

Cultivating Outdoor Learning for Children's Wellbeing in Primary Schools

Relevance and Importance

The National Improvement Framework outlines the need to improve children's mental, emotional and physical wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2019).

Research has shown that children play outdoors less than they used to. Data recorded by The National Trust in 2012 showed that children play outside for an average of just over four hours a week (The National Trust, 2012). Despite the fact that there has not been updated data about children's relationship with playing outdoors, the research from 2012 is enough to reiterate the importance of outdoor learning in schools.

Some of the benefits of outdoor learning include:

- Creative freedom to explore multi-sensory environments that the classroom cannot provide (Quibell et al, 2017).
- Children being more active outdoors than indoors – positively impacting on their health and wellbeing (Bilton, 2010).
- Deeper understanding of the natural world and appreciation for Scottish landscapes (Scottish Government, 2010).

Data Collection Tools

Using the 'Analysis of Talk' tool outlined by Hall and Wall (2019) would allow for a specific analysis of children's engagement and wellbeing during Outdoor Learning. This approach can be broken down into three steps:

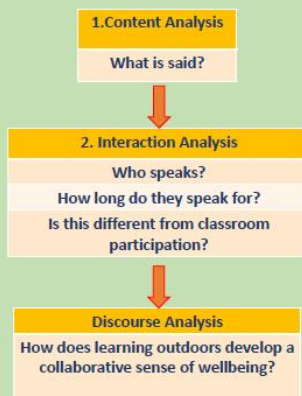


Figure 1.1 (adapted from Hall and Wall, 2019)

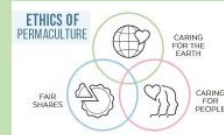
"The outdoor area is a complete learning environment, which caters for all children's needs – cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and physical." (Bilton, 2010, p.1)

Aims

In our presentation, we share our research-informed project of continuing to develop our green spaces with a focus on:

- Integrating new holistic frameworks such as permaculture principles (Holmgren 2002) and the Froebelian approach.
- Nurturing children's wellbeing while creating opportunities to experience the beauty, growth, and freedom that the natural environment provides.
 - Developing children's sense of responsibility and empathy towards nature and each other.

Permaculture Process: Our Observations



Applying the 'caring for people' principle to pupil wellbeing means that as practitioners, we should prioritise psychological safety, not just standard behaviour management. Building learning spaces where pupils feel seen, listened to, and valued is paramount.

Outdoor Learning helps to design lessons that reduce stress rather than exacerbate pressure. At times, it is important that instead of asking ourselves "how do we control pupils?", the question becomes "what conditions help them thrive?".

Our Findings

- Increased engagement and motivation.
- Positive pupil and parental feedback.
- Reduced behavioural challenges.
- Opportunities for 'mother tongue' language experiences.
- Positive impact on pupil confidence.
- Rich interactions between pupils.
- Increased attainment.
- Deeper connection with the natural environment.





References

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