

If a planned scheme of outdoor learning in Science is delivered, will this improve attitudes in English for children who are just below ARE in Reading and Writing?



Introduction/Context:

Broadheath Primary School is a large, 2/3 form entry, primary school on the very edge of Altrincham, South Manchester. There are currently 440 on roll, with a 52 place Nursery. The school has recently been expanding, and has a new building to complement the existing building. There is a large playground and field, as well as a large, mainly unused garden/copse/orchard area at the side of the LKS2 department, which was ideal to carry out this research project.



The issue addressed

After much research within school, whole school improvement targets and wider reading, creating an effective environment for working outdoors is an area to develop at Broadheath Primary School. After guidance and reports from Manchester University SEERIH Department, conclusions were drawn that proved the EYFS model of enquiry-based learning outdoors, had a positive impact on confidence and attitudes to learning amongst younger children. Could this be replicated in Lower Key Stage 2? This formed the first part of our research question. A whole school target is to raise the profile of writing across the school, so this was incorporated into the research.

Review of current practice and literature

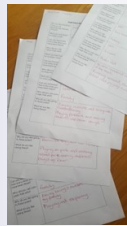
'Transforming Outdoor Learning in Schools from the Natural Connections Project' (Plymouth University, September 2016) Martin Gilchrist and Caroline Emerson, Natural England

'Student Outcomes and Natural Schooling Pathways from Evidence to Impact Report' 2016 (Associate Professor Sue Waite, Plymouth University and Professor Karen Malone, Centre for Educational Research, Western Sydney University).

Research methods:



Pupil Voice



Individual interviews



Participant observation



Data Collection

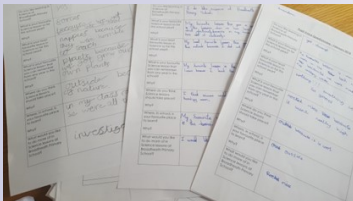


Exploration and field notes

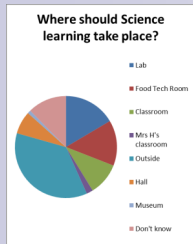


Findings before intervention

Step 1



LKS2 Pupil Voice

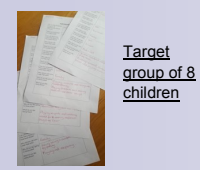


"There is more Science outside."
 "You can try new things in a lab."
 "Science learning should take place everywhere."
 "In the hall because we can make a big mess."
 "Science is cool outside, if the weather is good."

"The classroom is a safe space to learn."
 "I like learning in a room with my friends."
 "It's cool to learn stuff outside."
 "I like learning every-"

Reasons for enjoyment

- Making dens
- Playing in the mud
- Climbing trees
- Exploring
- Running around
- Spending time with family
- Playing hide and seek
- Having fun



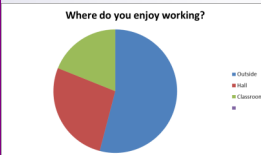
Target group of 8 children

Where have you visited?

- Dunham Park (NT) 8/8
- Tatton Park (NT) 7/8
- John Leigh Park - 7/8

Findings after intervention

Following the 6 week programme, all the children were interviewed individually again regarding their favourite place to learn.



Before intervention



100% (8 children) stated they enjoyed working outdoors after the programme.

"All the activities were my favourite because they were exciting and different." HD (aged 8)
 "I have more ideas for writing stories, especially if I go outside first." FC (aged 9)
 "It has helped a lot with my story writing because I am more imaginative outside." JH (aged 8)

"It's more enjoyable because now I'm writing more in English, using more adjectives, and remembering what I see, hear, smell and feel outside." CB (aged 9)

Intervention:

A 6 week programme of activities, building step by step, with a focus on the English curriculum.



Implications for future Practice/ Lessons Learned

Final pupil interviews
 After discussion and interviews with the children, evidence showed that they had all loved working outside as it was something new. 7/8 felt their attitudes to English (Reading and Writing) had improved, with 3 saying they were excited, as learning outdoors had stimulated an interest in the world around them. This had, in turn, led to increased use of quality vocabulary (adjectives) in writing. The outdoors had stimulated senses, imagination and a new enjoyment for writing.
 The project had a greater and more positive effect on the Year 4 children (aged 8-9), possibly due to maturity and the programme delivered. Future, planned programmes of work are a way to increase attitudes towards learning in some children falling below ARE in English, and a way to stimulate exciting vocabulary and word choices.