

An hour or two of outdoor learning every week increases teachers' job satisfaction

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Children engaged in outdoor learning. Credit: Swansea University

A Swansea University study has revealed how as little as an hour a week of outdoor learning has tremendous benefits for children and also boosts teachers' job satisfaction.

Through interviews and [focus groups](#), researchers explored the views and experiences of pupils and educators at three [primary schools](#) in south Wales that had adopted an outdoor learning programme, which entailed teaching the curriculum in the natural environment for at least an hour a week.

Interviews were held with headteachers and teachers, and focus groups were conducted with pupils aged 9-11 both before and during the implementation of an outdoor learning programme within the curriculum.

The schools in the study reported a variety of benefits of outdoor learning for both the child and the teacher and for improving health, wellbeing, education and engagement in school.

Lead author of the study Emily Marchant, a Ph.D. researcher in Medical Studies at Swansea University, explained: "We found that the pupils felt a sense of freedom when outside the restricting walls of the classroom. They felt more able to express themselves, and enjoyed being able to move about more too. They also said they felt more engaged and were more positive about the learning experience. We also heard many say that their wellbeing and memory were better, and teachers told us how it helped engage all types of learners."

The benefits of outdoor education for children are well documented, but a finding of this study is the impact that the outdoor learning programme had on teachers.

Emily said: "Initially, some teachers had reservations about transferring the classroom outdoors but once outdoor learning was embedded within the curriculum, they spoke of improved job satisfaction and personal wellbeing. This is a really important finding given the current concerns around [teacher](#) retention rates. Overall, our findings highlight the potential of outdoor learning as a curriculum tool in improving school engagement and the health, wellbeing and education outcomes of children.

"The schools within our study have all continued with regular outdoor learning within the curriculum. With support and recognition from education inspectorates of the wider benefits to children's development and education, outdoor learning could be set within the primary [school curriculum](#)."

The study, 'Curriculum-based outdoor learning for children aged 9-11: A qualitative analysis of pupils' and teachers' views', is published in *PLOS ONE*.

More information: Emily Marchant et al, Curriculum-based outdoor learning for children aged 9-11: A qualitative analysis of pupils' and teachers' views, *PLOS ONE* (2019). [DOI:](#)

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