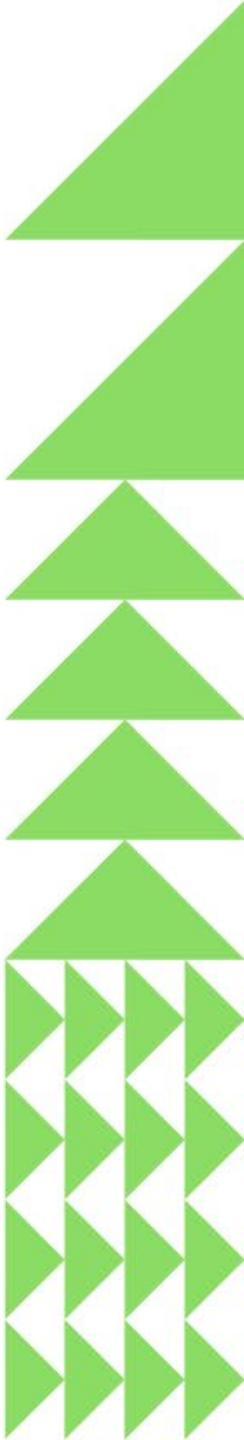
“Life is not computer generated or all about social media, it’s about ...”



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



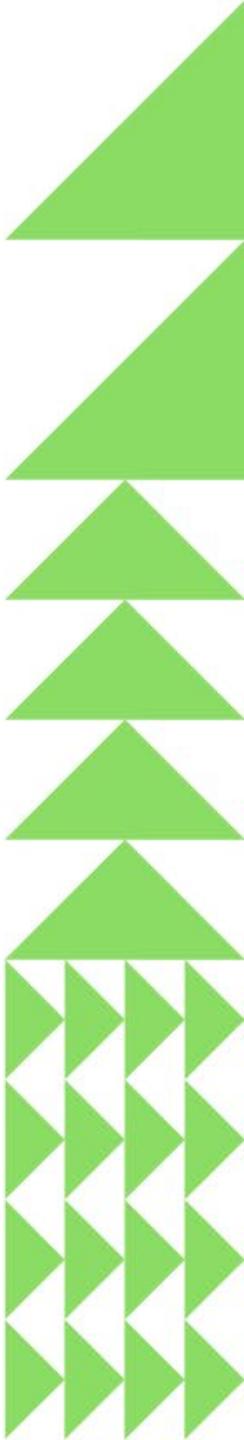
“...connecting with environments ...”



“...getting dirty ...”



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



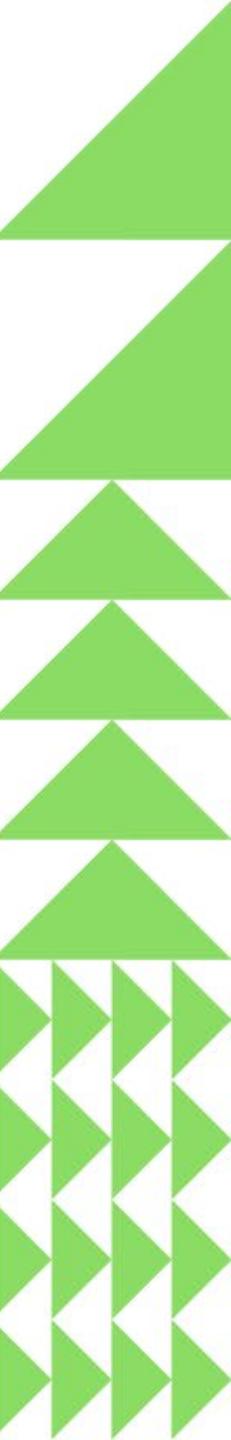
Comparative studies

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



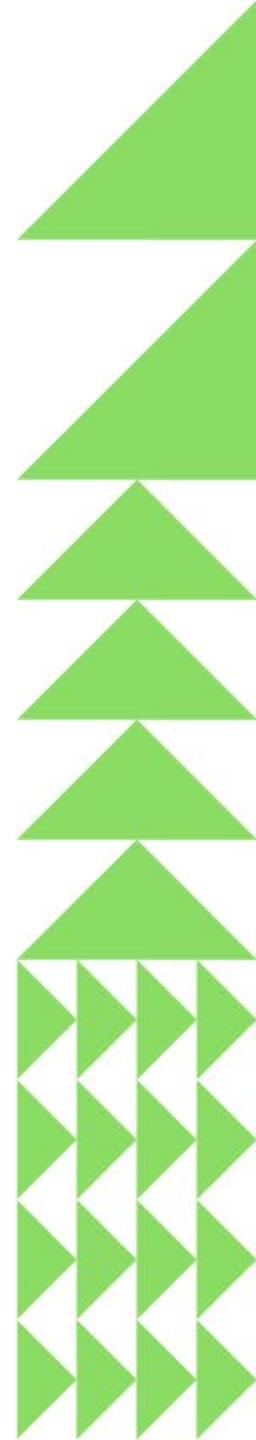
‘No Child Inside’
‘Every Child
Outdoors’
‘CIDIO’

‘Grandparents
Gardening Week’

Natural Connections
demonstration
school

Summary of research

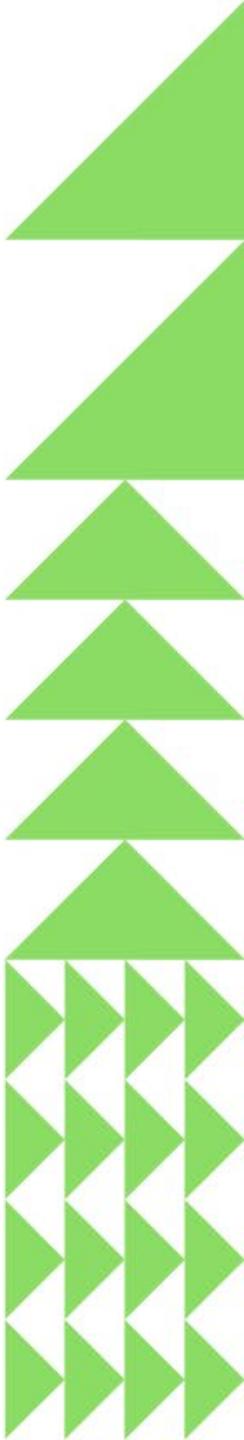
- Schools are continuing to use their playgrounds and day visits as locations for practice
- Proportionate increase in residential visits in 2017
- Teacher expertise in schools had decreased by 2017
- Major challenges and barriers to implementation of time and expense remain similar in both years.
- 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

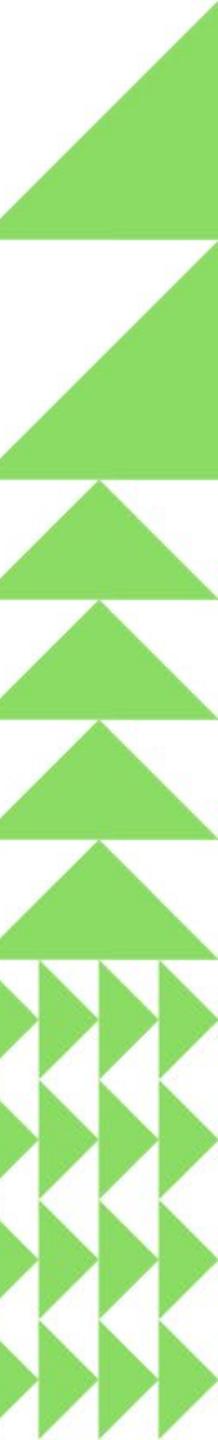
Five key ingredients for successful outdoor education in primary schools:

- 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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