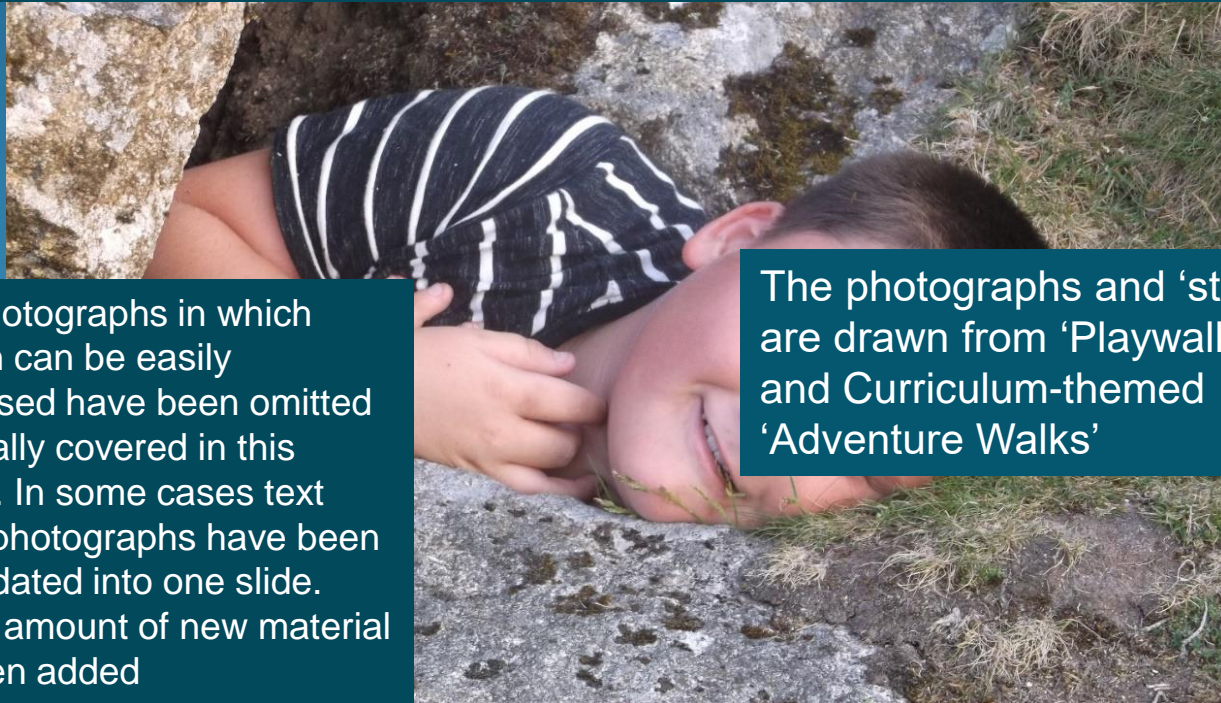


Inspiring Play in Wild Areas

This session was a 45 minute version of a 90 minute workshop/ presentation. I am keen to spread the message so please contact if interested in any aspect. David



N.B. Photographs in which children can be easily recognised have been omitted or partially covered in this version. In some cases text and/or photographs have been consolidated into one slide. A small amount of new material has been added

The photographs and 'stories' are drawn from 'Playwalks' and Curriculum-themed 'Adventure Walks'

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Contents

By the end of the session we will have considered

- The value of free play (especially in wild areas)
- Connecting with nature and the wider environment
- Roles for the playful teacher
- Practicalities including, preparation, supervision and risk management

The value of free play

It's what children do! It's how they learn about themselves and the world around them.

Children are

- driven to explore, experiment, learn, and to improve
- taking personal responsibility for the choices they make
- building resilience through overcoming difficulties

Free play is intrinsically rewarding



Children playing on a bomb site in Syria

Every picture tells a story

Given **time** and space children will explore, discover and take on new challenges. The motivation comes from within.



Putting our faces in the water is fun



This collaborative, child initiated, mixed gender construction project eventually emerged following 30 minutes of other free play. 'We're going to build a drystone wall'

The serious business of play

Extended opportunities for free play, especially in wild areas, helps children to develop their

- Concentration
- Perseverance
- Creativity
- Important social skills

And has

- Physical health benefits
- Mental health benefits

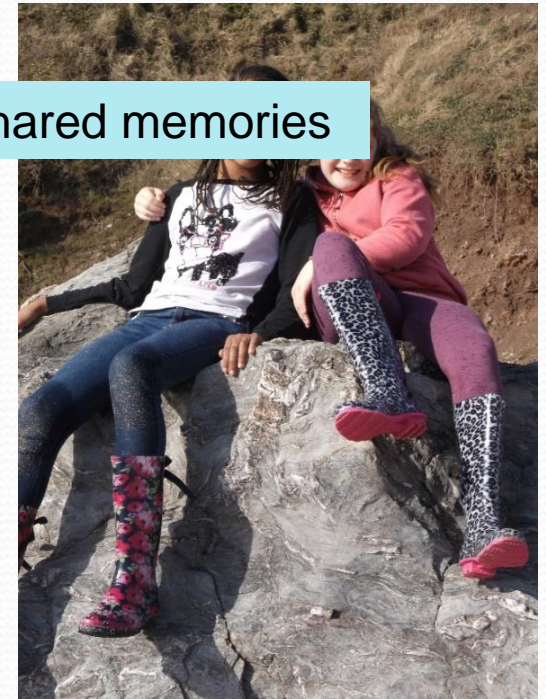




New groups and pairings develop: *'I would never have predicted that' (teacher)*



New friends Shared memories



Creating, collaborating experimenting
reviewing, adapting improving.



Setting their own challenges makes
them all the more proud to achieve
them – our praise only confirms what
they already knew



Self-initiated sculpture



The playful teacher

- Gives permission to play and be playful
- Gives clear but widely drawn boundaries
- Discusses risks and expected behaviour
- Allows play to evolve (gives time!)
- Allows for creative ideas
- Says yes whenever possible
- **Stands back to observe and learn about the children as their play develops and changes over time**



Saying yes! Seizing the moment

Cross country
horse jumps
on access land



Permission to explore



Setting Challenges

Can we get the whole class
off the ground in 20 seconds?



Yes as I had noted the odd tree stump and
log that the less able could manage.



Who would like to climb
along that branch?

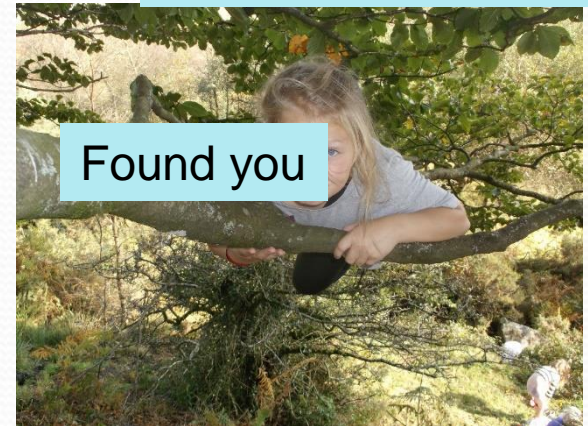
Class challenge; Can we get half the class through the fork in that tree?



Yes and the 'larger' children found a role in helping others.



Teacher leads:
Hide and seek



Found you

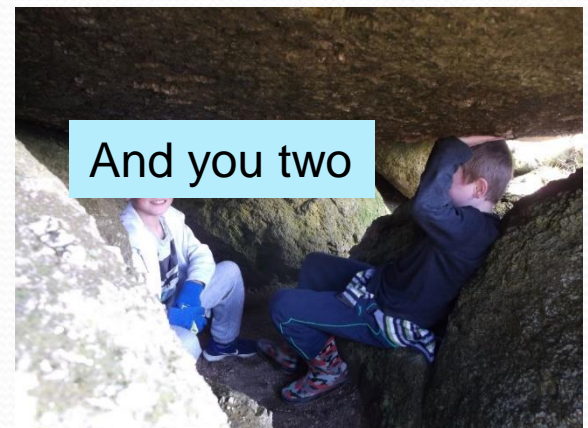
Teacher leads: Follow my leader



What is it about children and sticks?



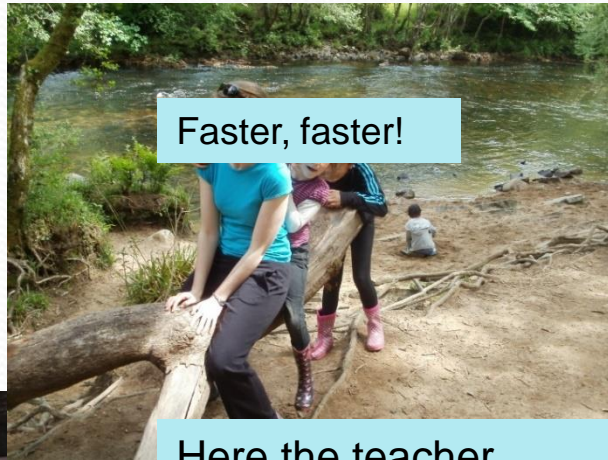
Allows teacher to create small challenges along the way



And you two

The teacher joining can help with relationship building

During free play children may invite your participation. It's their game; they can (and will) decide to leave for another activity if you try to take over.



Here the teacher asked if she could have a go on this rocking branch. The children were pleased as it extended their fun for a few minutes before moving on to something else

Teacher offers to extend the challenge



Time to enjoy the environment

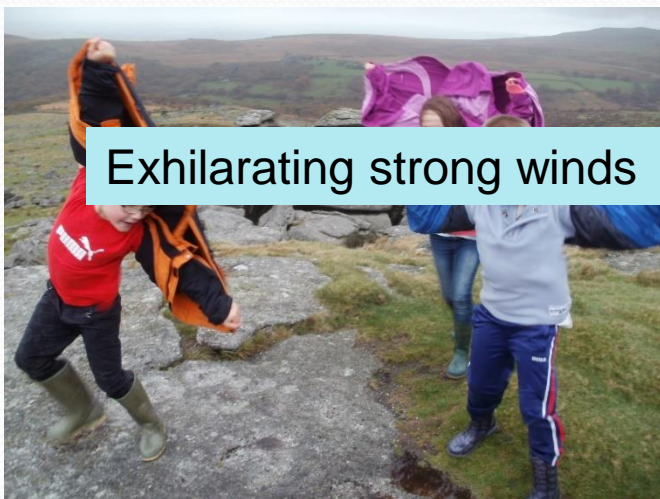
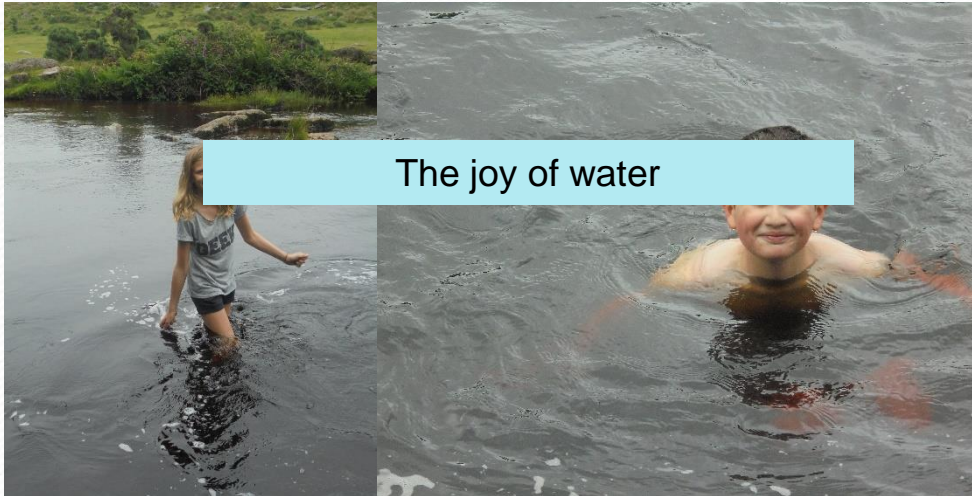
Connecting with Nature

- Time to experience the new and the different
- Time to exercise their natural curiosity
- Time to ask questions
- Time to think, reflect and learn
- Time to make new memories, and experience feelings and positive emotions to last a life time



Fascinated
by the
smallest
things

Free to 'immerse' themselves in the environment, children develop a connection with nature that involves all the senses

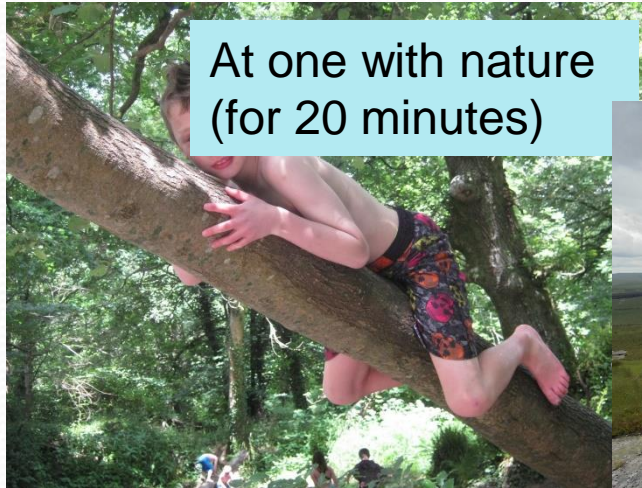


Playful nature watching

Greater horseshoe bats



At one with nature
(for 20 minutes)



Telling the world
'All hail nature!'



Star gazing on a beach



Given space and time to explore, rock pooling and pond dipping take on many of the features of free play



Practicalities

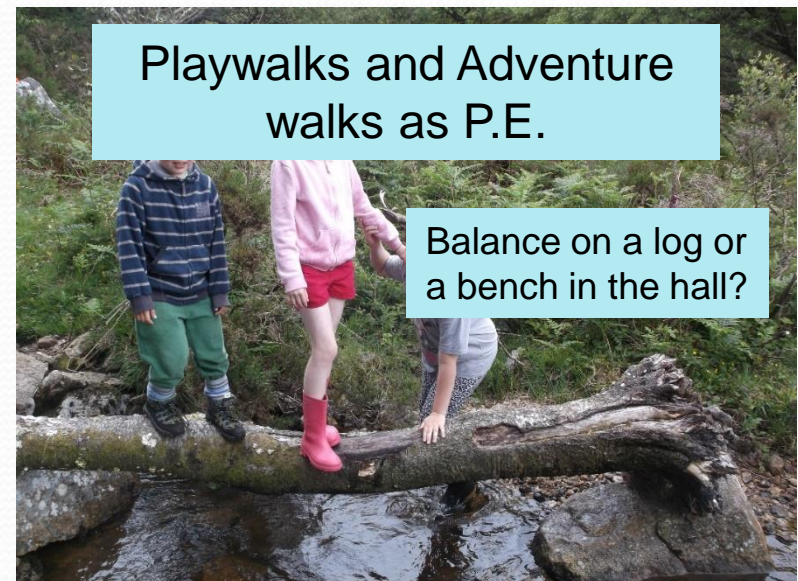
Creating Opportunities

The basics

- Know your environment
- Know your group
- Know yourself
- Understand the benefits
- Discuss risk with children, but stay positive, can you say yes?
- Promote the value of play across the school



Valuable experiences
and curriculum
coverage too!



Risk management; involving children

Know your environment: Pre visit (even if already familiar)

- Anticipate (and plan for) play opportunities
- Think about risk in terms of physical boundaries, and what you will need to discuss with the children

Know your group (try to stay positive)

e.g. Children on the autistic spectrum, ADHD etc.

Key discussions

- You don't have to do anything that you don't want to
- Never put pressure on someone into doing something
- Chasing games bring greater risk of misjudgement
- Look out for each other
- Have a great idea? Ask if you're not sure
- Follow the boundary instructions

Know yourself

Your own confidence, fears and limitations (and that of other adults in the group) *e.g. an adult in the group very afraid of heights*

- Be prepared to think on your feet. (Active risk assessment)

Active risk assessment and remote supervision

With no intervention from an adult these children spent along time discussing the risks involved in jumping the gap. A few eventually did others walked away. No pressure put on. It was serious!

A member of staff watching a self-initiated activity jumping from rocks
'You don't have to if you don't want to!'



Remote supervision, we have an overview. Maintaining boundaries. Whistle at the ready

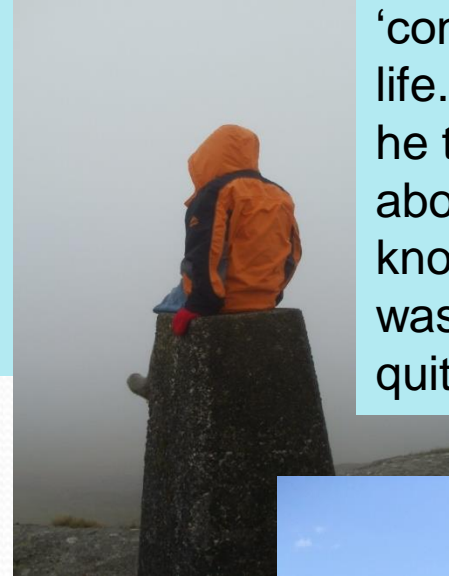


Benefits for both Physical and Mental Health and Well-being



It took him several minutes but he hauled himself to the top of this rock. Other children were leaping around like mountain goats but it was his idea and his triumph.

Really pleased with himself



He leads a 'complicated' life. What was he thinking about? I don't know but he was there for quite a while.



She encouraged him towards the end

She didn't say much all day. Found the walking quite hard. Then suddenly there she was, looking very happy!



Surprise!

Quotes from children

- ‘This has been my best ever school trip’ (Y6 girl)
- Conversation with very anxious Y6 boy
TEACHER: ‘So did you have a good time in the end?’
JAKE: Better than that it was totally awesome
- Mum don’t drive so I’ve never been anywhere like this before, it’s magic (Y3 boy)
- That’s the first time I’ve climbed a tree and I definitely never thought I’d ever swim in a river (Year 5 girl)
- ‘This is like paradise Mr Glenny’ (Y5 boy)
- This has been the best day of my life so far (Y2 girl)

Thank you for coming

Questions welcome

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