



Supporting Learning, Play and Development in the Outdoors

1.1 Explain a range of outdoor learning approaches

1.4 Summarise research related to Outdoor Learning/Play and relate to personal practice

Forest School Leader

1.1 Summarise the History of Forest School development in the United Kingdom

Where did it all start?

- Learning theorists and educators Eg. Pestalozzi, Froebel, McMillan, Steiner, Montessori, Isaacs, Malaguzzi & Gardner
- A culture of outdoor / agricultural practical skills based life and function in communities

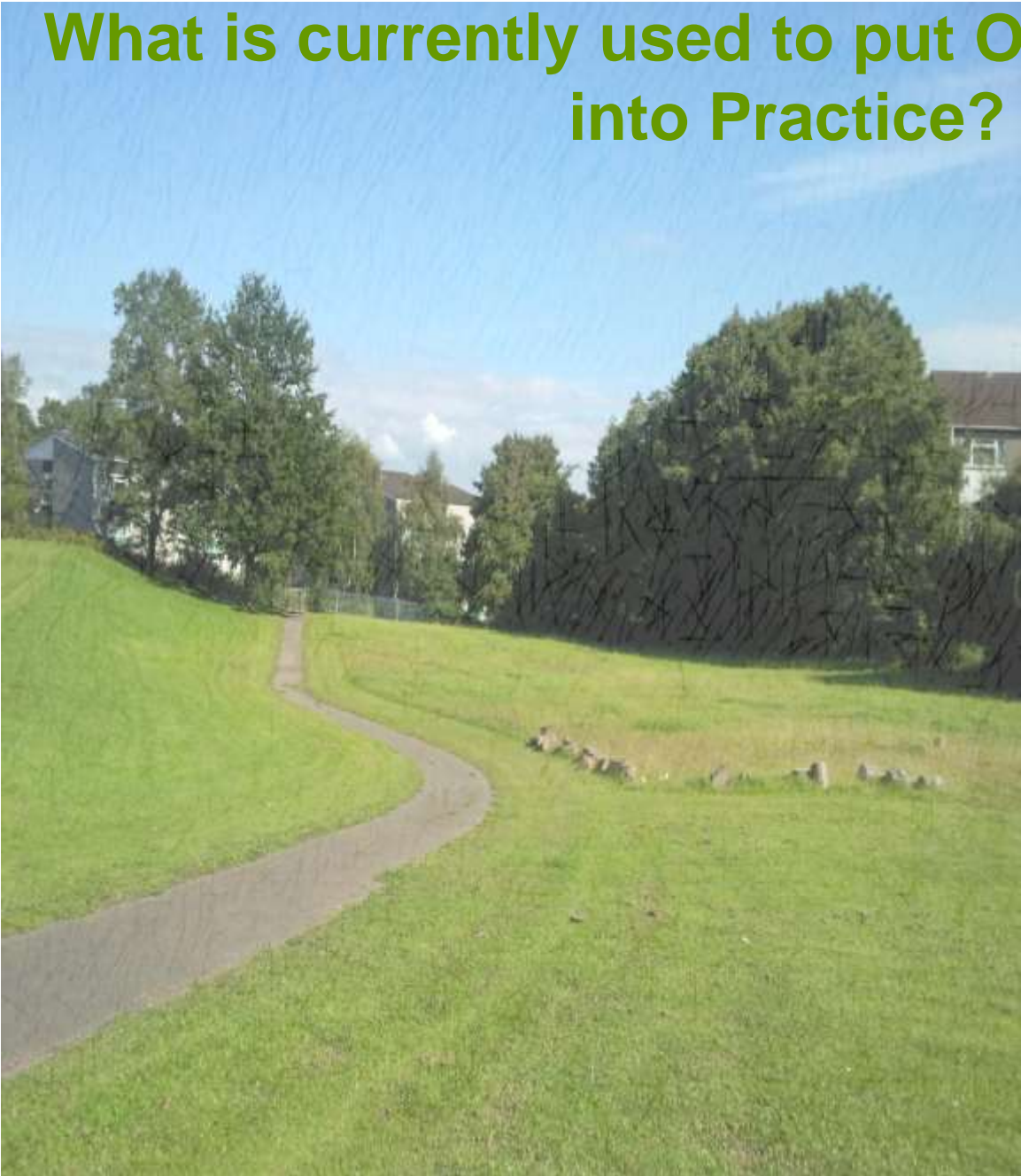


The modern context of outdoor learning

- Early Years Foundation Phase & Early Years Foundation Stage
- Engaging children in life long learning
- Growth of Forest School practice in UK
- A culture ‘divorced’ from their local natural environments



What is currently used to put Outdoor Learning into Practice?



Outdoor Education Centres

Visits & school trips

Forest School

Outdoor play for EYFP / EYFS

School sports

After school clubs

Developing a whole school strategy & policy to use OL in delivering the curriculum

Current Outdoor Learning: Practice & Research

- Every Child Matters and EYFP / EYFS
- Specific government led initiatives such as Learning Outside the Classroom & Growing Schools
- Non Government Organisations Eg. RSPB & RHS research aimed at encouraging schools to practice outdoor learning
- Forest Education Initiative backing of Forest Schools and current Forest School practice

Key findings common to much of the research:-

- First hand experiences help to engage children and enhance their understanding
- Attendance is improved
- Children with additional learning needs especially benefit
- Aids development of a positive self-image and increased confidence in own abilities
- Improves children's physical and mental health and wellbeing



References for the above are included in the accompanying handout

Nature needs children

- Less than 10% of children regularly play in natural spaces (Natural England 2009)
- Poverty places limits upon children's opportunity to access outdoor spaces (Thomas Thompson 2004)
- Environmental memory cannot be formed without environmental experience
- People who feel connected to their local natural environments are more likely to change their behaviour out of concern for the environment (Mayer and Frantz 2004)

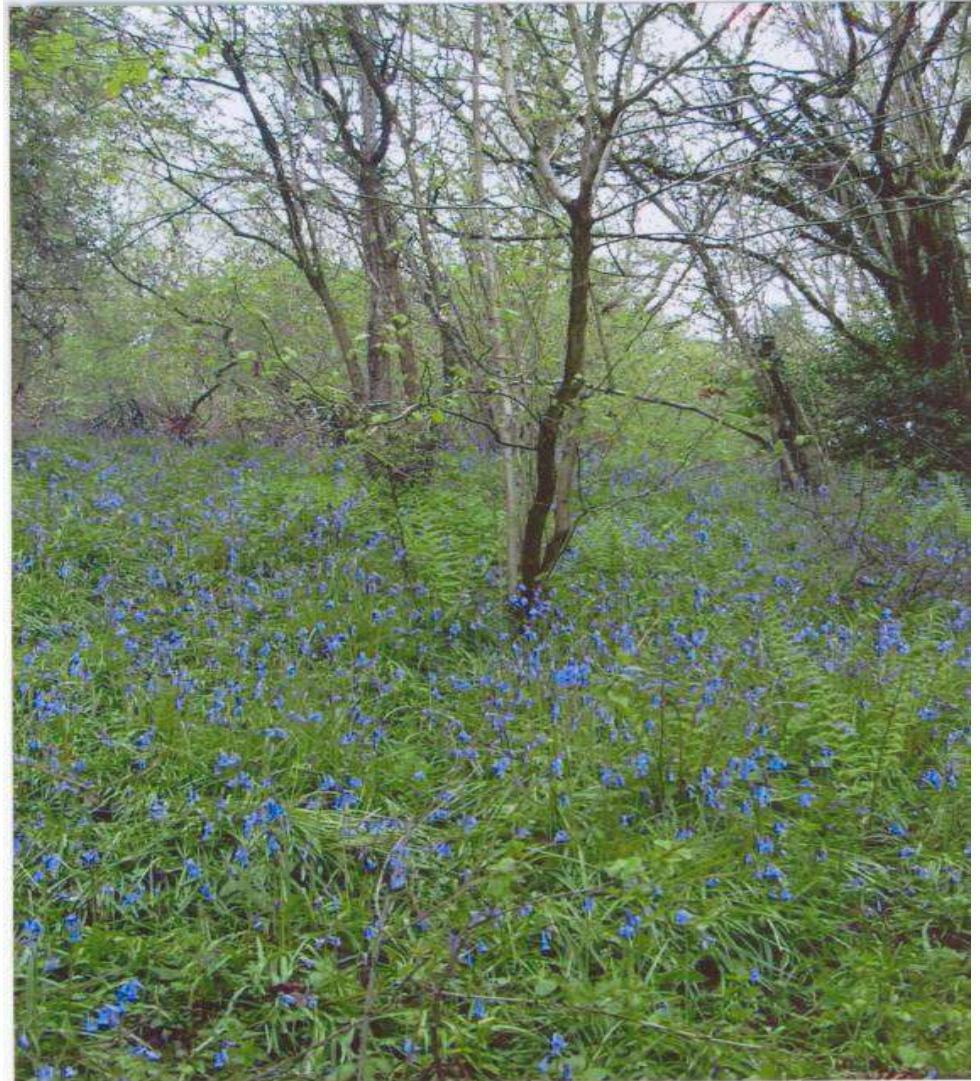


What is Forest School?

- Woodland setting
- Programme of sessions
- Trained Leader

Woodland Setting

- Resource rich
- Robust
- Safe
- Sheltered
- Changing
- Calming
- Multisensory
- Accessible



Programme of Sessions



- Continuity
- Individualised
- Flexibility
- Child centred
- Allows relationship building
- Builds confidence
- Encourages 'ownership' of learning environment

Trained Leader

- Develop practical skills
- Assess learning and development
- Develop policies and procedures to enable safe and enjoyable participation in activities
- Child centred learning



Nature of Learning

Time to play outdoors, reflect, repeat and talk to peers and adults

Stimulating environment that gives enjoyable experiences

Based on stage of learning rather than focussing on outcomes to be achieved

Finding out about things that interest them, not just things determined by others



Key Elements of Forest School

- It is concerned with the process, not the product
- Small groups with high adult:child ratios
- Gives opportunities for challenge and risk
- Builds self confidence by enabling positive and purposeful skills building
- Promotes physical activity
- A vehicle for positive social interaction and language building
- Engages people with their local outdoor environment in a sustainable way

A brief history
School

of Forest
in the UK



Scandinavia

- Froebel
- Skogesmuller
- Culture of engagement with and access to outdoor areas
- Formal schooling has a later start



Early days in UK



- Staff from Bridgwater College visited Denmark
- Implemented Forest School in college creche
- Wrote module for nursery nurses
- Btec course developed
- OCN developed for Wales
- First training in Wales in 2001

Since 2004

- Estimated 500 educational professionals trained at Level 3 (in Wales)
- NEF and FEI research carried out in Wales and in England, research is ongoing
- Forest School Trainers Network formed in 2006 to standardise delivery of training
- Agored FS Units revised to enable accessibility and to ensure best practice