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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Outdoor Learning

an evaluation of learning in the outdoors for children under five in the Foundation Phase

September 2011



**INVESTORS
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Summary

The Foundation Phase places great importance on children using the outdoors to experiment, explore and take risks. Many schools and settings have invested considerable time, energy and money in improving provision for outdoor learning to meet these aspirations.

The first cohort of children has not yet completed the Foundation Phase. This means that there is little data available currently that could be used to quantify the benefits of the Foundation Phase. The lack of data also makes it difficult to compare providers. This data will be available from summer 2012.

In two-thirds of the sessions observed as part of the survey, learning experiences in the outdoors were good or better. The provision for outdoor learning has been more successful in schools than in non-maintained settings.

Most schools and settings are making at least adequate use of the outdoors and children's learning generally benefits from this. In most cases, children's enjoyment, wellbeing, behaviour, knowledge and understanding of the world, and their physical development improve as a result of using the outdoors. However, the outdoors is not used enough to develop children's reading and writing, Welsh language, creativity, or their ability to use information and communication technology (ICT).

Teachers tend to assess children's learning less often and less well outdoors than indoors. They do not track the progress children make in developing their skills outdoors well enough. With children spending more time outdoors, this means that important milestones in their development may be missed.

Senior leaders and managers have not always received enough training on the Foundation Phase to identify good practice, challenge less effective practice, or make cost-effective decisions on improving outdoor provision and facilities.

Main findings

- 1 Most schools and settings are making at least adequate use of the outdoors to enhance and consolidate children's learning. Practitioners (teachers and support staff) in schools are more confident in planning for outdoor learning than those in non-maintained settings, where they often lack suitable outdoor space.
- 2 The vision of leaders and their commitment to making the best use of outdoor learning are key factors in overcoming obstacles such as having limited space or a site that is difficult to adapt.
- 3 In most cases, children benefit from their time outdoors. They display high levels of engagement and enjoyment and their knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development improve. A majority of practitioners also say that children's behaviour, physical fitness and stamina improve.
- 4 There is no quantitative data to evidence whether certain groups of children benefit more than others from using the outdoors. However, a majority of practitioners say that boys benefit the most, as the outdoors lends itself to a more active approach to learning that many boys enjoy. A few practitioners also feel that children with special educational needs and more able and talented children gain from learning outdoors.
- 5 In most schools and settings, there is at least adequate planning to achieve an appropriate balance of outdoor activities across all Areas of Learning and skills. However, practitioners generally do not use the outdoors well enough to develop children's skills in:
 - reading;
 - writing, with the exception of early mark-making;
 - using ICT;
 - creative development; and
 - awareness of cultural diversity.
- 6 In two-thirds of the sessions observed as part of the survey, learning experiences in the outdoors were good or better.
- 7 Children's learning is not assessed as often outdoors as indoor and outdoor assessments are often less focused. As children use the outdoors more often and for increasing periods of time, important stages in a child's development may be missed without a more comprehensive approach to outdoor assessment.
- 8 A few schools and settings are sceptical about the benefits of outdoor learning for children. In these schools, despite support by local authorities, the outdoor learning environment is not used well enough.

- 9 Most schools and settings work well with parents¹ to make appropriate use of their specialist skills and knowledge to support outdoor provision. However, parents do not receive enough information from schools and settings about what their children are learning outdoors.
- 10 Almost all practitioners undertake some informal monitoring of the use of outdoors. Practitioners also make some observational assessments of children during adult-directed and child-initiated activities outdoors. However, most schools do not have rigorous systems in place to track and measure children's progress in skills through outdoor learning.
- 11 Leaders and managers do not always pay enough attention to raising standards and levels of wellbeing when making improvements to outdoor provision. They do not generally set specific targets when planning for improvement.
- 12 Schools and settings make the best use of outdoor provision to support and enhance children's learning when there is strong support from leaders and managers. In these cases leaders and managers have received enough training on the Foundation Phase to identify good practice, challenge less effective practice, and make robust, cost-effective decisions on improving outdoor provision and facilities.

¹ The term 'parents' refers to parents and carers.

Recommendations

Schools and settings should:

- R1 provide more regular opportunities for children to develop and practise their reading and writing skills outdoors;
- R2 plan, organise and assess learning and wellbeing as well in the outdoors as they do indoors;
- R3 develop more effective outdoor learning improvement plans and set clear, measurable targets for improving outcomes for children;
- R4 ensure that all staff are well trained and confident in using the outdoors to support children's learning; and
- R5 consider the impact on outcomes for children when making financial decisions to develop outdoor provision and facilities.

Local authorities should:

- R6 provide training for leaders and managers to help them to identify good standards and quality in the provision of outdoor learning; and
- R7 work with schools and settings to improve the quantitative and qualitative data available to evaluate the effectiveness of outdoor learning.

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 provide guidance on evaluating the cost effectiveness of outdoor provision and facilities.

Context

The purpose of the report

- 13 This report has been produced in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit to Estyn for 2010-2011. The report evaluates how well outdoor learning is developing in Wales, its impact on children's standards and wellbeing, and where improvements can be made.
- 14 This survey provides advice related to the Welsh Government's objectives in Learning Country 2: Vision into Action by asking whether:
- outdoor learning is increasing the engagement, enjoyment and achievement of our youngest children;
 - an enriched and extended curriculum outdoors engages all children but particularly more able and talented, boys and children with special educational needs;
 - better use of the outdoors is increasing children's health and fitness and wellbeing; and
 - practitioners are delivering outdoor learning to the quality levels required.
- 15 The report is intended for the Welsh Government, senior leaders and managers in schools and settings, local education authority officers and advisers. The report may also be of interest to institutions that train teachers and to church diocesan authorities.

Background

- 16 The Foundation Phase, introduced to all children under five in 2009², is based on the principle that early years' provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. From September 2011, the Foundation Phase applies to all three to seven-year-old children receiving their education in local authority maintained schools, church schools and in non-maintained settings. The 'Framework for Children's learning for 3 to 7-year-olds' provides a statutory curriculum entitlement and emphasises children learning through 'doing appropriate activities' indoors and outdoors.
- 17 In order to support practitioners in delivering high-quality outdoor learning experiences, the Welsh Government funded training on outdoor learning held practitioner events focusing on outdoor learning and funded organisations such as 'Learning Through Landscapes' and 'Sports Wales Chwaraeon Cymru' to produce guidance and resources.

² Children of three to four years of age were introduced to the Foundation Phase in 2008. From September 2011, the Foundation Phase applies to all three to seven-year-old children receiving their education in local authority maintained schools, church schools and non-maintained settings.

1 The value of outdoor learning

How well does outdoor learning support children's engagement, enjoyment and achievement?

- 18 Most schools and settings are generally making at least adequate use of the outdoors to enhance and consolidate children's learning. The quality of buildings and outdoor facilities and the limitations of space or site of many schools or settings provide challenges for leaders and managers when planning outdoor learning. How well the school or setting overcomes these challenges largely depends on the vision and commitment of leaders to making the best use of the outdoor environment for learning. Schools such as Gorseinon Infants and Nursery School in Swansea, Cwmaman Infants School in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and settings such as Wick and District playgroup, in the Vale of Glamorgan, show that with strong leadership, imagination and understanding even 'concrete jungles' or disused ground can be transformed into exciting learning environments.
- 19 Most practitioners report that learning outdoors promotes children's engagement and enjoyment in learning. This in turn impacts positively on children's personal and social development, general behaviour and wellbeing. Children persevere with activities for longer periods outdoors and will attempt new things more readily. They learn to co-operate and apply their thinking skills to real problems, such as making a water-tight den for characters in a story. Generally, levels of enjoyment are high and children take pleasure in what they do.
- 20 There is a consensus among practitioners and local authorities that children's knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development improve best where outdoor resources and facilities are best exploited.
- 21 Many schools, and a majority of settings, have created rich and varied outdoor environments in which children use their senses to find out about their world. Good examples include areas created for bird watching, growing vegetables, sensory walks and wildlife areas. Practitioners frequently refer to children's improving understanding of the seasons and plants. In one school visited, the children named several herbs and shrubs when collecting leaves to make perfume for 'Winnie the Witch'.
- 22 Most practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to run, jump, balance, climb, explore and experiment. Outdoor areas are increasingly used to encourage children to take reasonable physical risks such as walking and running on uneven surfaces or trying to steer a bike using one hand.
- 23 A majority of practitioners report that children's physical stamina and fitness are improving because they engage in regular outdoor activities. For instance, practitioners could name individual children who had wanted to be carried when they entered a nursery class but who that within a few weeks were happy to take long walks without assistance.

- 24 There is less evidence that use of the outdoors is enabling children to achieve better standards in all Areas of Learning and key skills. Just under a half of respondents to the questionnaire for this survey identified improvements in children's mathematical skills, particularly counting skills. About a third identified improvements in children's literacy skills, largely improved oracy, and mark making. ICT and Welsh language development in English-medium provision are areas where children make less progress outdoors.
- 25 Few practitioners identify improvements in children's creative development from using the outdoors, although the outdoors lends itself particularly well to activities that could support improved standards in dance, large-scale art work, role-play and music.

How well does outdoor learning support particular groups of children?

- 26 A majority of practitioners feel that boys gain the most out of learning outdoors as it suits their active-learning style. A few practitioners feel that children with special educational needs also benefit from a less pressurised and freer outdoor environment. Practitioners are undecided about whether learning outdoors benefits more able and talented children.
- 27 Generally, practitioners report that all children are benefitting to a certain degree. In most instances, practitioners can identify how individual children have benefitted. For instance, there are quiet, shy children who have learned to use 'big voices' outside and children with behavioural difficulties who have settled better in class after undertaking outdoor tasks.

2 Delivering good quality experiences

How good are learning experiences?

- 28 In the best practice, all teaching and support staff take turns in working outside with groups of children. Children's learning outdoors is valued and is considered of equal importance to indoor learning. In a minority of schools however, only non-teaching staff are supporting children's learning outdoors. Often in such instances, 'real learning' is perceived as taking place only in class with the teacher and the outdoors is marginalised.
- 29 In most schools and settings, planning is at least adequate in ensuring that an appropriate balance of activities take place outdoors across most Areas of Learning and key skills. In these schools and settings, activities are both child-led and adult-directed, have a clear purpose and are suitable for the outdoors. Where planning is particularly effective, practitioners plan together so that all staff know what the children should learn. Where planning is less effective, practitioners do not have a good enough understanding of the importance of quality outdoor play in supporting children's development and learning. This results in an overdependence on traditional outdoor activities such as children using bikes and wheeled toys and opportunities are missed to take advantage of children's natural curiosity. Children are natural questioners and investigators and given time, space and the necessary resources will seek answers to questions, such as: What will happen if we pour water on leaves or knock over a tower of logs and why? What will happen to my chalk picture when it rains? Why do we find woodlice in dark places? How can I stop the rain from coming in my den?
- 30 Many schools and a majority of settings plan a range of appropriate outdoor activities to develop children's speaking and listening skills and mark-making. Practitioners go on 'listening walks' with the children or encourage group problem-solving where communication is essential to the success of the task. While children regularly make marks or write in chalk, paint, mud or berry juice on outdoor surfaces, there is very little progression in children's writing skills outdoors. Planning does not generally focus well enough on developing children's early reading and writing skills. Practitioners are not always creative enough in finding ways to use the outside to support reading and writing.
- 31 Children's Welsh language development in English-medium provision, ICT skills, creative development and cultural diversity are generally less well planned for outdoors. The weather restricts the use of the outdoors to develop children's ICT skills. For most other Areas of Learning it is practitioners' lack of preparation, imagination and appropriate resourcing (by making suitable clothing available) that prevents the outdoor areas from being used effectively, particularly during inclement weather.
- 32 Where practitioners do not understand or are sceptical about the importance of learning outdoors for children, learning experiences are not as good as they should be. In these cases children miss out on important steps in their learning.

- 33 Almost all schools and settings undertake some observational assessments of children outdoors, although fewer such observations are made outdoors than indoors. Practitioners use sticky-notes and jotters to record children's participation in, and enjoyment of outdoor activities. However, a significant minority of practitioners do not record enough information about children's progress and achievement outdoors. This means that important milestones in children's development are missed.

How effective is practitioner training and development in making the most of the outdoors?

- 34 Most practitioners and local authorities, report that training in using the outdoors encourages better use of the outdoors and has improved children's learning experiences. Almost all schools and settings make regular use of the outdoors and in the best practice the outdoors activities are planned, managed, evaluated, resourced and staffed on a par with indoor activities. During our visits to schools and settings, most practitioners identified ideas they had gained from training that they subsequently used. One idea involved the use of weather boxes. These boxes contained such things as umbrellas of various sizes and colours for rainy days and ribbons, pieces of cloth and beads for windy days.
- 35 However, in about a third of sessions observed, learning experiences and the use of the outdoors were only adequate or even unsatisfactory. Areas for improvement included the following.
- Learning experiences were too adult-directed.
 - Continuous activities lacked challenge and children soon lost interest.
 - There was too little planning to enhance activities outdoors.
 - The lack of training and guidance for support staff meant that occasionally their role was supervisory rather than educative.
 - Opportunities were missed to develop children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
 - The activities planned were unsuitable for outdoors or did not make the most of the facilities available.
- 36 More areas for development were identified in observations in non-maintained settings than in schools. This is because practitioners in settings are generally less certain of how to make the most of outdoor learning, particularly as they often lack a suitable outdoor space. A few practitioners do not understand that natural or recyclable materials can be as effective in supporting outdoor learning as purchased resources.
- 37 Overall, practitioners are making better use of the outside environment when whole classes of children go outdoors together than when only small groups of children are involved, for instance where days are designated for learning in the local environment such as 'Mucky Mondays', 'Wellie Wednesdays' and 'Freaky Fridays'. These days provide a clear focus for outdoor learning, particularly for less confident practitioners.

- 38 There are too few training opportunities for senior managers to learn how to evaluate the impact of outdoor learning on children's standards and the quality of provision. This is an important gap in Foundation Phase training. Senior leaders and managers are often responsible for major spending decisions for new outdoor provision and facilities, but they do not always have the understanding of the role of outdoor learning in the Foundation Phase. They cannot make sure, therefore, that such spending will improve children's standards and wellbeing or providing value for money.
- 39 All local authorities who responded to the survey questionnaire provide additional support to schools and settings for outdoor learning. Good practice is shared at conferences and additional resources are provided to enhance provision such as den-making kits and water-kits. A few local authorities have funded minor building works such as covered play areas or fencing or provide equipment such as greenhouses or shelters. Additional training is also provided by agencies such as the Forestry Commission, which has increased practitioners' confidence in using woodland areas. Despite this good work by local authorities and other agencies, the outdoors remains an under-utilised learning resource in a few schools and settings.

3 Parents' involvement in outdoor education

How well do schools and settings engage parents in their children's outdoor learning?

- 40 Most schools and settings involve parents and carers. In many cases parents help to fundraise to buy materials and resources. Parents often accompany children on visits into the community such as visits to local woodland and parks. If parents have gardening skills then schools and settings are keen to make the most of this expertise. Outdoor learning is used well in the majority of schools and a few settings to strengthen links between home and school or setting. For instance, Wrexham local authority project, 'Grow With Me – Tyfu Gyda Fi' encourages parents of three-year-olds to grow salad leaves in window boxes at home with their children.
- 41 Many schools and a majority of settings keep parents well informed about how the outdoors is used to provide experiences for their children through regular newsletters, portfolios of photographs or open days/play sessions. In the best practice, parents are provided with information about what their child is learning outdoors including the skills they are acquiring rather than the experiences they are having. However, overall, parents do not receive enough information about what their children are learning outdoors.

4 Assessing and evaluating outdoor learning

- 42 In the majority of school and settings, assessing and evaluating children's standards and wellbeing outdoors is generally at an early stage of development. Almost all practitioners undertake some observational assessment of individual children in the outdoors, particularly when children undertake focused tasks. Children's interest levels and motivation are often recorded and may result in changes in practitioners' planning. Recording children's activities in this way provides practitioners with useful information about individual children.
- 43 However, there is very little tracking of progress of groups of children to identify whether outdoor learning is making a difference. Leaders and managers do not measure and evidence children's progress well enough. For instance, most practitioners believe that boys benefit from outdoor learning, yet they are unable to demonstrate this by showing records of progress in boys' skills. Similarly, practitioners perceive that children's physical skills are improving, but cannot link this, for example, to records of improvements in children's handwriting as a result of improved physical skills. Most practitioners report that outdoor learning engages children and motivates them to learn, and that they are happier coming to school, but cannot demonstrate improved attendance and punctuality.
- 44 Many schools and settings have included improvements in provision for outdoor learning as an action in their improvement plans, but they do not set targets that are clearly linked to improvements in children's standards and wellbeing. The result is that success is often measured in terms of completed actions rather than improved outcomes.
- 45 Local authorities have systems in place to monitor the quality of outdoor provision. These include audits of provision to prioritise support and training, regular visits from advisory teachers to settings focusing on outdoor learning, and the scrutiny of inspection reports. Generally, this work does not focus enough on evaluating the impact of outdoor provision on children's standards and wellbeing.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

In gathering evidence for this survey the following methods were used:

- visits to 23 schools and settings across Wales during which 35 session observations were made;
- discussions with headteachers and Foundation Phase co-ordinators in the schools visited;
- discussions with lead practitioners in the settings visited;
- analysis of inspection data for 2008-2010;
- analysis of 14 returned questionnaires from local authorities, 27 from schools and ten from settings; and
- telephone interviews with practitioners in ten settings.

Inspection evidence was used to identify a selection of schools and settings to visit that represented a cross-section of providers across Wales.

Appendix 2: Case studies of good practice

Case study 1: Wick and district playgroup, Vale of Glamorgan

Context

Wick and District playgroup is situated in the Vale of Glamorgan and provides care and education for between 17 and 24 children from two and half years of age. The playgroup is a voluntary sector playgroup, which receives education funding from the local authority for part-time three-year-olds. The playgroup is run and managed by a very experienced leader who is supported by three additional members of staff and two volunteers. The playgroup is actively involved in education for sustainable development and global citizenship. It was the first playgroup in Wales to gain the Green Flag award and the first playgroup in Britain to gain the Fairtrade Schools award. The playgroup is based in the village hall, which is adjacent to the local churchyard.

Strategy

In preparation for the implementation of the Foundation Phase the setting leader and staff audited their outdoor provision. The audit showed that, although good use was made of the relatively small concrete area surrounding the playgroup, more opportunities were needed for children to have first-hand experiences of the natural world. An area in the adjacent churchyard was identified as a possible area to provide a Wildlife and Learning Garden for the children to use.

Action

After much planning and negotiation a section of the churchyard was identified for the playgroup's use. Over time the overgrown section of the churchyard has been transformed into a dynamic, flexible and versatile outdoor learning space. Activities are carefully planned to make as much use as possible of the area. A 'Mathematics and Learning Outdoors' file, for instance, contains activities for weighing, sorting and comparing vegetables from the garden, details of shape hunts and pattern hunts using flowers and bark, and problem-solving activities.

Impact

The Wildlife and Learning Garden encourages children's natural curiosity and desire to explore with their senses. Learning is fun and the children show high levels of motivation and perseverance. Children's understanding of the seasons, living things and natural materials are increased through the first-hand experiences that the garden provides of the natural world. Children learn to show respect and appreciation for the natural world and how to care for it.

The Wildlife and Learning Garden has impacted positively on other aspects of the life and work of the setting including parental and community involvement. Parents helped to clear the site and remain involved not only in its maintenance but in enhancing provision. For instance, a parent has made a mini-beast hotel from recyclable material. The community and visitors to the Church are actively encouraged to use the garden when not in use by the playgroup. A series of booklets about the garden and what to look for, such as mini-beasts, types of trees and signs of spring, are placed in the Church for visitors to use if they wish to visit the churchyard and garden. The local school also makes regular use of the area with groups of children.

Case study 2: Nottage Primary, Bridgend

Context

Nottage Primary School is located in the seaside town of Porthcawl and caters for pupils aged three to 11 years of age. There are 405 pupils on roll. The school admits children to the nursery class at the beginning of the term after their third birthday. The school has created a woodland area in the grounds to enhance the learning experiences of all children but particularly for children under five years of age.

Strategy

The school realised quite early on that parental involvement was essential if parents were to understand the importance of outdoor learning and not be overly concerned about children getting muddy or catching cold. The school kept parents well informed about the importance of outdoor learning but recognised that parents' understanding could be improved if home-schools tasks focused on outdoor learning.

Action

The nursery class teacher planned language, literacy and communication skills activities around a character in a story book. In the story the character loses his colour patches. Parents were provided with laminated cardboard cut-outs of the character in the story and asked to play a game with their children by counting and matching colours. Before the children woke in the morning the parents were asked to remove the colours from the cut-out. The parents were encouraged to talk to their children about what may have happened to the colours and suggest where they might have gone. This was followed-up in class with the children going on a colour-hunt in the woodland area to find the missing colours.

Impact

The children were excited and could not wait to go home and tell their parents what they had found. As a result, the parents felt they played part in their children's learning and have a better understanding of how the outdoor learning can support the curriculum and children's skills development.

Case study 3: St Aloysius Primary, Merthyr Tydfil**Context**

St Aloysius RC Primary School is situated on the Gurnos Estate in Merthyr Tydfil. The area is recognised as socially disadvantaged. The school caters for children between the ages of three and 11. There are currently 179 pupils on roll.

Strategy

The school wanted to devise a system for young children of three to five years of age to assess their own learning, particularly outdoors where activities were often child-led.

Action

After trialling several systems the school chose two picture symbols to support very young children to self-assess: a sparkling star if children felt that they had learned something new and a sunflower if they were still growing, i.e. developing but in need of more practice. Large laminated sheets were placed alongside activities, which were the focus for observational assessments during the week. The success criterion for each activity was highlighted and the children reminded of these at regular intervals. After completing activities, children chose a symbol to place on the board explaining why they have chosen the symbol. An adult wrote the child's name in felt pen on the symbol and the child placed it on the laminated sheets. During the week, photographs were taken of the sheets and these provided a pictorial record of the children's assessment of their own learning. This information was used alongside observational assessments to inform the next steps in children's learning.

Impact

Very young children developed an awareness of what they did well and what they need to do better. This is a fundamental skill for lifelong learning. The other advantage was that practitioners were made aware immediately if children felt that they needed more help. Intervention was swift and responsive to children's needs.

Case study 4: Bedwas Infants, Caerphilly**Context**

Bedwas Infants is a medium-sized infants school in Caerphilly. The school caters for children between the ages of three and seven years of age. There are currently 165 on roll, including 85 children between three and five years of age. The school playground and grounds are used by children from five to seven years of age during break times and lunchtimes. The school has relatively large grounds, which are used well to support children's learning.

Strategy

As part of the school's healthy initiative plan, the school audited the use made of its grounds during break times and lunchtimes. It found that not all areas were as well used as they could be. Further, many children were not always purposefully engaged during these periods, which led to instances of poor or careless behaviour and resulted in minor accidents.

Action

The headteacher and staff have worked together to provide a stimulating and rich outdoor learning environment during break and lunchtimes. The school playground and adjacent grassed areas were divided into well-equipped learning zones. Each zone was supported by an adult. Children were free to choose where to go and with whom to play, and often older pupils supported the play of younger pupils. The learning zones contained a range of good quality activities such as the teaching of football skills, 'jungle gyms', climbing apparatus, tunnels and two-wheeler bike-riding skills area. There were also good opportunities for quieter activities, such as board games, reading books and materials for chalking, writing and drawing.

Impact

After introducing the learning zones into break and lunchtimes, children's behaviour improved and there were fewer accidents. Children enjoyed their break and lunchtimes far more. They actively engage in a range of learning activities, including physical activities.

Case study 5: Ysgol Pen Coch, Flintshire

Context

Ysgol Pen Coch is a purpose built school for pupils with a range of additional needs in Flintshire. The school opened in 2009. There are 82 pupils on roll including 25 in the Foundation Phase.

Strategy

In meeting the complex needs of many of the children in the school, practitioners in the early years classes developed skills ladders for many aspects of continuous provision that takes place outside, such as 'sand play', 'block play' and 'water play'.

Action

Teachers and support staff worked together in developing skills ladders to plan a set of individual 'skills' for each child that can be achieved indoors or outdoors. Staff carefully matched these individual 'skill plans' to resources and provision. Class topics, such as, 'Ourselves' also identified children's skills development in enhanced and focused activities indoors and outdoors.

Impact

The 'very small steps' skills assessment covered all learning experiences whether taking place indoors or outdoors. Practitioners were able to assess more accurately and plan more effectively for children's next steps. They could identify clearly when success criteria were met, wherever the learning had taken place.

The school consistently monitored children's learning and progress outdoors. For instance, the school recorded far fewer examples of children displaying challenging behaviour when undertaking activities outdoors. The school has also identified that many children learn more effectively outdoors and make better progress.

Glossary/references

Foundation Phase – a play based, experiential curriculum for children three to seven years of age

Areas of Learning – these form the curriculum content of the Foundation Phase and are made up of statutory Areas of Learning that all schools, and settings eligible for funding, must follow. The Areas of Learning are:

- personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity;
- language, literacy and communication skills;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;

- physical development; and
- creative development.

In English-medium schools and settings, Welsh language development is an additional area of learning.

Settings

These are funded by Early Years and Childcare Partnerships, to provide part-time education for three to five-year-olds. Settings include playgroups, private day care providers, independent nurseries and childminders.

Schools

This sector of education is funded through the local authority to provide part-time and full-time education for three to five-year-olds. Schools include nursery, infant and primary schools.

Practitioner

This term includes all adults who work with children in a school or setting on a regular basis.

The remit author and survey team

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