



Out of classroom learning

Making the most of first hand experiences of the natural environment

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Information

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Out of classroom learning

- Audience** Headteachers and teachers of all maintained schools in Wales; Initial Teacher Training Institutions; Local Authorities; National and local initiatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other bodies in Wales concerned with providing out of school learning to young people.
- Overview** This document is aimed at those organisations, individuals and teachers that seek to encourage young people to learn about, appreciate and enjoy the natural environment and cultural heritage through first hand experience.
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- Related documents** Environment strategy for Wales: First Action Plan, May 2006
Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Action Plan, September 2006
Becoming a Qualified Teacher: Standards for Qualified Teacher Status, October 2006



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Summary

This document is aimed at those organisations, individuals and teachers that seek to encourage young people to learn about, appreciate and enjoy the natural environment and cultural heritage through first hand experience. It is also aimed at external providers of education beyond the classroom, as a good practice guidance document.

This good practice guidance aims to achieve three things:-

- To inspire teachers to take groups out of school and discover the benefits of 'Out of Classroom' learning
- To guide on the planning required to organise a safe, effective and enjoyable visit
- To offer guidance as to how to assess the quality of provider for your visit.

There has to-date been a lack of guidance available to teachers to help them address the barriers, real or perceived, to taking children out of the classroom and to maximise the value of experiential learning in the environment. This good practice guidance document addresses this need and provides support for teachers who are looking to embrace greater use of 'Out of Classroom' learning.

Children gain their most powerful understanding of their natural environment through exploring it for themselves

The Importance Of First-Hand Experience Of The Natural World

Research into the 'significant life experiences' that determine our connection to the environment, and our attitudes and values, reveals that positive direct contact or 'first-hand' experience has the greatest impact (NFER, 2004). Evidence also points to the fact that children gain their most powerful understanding of their natural environment through exploring it for themselves. However, within formal education, teachers are often hampered from facilitating this exploration beyond the classroom by the pressures of the curriculum, health and safety concerns, lack of confidence and restricted budgets.

Paradoxically, it is this generation, more than any other before, which will need the environmental awareness and citizenship instilled through exploration and discovery during childhood. This generation is likely to face the toughest environmental challenges yet to be experienced by mankind, in terms of climate change and the ever-increasing pressure on natural resources. Yet, it is widely felt that today's children are losing their connection with the natural environment and cultural heritage, and hence a foundation stone for future sustainable development.

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Foundation Phase and the Environment

The Framework for Children's Learning states "Indoor and outdoor environments that are exciting, stimulating and safe promote children's development and natural curiosity to explore and learn through first hand experiences. The Foundation Phase environment should promote discovery and independence and a greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment as a resource for children's learning."

There are seven areas of learning in the Foundation Phase curriculum: Personal and Social Development, Well Being and Cultural Diversity; Language, Literacy and Communication Skills; Mathematical Development; Welsh Language Development; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development and Creative Development. Together these support the development of children and their knowledge, skills and understanding. Because of the holistic nature of the curriculum, outdoor learning should take place in all seven areas on an almost daily basis. In addition to using the school grounds, there is massive potential to go beyond the classroom and make use of wider environments and external providers to supplement and complement the work carried out at school.



chwarae • dysgu • tyfu
play • learn • grow
cyfnod sylfaen 3–7 foundation phase

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'Out of Classroom' and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)

Out of Classroom learning can provide a vital link between the theoretical aspects of ESDGC and the reality of the issues that affect our future lifestyles and the natural world around us.

As society evolves nationally and globally, children are increasingly being encouraged to consider their roles within it as custodians and beneficiaries of the environment. Delivering ESDGC and PSE is a requirement for schools and 'Out of Classroom' can make a valuable contribution. The outdoor environment provides a very powerful medium for getting beyond facts and figures. Being outdoors, and working with living things in their environment, children can begin to understand how the natural world actually works, and develop the attitudes, values and commitment needed to support popular and sustainable change, and move us one step closer to becoming a sustainable Wales.

Used effectively, 'Out of Classroom' learning can be an important tool in creating more 'active and sustainable citizens' capable of recognising that the issues they face are complex and the solutions likely to be grey, rather than black or white.

Outdoor learning has been shown to have an impact wider than the subject being studied during the visit.

Added value of 'Out of Classroom' learning

There is growing recognition of the value of outdoor learning - not only in the area of geography or science field studies - but also in children's broader personal development and academic achievement. Outdoor learning has been shown to have an impact wider than the subject being studied during the visit (NFER, 2004). Transferable skills such as independent thinking, motivation, time management, communication, team-working and professional judgement were also being acquired. Moreover, socialisation and personal development skills such as well-being and trust, respect for the environment and social integration were found to increase as a result of participation in outdoor learning.

The added value of outdoor learning is the development of students with more rounded experience and skills, more capable of dealing with real world issues and with an increased community and environmental awareness.

QTS Standard S3.1.5 requires trainees to demonstrate that they are able to plan opportunities for pupils to learn in out-of-school contexts.

Qualified Teacher Standards and 'Out of Classroom' Learning

The QTS Standards are outcome statements that set out what trainees must know, understand and be able to do at the end of an initial teacher training course or employment based programme to gain QTS. New QTS standards apply on a mandatory basis from 1 September 2007. As part of these, standard S3.1.5 requires trainees to demonstrate, as relevant to the age range they are trained to teach, that they are able to plan opportunities for pupils to learn in out-of-school contexts, such as school visits, museums, theatres, field-work and employment-based settings, with the help of other staff where appropriate.

This Standard recognises that valuable pupil learning can take place in a wide range of out-of-school contexts and that teachers need to be able to plan to make the best use of these opportunities for learning, and recognise the additional value that they bring. To meet this Standard, Assembly guidance indicates that trainees will need to demonstrate that, with the help of other staff where appropriate, they can identify some out-of-school learning opportunities relevant to the intended learning objectives and the age range they are preparing to teach. They do not necessarily need to organise a visit but will need to demonstrate some awareness of health and safety issues relating to learning in out-of-school contexts. This good practice guidance offers some practical help so that planning can show that the most would be made of a visit beyond the classroom, that the planning is efficient and complete, and that the educational value of the planned visit is built into a wider context.

Springboard for other aspects

Going beyond the classroom and experiencing the environment first hand touches on other aspects of learning such as outdoor sports and healthy living education. One discipline may lead to, complement or offer a springboard to another. Specific guidance and policies exist to support these additional aspects (Climbing Higher and Healthy Schools Initiative, Food and Fitness Action Plan). This document does not attempt to cover these wider linked aspects but to provide full information concerning the planning, inspiration and benefits of taking groups beyond the classroom into the wider environments of Wales.

The visit should be inspiring, involving and participative. The children should be able to fully immerse themselves in the day and find it safe, lively and fun.

'Out of Classroom' Learning: Choosing a quality provider

A code of practice for 'Out of Classroom' Learning providers

'Out of Classroom' visits should be of a consistently high and reliable quality.

For the teaching staff - the visit should provide them with additional expert and inspirational teaching input, and they should be confident in the quality and safety of the location and the professionalism of the staff leading the visit.

For the children - the visit should be inspiring, involving and participative. The children on the visit should be able to fully immerse themselves in the day and find it safe, lively and fun. The 'Out of Classroom' visit should be relevant, stimulating and thought-provoking, providing many opportunities for follow up work, positive memories and increased understanding.

For the provider - they should be confident that the visiting teachers and children are fully prepared for the experience and know what to expect so that they can fully participate and derive maximum benefit.

To work towards these aims, the following code of practice provides good practice guidance, and specific assistance for visiting teachers in assessing the suitability of venues and providers.

The Code of Practice is divided into 3 sections: pre-visit; the visit itself; and post-visit.

1. Pre-Visit: Planning, administration and preparation

Pre-planning ensures that the 'Out of Classroom' experience fits into the wider learning context and ensures that the day goes as planned by each party, achieving pre-agreed objectives and ensuring safety for all.

A quality provider should ...

Achieve a shared understanding of responsibilities

Before the visit starts, agreements should be reached between the provider and the visiting party concerning:

- the timing of the visit (planned arrivals, departures, duration of contact time and arrangements for lunch if necessary). This will allow each party to make their own arrangements on how they can best use time during the visit to suit pupil and group leader needs.
- the nature of the contact time between the provider and visiting teaching staff. This includes, the language of the presentation, length, content, and whether the contact is at the start, middle or conclusion of their visit or for the duration of the time that the group is at the site.
- directions to the site and instructions for coach parking (if any), pick up times of coaches.
- responsibilities for discipline, adult to child ratios and the role of accompanying adults during the visit. For aspects of safety, the adult child ratio remains the responsibility of the visiting group who should be advised to adhere to their relevant local authority guidelines. Site staff should not be included within these calculations to allow for on site procedures such as lost child or accident procedures to be carried out effectively.
- clothing and equipment needs for the visit.
- guidance on what the provider expects from the visiting group (re policy on use of mobile phones, discipline, role of visiting staff and helpers, photographic consent etc.)
- first aid, insurance and any other specific policies that apply to the activity or to the regulations of particular local authorities.
- Any additional requirements regarding special education needs of any members of the visiting pupils.

Agree learning outcomes

Shared-learning outcomes should be agreed between the visiting party and the providers in advance of the session. Ideally, especially for a first time user, this would be through a pre-visit to the location by the teacher and discussion with the providing organisation. However if a pre-visit is not possible then this should be carried out by detailed phone discussions, by using the providers' web site, or through materials supplied to the visiting teacher by the external

provider. There should be clarity concerning the links, if any, between the activity and the national curriculum or examination courses. Evidence of these links should be made available by the provider ahead of the visit, if requested by the visiting teacher.

Information could also be provided for the children to read so that they themselves are prepared for the visit, including awareness of any cultural, social or way of life issues and values relating to the area that they are visiting.

Give context to the day

The agreed learning outcomes for the visit should include reference to wider aspects such as cultural context, historical implications or environmental issues, which are relevant to the student. In introducing and summing up the day, the visit should be placed in context for the student and discussion started about how to continue one or more of these themes when away from the site.

Learning outcomes for the visit should include reference to wider aspects such as cultural context, historical implications or environmental issues

Ensure Health and Safety

The provider should make available sufficient information that the visiting staff are able to complete a risk assessment for both the site and the activities in advance of the visit. The provider should also make available, on request, their policies for emergencies, such as accidents, lost children etc and their child protection policy. A quality provider should also make provision for communication via telephone or radio in the event of an emergency. They should ensure that the visiting group adheres to the relevant LEA guidelines for teacher to pupil ratio, and agree with the visiting group that the planned activities are suitable for the age group concerned.

A vast amount of health and safety material is available for teaching staff to enable them to fully cover this aspect within their planning. A good initial starting point would be the health and safety officers within the local authority. Within Wales, a generic 'Safety Information' model is available for managed venues to aid them in providing appropriate information to schools. For further information contact your local authority health and safety officer or educational visits co-ordinator.

Hold Adequate Insurance

All quality providers should hold an appropriate level of public liability insurance, or other means to pay any legitimate liability claim, and ensure that clear information concerning their insurance cover is made available to visiting groups on request.

First Aid provision

Appropriate levels of first aid cover should be available on site in accordance with the risk assessment.

Child safety and welfare aspects

All providers should ensure that all staff working with the group should be fully trained for this purpose, they should be knowledgeable, child friendly and CRB checked at an enhanced or standard level, as appropriate.

Access for all and special education needs (SEN)

The site should make groups aware of its policy with regard to access for all. This should form part of the discussions regarding the visit to ensure that all participants are catered for and that there are no surprises on the day.

2. During the visit: Education content and teaching style

A quality 'Out of Classroom' visit offers the potential to extend and develop a curricular topic; for rewarding hard work; or to allow different teaching styles to involve the children in different ways.

A quality provider should....

Maximise the percentage of the day spent outdoors

The greater part of the visit should be spent on priority learning outcomes and ideally spent outside (weather permitting).

Set the scene with the group

The introduction from the provider to the group should include clear ground rules so that all are aware of expectations, health and safety concerns and any site specific issues. They should introduce the group to what they are going to do during the visit and set the scene for the day. This could also be provided to the visiting group via printed pre visit material if needed.

Providers should strive to encourage a sense of awe and wonder.

Use a low pupil to leader ratio

The tone of the visit should be one that encourages investigation, involves the entire group and stimulates imagination. The ratio of group size to leader will influence the teaching styles that can be used. A good (high leader: pupil) ratio will help to ensure effective delivery of the agreed learning outcomes. Active involvement of the teachers and accompanying adults will enhance the visit.

Accommodating different learning styles

The learning provider should pay attention to accommodating different learning styles within their programmes to ensure that all children are engaged, interested and participating in the activities. The children should be actively involved and not just listening to the leader talk about the environment. The contact time with the provider should focus on getting the children actually investigating, exploring and involved with practical tasks.

Manage the energy of the group

Different groups work at different paces, and this can alter during the course of the visit. A high quality visit will accommodate changes of pace - such as allowing for constructive play during or after lunch time, or allocating time within the programme for younger groups to run off steam or to allow older groups some time to reflect on what they are learning or where they are. The provider needs to ensure that there is suitable space at the location to enable this to form part of the day.

Bring out the awe and wonder of the location or activity

Providers should strive to encourage amongst the students, a sense of awe and wonder in the setting, the experience or the outcomes and aim for each group to leave with an appreciation of the special qualities of the location.

Assess the environmental impact of their activities

A quality provider should pay due care and attention to the impact on the environment of the activities they pursue. This could be achieved by

- Rotation of location for education visit: Take steps to minimise long-term damage either by rotating sites, altering activities at certain times of the year or by putting in place appropriate infrastructure.

- Operate a booking system so as to spread the load or pressure when a large number of students and supervisors visiting at any one time.
- The provider could work towards seeking appropriate accreditation such as green dragon, or eco centre status for their operations.

Ensure appropriate site Infrastructure

A quality provider should ensure that the following facilities are available for use at some point during the visit if necessary

- Toilets for school use including hand-washing facilities
- Some shelter from extremes of weather - hot or cold and wet. This could be a formal building/shelter or under trees for shelter from the sun
- Safe access when arriving at or leaving the site
- Quality equipment provision and maintenance
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) access where possible

Ideally, the visit should not be in isolation from other work at school and should be reflected on and utilised when the students have returned to the school

3. Post-visit: providing ideas for future learning

Extending the visit

A quality provider should offer opportunities to extend beyond the one off visit and work towards the experience being seen as part of an integrated work programme, anticipated, planned for and used consequently back at school. Ideally, the visit should not be in isolation from other work at school and should be reflected on and utilised when the students have returned to the school. A quality provider will, if possible, provide suggestions, activities and materials to enable teachers to carry this out.

Provide Quality Assurance

A quality provider should be working to ensure that evaluation of their scheme is an integral part of the process. Evaluation of a scheme by participants is a valuable and vital component in ensuring high quality. A high quality provider should be ensuring that feedback is sought from the participants and that this is a valued component of every visit. The provider should then use constructive feedback to further develop the provision where applicable and where funding allows.

Assessing the educational impact

After the visit the teacher should evaluate for themselves the importance of the 'Out of Classroom' visit. Did it achieve the learning outcomes that it set out to do? What was the add-on value of having undertaken the visit? How can they share this good practice with others in the school and beyond? How are they going to reflect the impact within their own monitoring and recording?

How do you recognise a 'quality' 'Out of Classroom' Learning provider?

A checklist for teachers to assess quality

This checklist should be read alongside the code of practice for providers

Pre-visit - Planning Administration and preparation	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Min.....Max				
Achieve a shared understanding of responsibilities					
• Is the timing of the visit suitable for you?	1	2	3	4	5
• Does the nature of the contact time suit your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
• Do you need to bring special clothing and equipment?	1	2	3	4	5
• Are special policies needed for the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
Agreed learning outcomes					
• Can you arranged a pre-visit?	1	2	3	4	5
• Are materials available prior to the visit to help with the planning and teaching preparation?	1	2	3	4	5
• Are there links between the planned activities and the national curriculum? Do these fit with your teaching plan?	1	2	3	4	5
• Is there information that could be provided for the children to read so that they are prepared for the visit.	1	2	3	4	5
Give Context to the Day					
• What links does the provider make between their specialisms and the wider world.	1	2	3	4	5
• How will links be made between the visit and follow on work when away from the site?	1	2	3	4	5
Ensure Health and Safety					
• Is sufficient information provided to allow you to prepare a risk assessment appropriate for your group and for all the activities envisaged?	1	2	3	4	5
• Are emergency procedures in place for lost child or accidents?	1	2	3	4	5
Hold Adequate Insurance					
• Does the provider hold an appropriate level of public liability insurance, or do they have an alternative to commercial insurance and are sufficiently covered to repay legitimate claims?	1	2	3	4	5
First Aid provision					
• Are staff connected with my group first aid trained?	1	2	3	4	5
Child Safety and welfare aspects					
• Are staff fully trained for working with children?	1	2	3	4	5
• Does the provider have a written child protection policy that is in line with local Area Child Protection Committee/Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures?	1	2	3	4	5
• Have they been CRB checked or through an equivalently recognised scheme?	1	2	3	4	5

	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Min.....Max				
Access for all					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the site able to accommodate any SEN requirements of your group? 	1	2	3	4	5
During the Visit - Education content and teaching style					
Maximise the percentage of the day spent outdoors					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the group spend the greater part of the day outside? 	1	2	3	4	5
Set the scene with the group					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are ground rules clearly set out for the group? 	1	2	3	4	5
Leader to pupil ratio					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the provider use a high leader to pupil ratio? 	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodating different learning styles					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What percentage of the visit will the group be actively involved? Is it an appropriate style for the group? Are a variety of methods used to suit different learning styles? 	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
Manage the energy of the group					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the visit include quiet times, and 'let off energy' times, the reflective and individual times? 	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
Bring out the awe and wonder of the location or activity					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most memorable aspect that groups find during visits to your site? Or during activities with your staff? 	1	2	3	4	5
Assess the environmental impact					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is due care given to ensuring that no lasting impact from the activities occurs on site? 	1	2	3	4	5
Ensuring appropriate infrastructure					
Does the site have:-					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets for school use including hand-washing facilities Some shelter from extremes of weather Safe access when arriving at or leaving the site DDA access? 	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
Post Visit: providing ideas for future learning					
Extending the visit					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What materials, activities or suggestions does the provider supply to extend the visit once back at the classroom? 	1	2	3	4	5
Provide Quality Assurance					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is evaluation carried out routinely by the provider? Is this feedback available for potential clients to see? 	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

Case studies

Case Study: Bringing the curriculum to life

The majority of students at FSC Orierton are aged 16-18, studying biology or geography. Many have done little or no field work before they come, and although they may be widely travelled internationally, a surprising number have little experience of the UK away from their home area.

Students typically work in a variety of habitats including rocky shores, freshwater, woodland and sand dunes, before selecting one habitat for more intensive study. It is a very steep learning curve - many are unfamiliar with even common British plants. However with expert help, they quickly learn the techniques of sampling and identification using a key, as well as the important skill of risk-assessing a site. Success depends on focusing on the job in hand and on teamwork, and often students who struggle to succeed in the classroom shine in a more practical setting.

The opportunity to spend extended periods of time focused on a single habitat, and to see a piece of work through to its conclusion in a single day helps students to achieve a deeper understanding of the natural world. They quickly become adept at the skills and techniques they had previously only read about, and develop sophisticated investigations for coursework, far beyond their ability at the start of their fieldwork session.

Field Studies Council - Orierton

Case Study: Building a relationship with the environment

Our school is situated near woodland, which was previously part of Tredegar House Estate. The Tredegar Park ward is recognised as having the highest levels of child and income deprivation in Wales (Index of Multiple deprivation, NafW) There has been a very negative perception of the wood amongst the community.

Duffryn Community Link is working hard to restore the woodland to local use. The school was very keen to take advantage of the woodland to enrich the learning and development of their pupils through 'Forest School'.

The children love being outdoors, learn a great deal about their environment but above all have fun!!!

Staff felt that many of our young children have only limited understanding of the risks that surround them. Many parents try and create a risk-free environment and never let them out of their sight, but this leaves children without the skills to manage risk and makes it difficult for them to judge situations for themselves. Forest School allows adults to share their own skills with young children and teach them important lessons of safety in a caring, supervised environment that is not closed off from the outside world.

Duffryn Forest School started with the support of the Forestry Commission and Groundwork Caerphilly. The Forest Schools approach encourages an appreciation of the natural world and builds self-esteem and confidence. The children, aged 3 to 6, visit the forest for two hours every week, rain or shine, and they learn about complicated concepts such as biodiversity and environmental protection in a fun and imaginative way.

Forest School allows our young children to explore, learn about the world around them and tackle new challenges. The children love being outdoors, learn a great deal about their environment but above all have fun!!!

Dyffryn Forest School

Case Study: Fun, Games and Learning in the Forest

Ensuring a visit has definite learning outcomes, is set at the right pace, caters for a variety of learning styles and is fun can sometimes be quite a challenge!

Garwnant Forest Centre, managed by Forestry Commission Wales, runs woodland visits throughout the year. Whether a curriculum linked visit, or part of a longer Forest School programme, sessions are carefully planned to manage the energy of the group and ensure the learners get the most from their day.

Depending on age and ability, sessions involve a variety of pace and a mix of learning styles. Typically a session would begin with a game to engage learners and encourage enthusiasm for the topic, followed by a variety of fun, fast paced learning activities and quiet, contemplative tasks, involving a mixture of looking, listening and doing.



Its great to see the children, who come from such contrasting backgrounds, mix so well together and begin new friendships.

Sharing what has been learned is an important part of the session: another game can bring the children together, consolidate learning and be fun - all at the same time.

There's a flexible approach, with time built in for letting off steam over lunch, or just sitting quietly for thought and reflection. Grassy and wooded areas close to the centre provide ideal locations for these types of activities - and those with lots of energy can make use of the low ropes course if they want to!

Forestry Commission Wales, Garwnant

Case study: Learning beyond the curriculum

The peace and tranquillity of the National Trust's Stackpole estate is often awoken by the noise of fun and games as children descend for some outdoor learning. The visits offer opportunities for schools, their pupils and families of differing cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to work together on arts based activities.

New friendships soon flourish between the pupils, from different schools, as they get to grips with various activities. The children dive head first into exciting yet educational fieldwork that sees them sample new ways of learning as the schools curriculum is brought to life at Stackpole.

Staff involved comment "Its great to see the children, who come from such contrasting backgrounds, mix so well together and begin new friendships. It's clear they will remember the adventures they have at Stackpole for years to come".

Experience from previous partnerships has shown that schools continue to work together after projects have finished and develop positive links with the location with which they worked.

National Trust, Stackpole for Schools education centre

Case Study - Introducing New Environments

At the National Botanic Garden we seek to develop a progression of environmental experiences that meet the learning needs of children from the Foundation Phase through to post secondary. We also seek to develop in children a sense of wellbeing, place, awe and wonder in natural settings.

Tedwen's Adventure developed from a realisation that many young children rarely have the opportunity to play in environments such as long grass, woodland and mud. Indeed, their exposure to such environments on a day trip, if handled ineptly, can lead to reinforcing a sense of trepidation or even fear in such "unusual" places.

Tedwen's Adventure invites children to bring their own teddy bears to the Garden to join our Teddy Bear, shy Tedwen, to keep her company on a journey to find the Secret Pond. On the journey the children travel through long meadow grass, closed canopy woodland and finally find the clay lined Secret Pond. On the way the children meet glove puppet characters who help the Ted's along the way. Angus the bull demonstrates how to search in the long grass for food, Samantha Fox instructs the children on how to build a shelter in the woods and Freda the frog shows everyone how to make a clay pot to collect pond water. By the end of the adventure a song reveals that we have provided the Teddy Bears with all they need to survive in the Garden; food and drink and shelter.

Back at school the adventure can be re-enacted through story work and many children also take their new skills home to play more creatively in their own gardens.

National Botanic Garden of Wales

Case Study: Seeing the whole picture

An introductory talk before students start their fieldwork is essential for giving the group a wider context for their work. Our presentation gives students the bigger picture concerning conservation, environmental impact and natural heritage before they focus on a small area in detail for their specific fieldwork task perhaps looking at successional vegetation change over time within the dunes.

The introduction puts Ynyslas in the context of landscape development over thousands of years and explains that it is still a dynamic and ever-changing area. The students learn its value as a habitat for special species of plants and animals locally and as part of a national and international network of conservation areas. Through the discussions that follow concerning visitor numbers and habits the students are aware of the pressures of human impact on this site specifically and with habitats globally and the relationship between our lifestyles and nature conservation. The work of CCW is put into context and the conflicts and issues to be managed in maintaining a reserve and some of the solutions, which ensure

maximum public access, and enjoyment with minimum damage to a fragile ecosystem is discussed.

This introduction gives students perspective and meaning to their visit and inspires them to feel wonder and fascination about Ynyslas and sow a seed of responsibility for, and identity with, nature.

Ynyslas, Dyfi National Nature Reserve, CCW

Case Study: An Inspirational First Encounter

A quiet, awed group of 5 year olds clasping their special jewels intently, whilst listening carefully to the sounds they can hear around them, might not be what people expect to encounter on an RSPB reserve. However, the First Nature programme is very popular with Early Years and Foundation Stage groups.

The day's activities have a hands-on focus. RSPB staff encourage young children to actively explore their natural world and develop their sense of awe and wonder in relation to it. Children discover the sounds, smell, sights and textures of their environment. They look closely at the huge variety of colours found in nature's palette and examine the texture of stones, feathers, moss and leaves.

In contrast to the earlier quiet, squeals of delight can often be heard as the children find a worm, spider or woodlouse that was hiding under a log or in the leaf-litter, or perhaps spot a grasshopper in the long grass.

The noise level of groups often rises too when water comes into the programme. Children can dip in streams or pools to see who lives where in the water. The search for fish and frogs is often forgotten as they find various beetles and nymphs. The children begin to think about how what they find is suited to living where it does.

The children often work in pairs or small groups so sharing and learning to work together sharing their discoveries is an essential part of the day. As the children leave they take with them a lasting impression of the wonders nature: they leave behind a site still ringing with laughter and fun....ready for the next group.

RSPB

Sow a seed of responsibility for, and identity with, nature.

As the children leave they take with them a lasting impression of the wonders nature: they leave behind a site still ringing with laughter and fun

Further information

General information concerning the importance of outdoor learning

Rickinson et al, NFER: A review of Research on Outdoor Learning, 2004

www.esdgc.org.uk Web site offering a virtual directory for teachers regarding ESDGC

Guidance on health and safety for Educational Visits

National Guidance and Practice - Department for Education and Skills (DfES) - Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (HASPEV) A Good Practice Guide www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthandsafety/visits

Generic Safety information model for managed venues via county H&S officers and LEA EVCs

All Wales guidance for learning outside the classroom is also being prepared by the Outdoor Education Advisory Panel for Wales sub committee. Due for publication in 2007

For further information concerning the case studies:-

RSPB 029 2035 3015 www.rspb.org.uk

National Trust 01492 860123 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Field Studies Council 01743 852100 www.field-studies-council.org

CCW 01970 871640 www.ccw.gov.uk

Forest Education Initiative 01873 852015 www.foresteducation.org

Forestry Commission Wales 0845 604 0845 www.forestry.gov.uk

National Botanic Garden 01558 667148 www.gardenofwales.org.uk