









Why we should, as practitioners, engage with outdoor learning.

Outdoor learning has been shown to improve health and wellbeing, engage students and develop personal competencies.¹ Numerous studies demonstrate that experiences in nature promote learning, fostering nature connection leading to pro-environmental behaviour and develop leadership, communication, problem solving and critical thinking skills.² Building outdoor learning opportunities into primary school curricula and valuing its impact on a multitude of different facets of learning is vital for practitioners with young people's best interests at heart.

All outdoor learning experiences have the potential to:

-  Improve children's physical health through physical activity e.g. exposure to vitamin D, improved eyesight, healthier weight
-  Improve children's mental health and wellbeing e.g. being in nature, an opportunity to recharge away from the classroom
-  Support children's physical development e.g. improve gross and fine motor skills
-  Develop interpersonal skills e.g. communication and negotiation
-  Encourage curiosity and develop problem solving skills
-  Enable children to negotiate risk safely
-  Strengthen resilience in children
-  Increase **nature connection** and promote sustainable actions

Research suggests that engaging with nature through simple activities (e.g. smelling a wildflower) is one of the best ways to improve nature connection. This in turn benefits our mental health and wellbeing. Spending time in nature gives pupils opportunities to increase their connection to nature, which could lead them to practice more 'pro-nature behaviours', for example using rubbish bins or taking waste home.

The next resource guides you through a series of ideas to explore this further. For more support: [High Quality Outdoor Learning 2025](#) The IOL High Quality Outdoor Learning 2025 guide is available.

At Field Studies Council we have been running Forest School training and outdoor learning training for teachers for decades. During these sessions we often ask participants to recall a happy childhood memory of outdoor experience. Over the years there has been a shift in these anecdotal recollections. We used to see a lot of descriptions of "playing out", exploring local woodlands, messing about in rivers and being out from dawn until dusk. Recently we have seen more young teachers and trainees, describing football practice, going to play parks, walking the dog, or more worryingly, struggling to think of anything at all.

This shift in focus from unfettered, non-regulated play and exploration in nature to organised sport or recreation means that without teachers like you engaging, without

outdoor learning opportunities through school, some children simply never get to experience being immersed in their local environment or explore novel landscapes. An interest in and love of nature and the natural world and the curiosity and creativity to investigate the world is born out of these experiences.

¹Mann, J., Gray, T., Truong, S., et al. (2022) Getting Out of the Classroom and Into Nature: A Systematic Review of Nature-Specific Outdoor Learning on School Children's Learning and Development. *Front. Public Health* 10:877058. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.877058

²Kuo, M., Barnes, M. and Jordan, C. (2019) Do Experiences With Nature Promote Learning? Converging Evidence of a Cause-and-Effect Relationship. *Front. Psychol.* 10:305. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00305