

# Evidence-Informed Research Report

Exploring the Impact of Outdoor Learning and Forest School Approaches on Pupils' Concentration in the Classroom and School Attendance

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## 1. Executive Summary

It has widely been accepted that there is a positive benefit of being outside on children's development. In 2006, Labour's Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto was launched, outlining that it "is not only about **what** we learn but importantly **how** and **where** we learn."<sup>1</sup> This has been supported by a number of other research projects, boasting the correlation of being outdoors and increased movement on personal development and academic attainment. When our EYFS/KS1 Lead undertook Forest School training and subsequently increased the time that her own class spent outside engaging with a variety of curriculum and non-curriculum learning, she noticed that not only were the children more focussed in the classroom but the class attendance was 3.4% above the school average over two terms<sup>2</sup>.

When we had the opportunity to explore this further with the guidance of the Essex Research School, we decided to test whether these results would be repeated across a number of classes against a control group. We initially created a test group of three classes, against a control group of six classes. We took mid-point results and then repeated this, doubling the size of the test group for the second term. Children were taken outside into the school copse for one session per week, underpinned by the Forest School structure<sup>3</sup> along with at least one curriculum lesson per week, adapted and taught outdoors.

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<sup>1</sup> DfE (2006) *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto*. DfES Publications

<sup>2</sup> Average attendance over two terms across the school excluding test class: 93.4%, test class: 96.8%

<sup>3</sup> Forest School Handbook (2020) [Forestschoolassociation.org](http://Forestschoolassociation.org)

Results for the first term (September to December 2025) showed a positive correlation for the children in the test group, demonstrating increased concentration and attention in class, along with a higher attendance figure compared to the control group. These results were then replicated with the increased test group over the second term (January to March 2026). Following these results, the recommendation is for all children at Beckers Green Primary School to experience one copse session per week and at least one curriculum lesson per week, adapted to be taught outside.

## 2. Introduction and Rationale

*EEF principle: Make decisions based on relevant evidence, explaining context.*

There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that outdoor learning can support social emotional outcomes and we can anecdotally support these findings from prior work in our setting. One piece of existing evidence was conducted by Natural England and Exeter University. The project with the headline of Two Hours a Week Outside is Important for Health and Wellbeing<sup>4</sup> is even cited on the Government website, boasting that ‘people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are significantly more likely to report good health and psychological wellbeing.’ In recent years, there has been an increase in further evidence to suggest that there is a positive impact of outdoor learning on attainment as well, as supported by projects such as those conducted by Quibell, Charlton and Law in 2017.<sup>5</sup> This research directly compared a Wilderness School intervention programme against conventional classroom methods over a period of six weeks. The data showed that there were notable improvements in the performance on the intervention group, particularly in reading, although writing and maths was also favourable.

Teachers are increasingly concerned about the concentration levels of the children in their classes, with many children unable to remain focussed on a short lesson input. Meeting the changing and developing needs has been the focus of observation and coaching over the past few years at Beckers Green Primary School, but this is not limited to our setting. A survey by Kapow of 504 early years and primary teachers from schools in England reported that 84% respondents agreed that children’s attention spans are ‘shorter than ever.’<sup>6</sup> Concentration has a direct impact on attainment, both with the ability to attend to/maximise daily learning opportunities and also in test performance.

The project at Beckers Green primary explored how adopting regular and consistent outdoor experiences and learning approaches might specifically improve classroom

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<sup>4</sup> White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J. *et al.* (2019) Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> Quibell, Charlton and Law (2017) *Wilderness Schooling: A controlled trial of the impact of an outdoor education programme on attainment outcomes in primary school pupils*, Newcastle University

<sup>6</sup> Mojica, L (2023) Poll of teachers reflect concern that children’s attention spans are ‘shorter than ever’, [Twinkl.co.uk](https://www.twinkl.co.uk), March 2026

concentration in our context and impact school attendance, combining research findings with validation of staff observations and pupil input.

### 3. Aims and Research Questions

*EEF principle: Define clear, focused questions to guide evidence use.*

Aims:

- Investigate the impact of outdoor learning on pupils' concentration and school attendance
- Identify which activities or approaches support sustained attention
- Gather pupil and staff perspectives to inform evidence-based decisions

Research Questions:

#### ***Does regular and consistent participation in outdoor learning affect pupils' concentration in classroom lessons?***

This project is seeking to explore whether the ability to concentrate for increased amounts of time is affected by increased time spent engaging in Outdoor Learning. By 'consistent participation', the researchers expect for the test groups to engage with one Forest School structured session per week (one hour) and at least one curriculum lesson, adapted and taught outside, weekly.

In order to measure concentration, it is important to derive a list of exhibiting behaviours that would indicate that a group has lost focus on the learning<sup>7</sup>. For the purpose of consistency, the lesson would be timed by an observing adult during a specific lesson taught inside the classroom and stamped when three or more children were presenting with the agreed behaviours. In order to be reflective of the group as a whole, children with significant additional needs that affect their ability to concentrate would not be taken into account during the data collection sessions. The same data would be collected in the same way across the school for baseline, mid-point and exit points.

#### ***Which features of Forest School sessions appear to support focus and engagement?***

Each session in the copse would have a structured teacher-led activity, for children to engage with if they wish. This may be a collaborative task such as building a team den, or a singular activity such as stick whittling. As well as the teacher-led activity, there are a number of other activities on offer, such as tree-climbing, using the rope swing and tree net, or role-playing in the mud kitchen.

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1

The Forest School Lead has planned a number of activities for other staff to use and engage with. She will also ensure that these are resourced and delivered with the quality of her own delivery, by providing CPD and drop-in sessions. In order to ascertain teacher views of both engagement in certain activities in the copse and subsequent concentration in the classroom after, a survey will be sent to staff following the project end<sup>8</sup>.

***Are the initial findings regarding improved school attendance replicated with a larger test group?***

Prior to the research project, we had noticed that the class that spent more time outside than the other classes had improved attendance, 3.4% above the school average over autumn and spring terms. During the early stages, it was difficult to tell whether this was due to an increase in the pupil's desire to be in school, a decrease in the circulation of germs outside, or pure coincidence. It was therefore vital that we looked at this on a larger scale.

Initially, we will split three classes out to be test groups, leaving six classes as the control group. Depending on the results during the first term, we will seek to change the test group in order to see if results are consistently replicated.

#### **4. Methodology**

*EEF principle: Ensure transparency and consider context, applicability, and reliability.*

We are a mid-sized primary school, with 11 classes and 317 children on roll. For the purpose of this project, we discounted our two EYFS classes as their free flow curriculum already includes an extensive use of the outdoor classroom. We will therefore conduct the research with nine classes across KS1 and KS2.

During the autumn term, we will instruct three classes as the initial test group – one from KS1, one from LKS2 and one from UKS2. Depending upon the results, we will add or amend the test group for the spring term, in order to validate the results from the first term.

The research project expectation is that all classes will conduct baseline assessments, mid-point assessments and exit point assessments. Observations regarding length of time that the class can concentrate will be conducted by the same members of staff, during the same taught core subject and at the same time of day to ensure consistency between collection dates. During the project, session leaders will be expected to record which lessons are being taught outdoors weekly (at least) and conform to the risk assessment in place for the safety of staff and

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<sup>8</sup> See appendix 2

pupils. Lastly, office staff will monitor attendance and report back to SLT at set points.

### ***Data Collection***

For the purpose of this project, we are seeking mostly quantitative outcomes. There is extensive qualitative data in circulation from other sources regarding the benefit to social and emotional health of outdoor learning. However, in order to facilitate change and encourage confidence from all stakeholders in the validity of the proposal, the authors felt that a quantitative base would be more valuable.

Quantitative: timed checklists<sup>9</sup>. The time will be marked when the observer notes that three or more children are presenting with the listed actions or behaviours. In addition, the monitoring of attendance figures per class will seek to validate or discredit the preliminary pre-project findings.

Qualitative: The Forest School Lead will monitor the breadth of curriculum coverage for the taught lessons, making amendments if needed. A survey form will also be sent to staff at the end of the project<sup>10</sup>, looking for qualitative feedback on a number of qualitative factors including the effect on pupils and logistics of delivery.

### ***Contextual factors***

The copse is on our school site and, although this is owned by the council, we have a long-term lease for its use. From a safety perspective, the only official entrance is through the gate on the playground, although trespassers have historically accessed the copse and left litter. Therefore, a full walk round by staff prior to pupils accessing the area is imperative. The weather also plays a part in the safe useability of the space: if it is too windy, it is not safe to use the copse as it is possible that some of the trees may be unstable in high wind. Equally, if there has been a lot of rain and the ditch is full, although children have been taught the rules of using the space, sufficient/additional adults will be needed to ensure that they can be reasonably spaced along the width of the water to ensure child safety.

When the initial test group of three classes are using the outdoor spaces, there are not concerns that this will prove to be logistically challenging. However, as the number of classes using the copse seeks to increase, careful timetabling will be paramount to ensure that each class is allocated a suitable session time, which enhances the timetable of the lessons in class and does not place additional pressure on teaching staff.

### ***Ethical considerations***

For the purpose of this research project, test class names will be communicated to parents and carers but not shared as part of the project to external stakeholders.

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<sup>9</sup> See appendix 1

<sup>10</sup> See appendix 2

## 5. Findings / Results

*EEF principle: Present evidence clearly, combining multiple sources.*

### **Theme 1: Impact of outdoor learning opportunities on attention and concentration in the classroom**

This table shows the data gathered by the staff, time stamping in the classroom. The groups highlighted in green show the classes in the test group for two terms, the groups highlighted in blue show the classes who joined the test for the second term.

	Baseline	Mid point 1	Mid point 2	End point		
	Time stamp (secs)	Time stamp (secs)	Time stamp (secs)	Time stamp (secs)	First term difference	Two terms difference (cumulative)
C	4	4	4.6	11	0.6	7
D.	6	7	5	15	-1	9
E.	5	324	240	310	235	305
F.	15	14	46.17	133	31.17	118
G	45	37	40	48	-5	3
H.	180	240	240	180	60	0
I.	44	10	4	74	-40	30
J	660	755	783	825	123	165
K	34	42	50	50	16	16

This data shows the following average results:

Test group one (two terms): Improvement of +196 seconds

Test group two (one term): Improvement of +14 seconds

Control group (two terms): Improvement of +7.7 seconds

The results show that the groups with the most significant increases both fell into the test group, with all three test classes in the first group continuing to show cumulative improvements over two terms. Although the second test groups did not show the same level of significant improvement, it should be noted that two of the groups actually regressed over the first term whilst they were not taking part in the test, going on to improve on their baselines when they started going outside. This said, it is important to note that the control group also improved on baselines, albeit to a lesser extent. This is likely to be due to improved knowledge of routine and expectation within the class over the course of the academic year.

It would be prudent to continue to monitor this data to see if the findings of cumulative improvements over two terms could be replicated within every group beyond the project.

### **Theme 2: Attendance**

Attendance - half termly average	October	December	April
C		93.56%	91.80%
D.	95.79%	95.28%	93.40%
E	96.62%	96.14%	96.50%
F.	93.36%	93.24%	94.80%
G	92.94%	91.96%	93.10%
H.	94.55%	94.85%	93.20%
I.	93.72%	93.45%	93.20%
J	95.77%	95.19%	93.60%
K	95.44%	95.59%	93.30%
AVERAGE - ALL	94.77%	94.36%	93.66%
AVERAGE - TEST	95.25%	94.86%	94.10%
<b>AVERAGE - Test vs average</b>	<b>0.48%</b>	<b>0.49%</b>	<b>0.44%</b>
<b>AVERAGE - CONTROL</b>	<b>94.49%</b>	<b>94.12%</b>	<b>93.00%</b>
<b>AVERAGE - Test vs control</b>	<b>0.76%</b>	<b>0.74%</b>	<b>1.10%</b>

The data shows that there is a positive correlation in the main test group compared to the control and/or whole group average attendance of 1.10% over two terms. However, it should be noted that the second test group have not performed as strongly as the initial test group, with two thirds of the classes showing a lower attendance in April than in October. Although the dip is not as significant as other classes within the control group, it was prudent to explore this in more detail, looking at the year-on-year average data for ten children with the lowest attendance from each class, especially as there are a number of extenuating circumstances within this group:

	Spring 2025	Spring 2026
Group 1	80.50%	86.00%
Group 2	82.90%	85.90%
Group 3	84.80%	87.60%

Although the attendance of these children is significantly lower than the general average, it is clear that, in all groups, the attendance has increased year-on-year.

### **Theme 3: Stakeholder reflections on concentration and classroom climate**

When gathering staff data at the end of the project, it was important to use the combination of the timed data collected in the classroom (theme 1) in conjunction with staff and pupil voice.

### Staff voice

Although the data above was decided at start to be the measure for impact within the classroom, we also surveyed staff at the end point<sup>11</sup>. This includes voice collection from across the school, including teaching and support staff. The results are as follows:

- ✓ 95% staff feel that the children have benefitted from the increased time outdoors
  - One third of staff feel that they have seen a positive difference in their social and emotional development
  - Another one third of staff feel that they have seen this improvement **as well** as academic improvement
- ✓ 17% staff have found it challenging, on occasion, to adapt curriculum lessons to be taught outside
- ✓ 69% staff have been able to complete one Forest School session and at least one taught curriculum lesson outdoors per week, with some managing in excess of this. 31% staff have reported that, although they have ensured that the Forest School session has been delivered, they have sometimes been unable to teach the curriculum lesson outdoors weekly.
- ✓ Overall, 95% staff would support a timetable amendment in order to ensure that our Outdoor Learning offer can be implemented and sustained within our setting

Further to this, a school Governor attended Forest School sessions on two occasions in order to quality-assure the provision on offer and to gather insights from staff and children. The last visit took place towards the end point of the research project and she reported the following<sup>12</sup>:

- ✓ Staff reported strong cooperation skills, respectful relationships and increased social mixing between pupils who would not usually interact
- ✓ Staff observations suggest that the benefits of outdoor learning extend beyond the sessions themselves, contributing to improved behaviour and learning attitudes in the classroom.

The combination of the work above shows that, although staff overwhelmingly support the project and a permanent change to our offer, some staff require additional support for planning and resourcing in order to deliver high-quality curriculum lessons in the outdoors.

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<sup>11</sup> See appendix 2

<sup>12</sup> Knights, L (2026) Governor visit note, Beckers Green Primary School (appendix 3)

### Pupil voice

The Forest School Lead has continually gathered pupil voice throughout the project, which demonstrated that children can see the benefits of learning outside and especially enjoy the sessions in the copse. There were some exceptions and 100% of these were based around working outside in colder weather. During the Governor visit<sup>13</sup>, the following observations were made:

- ✓ When participating in a circle time activity outside, all pupils were fully engaged, demonstrating 100% focus, strong eye contact and active participation through volunteering contributions
- ✓ All pupils listened carefully and gave their full attention to the Health and Safety instructions
- ✓ Within the environment, pupils were observed to be highly supportive of one another, demonstrating strong peer-to-peer relationships and sustained engagement
- ✓ All pupils questioned stated that time in the copse is the best part of the week and pupil voice indicates increased motivation to attend school on outdoor learning days

## **6. Discussion**

*EEF principle: Interpret findings in light of evidence and context.*

Observed improvements in concentration align with research published University of East London<sup>14</sup> part way through this project (Dec 2025). This research centred around comparing indoor and outdoor delivery of 600 primary English, maths and science lessons. The results showed that children were 'able to focus for longer periods outside' and less likely to 'move rapidly between activities.' The data gathered during this research project is in line with existing and ongoing external research. In addition to improved concentration, the positive correlation in attendance supports the outcome of this research. The likely hypothesis is that improved attendance in line with increased focus will result in increased attainment at key academic data collection points. This would form the basis for additional case studies.

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<sup>13</sup> Knights, L (2026) Governor visit note, Beckers Green Primary School (appendix 3)

<sup>14</sup> Goldenberg, Dr Gemma (2025), Outdoor Learning Linked to Lower Stress and Better Focus, University of East London

This research project has been primarily based on quantitative data, complementing the extensive existing research and outlining clear results. However, qualitative outcomes have also been gathered through pupil and staff voice as well as observations. These also support and have complemented the general findings of the research. It is likely to assume that the results from this project are generalised, especially as they are in line with existing research. However, it is prudent to suggest that environmental considerations may affect efficacy: pupil voice and observations found that children really enjoy being in the copse. Would the enjoyment level; ability to move and explore; and range of opportunities for social development be replicated in a small courtyard or playground? It is also important to note that other contextual factors, such as session consistency, staff training, familiarity and enthusiasm appeared critical for impact. Would the results be impacted with a greater or smaller number of sessions weekly, for example?

## **7. Limitations**

*EEF principle: Be transparent about constraints and reliability of evidence.*

Unlike the study conducted by Exeter University and Natural England, the size of this research project is a natural limitation. Whereas the existing study looked at 600 lessons, this project incorporated a total of 26 weeks (at least 52 sessions) for the initial test group and 11 weeks (at least 22 sessions) for the second test group. In order to investigate this on a larger scale, a greater cohort or longer period could be considered. Despite the limitations on sample size, we maintained a control group alongside the test group at all times in order to provide as much validity to the project as possible.

Forest School sessions were timetabled in order to provide consistency of delivery and duration. However, outdoor curriculum lesson delivery was left to the jurisdiction of the teacher, allowing for some potential inconsistency of regularity and duration. In order to ensure curriculum coverage, teachers were requested to fill in a form weekly, detailing the subject and lesson objective. The view of leaders was that there was a variety of core and foundation subjects taught outside, but there could be further emphasis put on specific subject skill development in the future.

Data collection methods were designed to be as consistent as possible. Attendance data is collected at a school level as directed by the Department of Education. Attention data was collected during a lesson of the same subject (writing), delivered by the same teacher, timed by the same member of support staff and at the same time of day for baseline, mid and end points. There are obvious limitations to this, such as interest in lesson content activities before/after. There are also external factors such as classroom temperature which may have had an impact.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

*EEF principle: Make evidence-informed recommendations without overclaiming.*

The initial aims of this research project outlined the following:

- Investigate the impact of outdoor learning on pupils' concentration and school attendance
- Identify which activities or approaches support sustained attention
- Gather pupil and staff perspectives to inform evidence-based decisions

Aim one: In conclusion, the evidence gathered in this project supports the theory that regular and consistent opportunities for outdoor learning positively impact on both pupils' concentration for formalised learning in the classroom and also on attendance. The evidence to support this came from the directed and purposeful research methods as set out in the methodology, and also supported from the softer information collated as the project evolved – such as observations and stakeholder voice.

Aim two: The Forest School Lead stipulated that Forest School sessions should include one structured, teacher-led activity per week, with freedom to engage with the task or to explore the other activities on offer. Although quantitative data was not specifically collected with regards to task engagement, it was noted in the Governor visit report<sup>15</sup> that, on one of her visits, “two thirds of the pupils chose to sit at the campfire, waiting patiently for it to be lit and taking turns to toast marshmallows”. It would be prudent for further research to look at activity engagement and to look for possible correlations with subsequent class-based lesson engagement. It would also be interesting to look at engagement in the curriculum-based taught lessons outside versus the same lesson taught inside. Moreover, a piece of work such as this would allow us to address the small number of staff who highlighted that lesson adaptation for outdoors was sometimes challenging.

Aim three: The final aim was to gather staff and pupil voice to inform the evidence-based decision making. The research project made full use of stakeholder views throughout the process. The following comment was collected via the digital staff questionnaire<sup>16</sup> sent at the end point:

*“I have really, really enjoyed being outside and seeing the children in a different light. I think it's great for relationships, resilience, strength and problem solving. I have really liked learning and being out of my own comfort zone in adapting lessons and leading Forest School Sessions. I have reflected a lot on my modelling and explanations when being in the copse as it is not as clear or sequential as I like to think it is inside the classroom. The children and adults have embraced the rubbish weather, although the ditch water has made me nervous at times!”*

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<sup>15</sup> Knights, L (2026) Governor visit note, Beckers Green Primary School (appendix 3)

<sup>16</sup> See appendix 2

In order to ensure that Outdoor Learning remains an intrinsic and sustained part of the offer at Beckers Green, the researchers have the following recommendations:

- ✓ Continue regular outdoor learning sessions with explicit links to classroom activities. At least one taught curriculum lesson and one Forest School session should continue although there could be increased flexibility should there be inhibitive weather. This is particularly important with regards to the taught lesson where outcomes are more likely to be negatively impacted by inclement conditions.
- ✓ Provide staff training on adapted practice to ensure all lessons (inside and outside) continue to include all elements of high-quality taught practice. Additional CPD sessions to share good practice from both elements of outdoor learning would be useful and to ensure consistency across the setting.
- ✓ It would be prudent to collect longitudinal data to assess sustainability and impact. This could include task engagement levels and potential impact on academic attainment as referenced above. Further to this, it is recommended to increase data collection to look for impact on emotional wellbeing as this has been positively reported by existing research. This is likely to include case study work using assessment tools such as Boxall, Six Core Strengths or the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire.

## 9. References

*EEF principle: Document all sources used to guide the intervention and interpret findings.*

- EEF (2024). *Using Research Evidence: A Concise Guide*
- DfE (2006) *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto*. DfES Publications
- Forest School Handbook (2020) Forestschoolassociation.org
- White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J. *et al.* (2019) Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
- Quibell, Charlton and Law (2017) *Wilderness Schooling: A controlled trial of the impact of an outdoor education programme on attainment outcomes in primary school pupils*, Newcastle University
- Mojica, L (2023) Poll of teachers reflect concern that children's attention spans are 'shorter than ever', [Twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk), March 2026
- Goldenberg, Dr Gemma (2025), *Outdoor Learning Linked to Lower Stress and Better Focus*, University of East London

## **10. Appendices**

*EEF principle: Provide supporting evidence and materials.*

Appendix 1: List of behaviours to reflect loss in attention

Good learning behaviours

Class:

Tick when you see these behaviours. When three or more have been ticked for **different children**, stop and time stamp the sheet.

Please ensure that this is recorded in morning writing lessons only. Children with profound additional needs should not be taken into account. This is designed for the 'majority of the class, during teacher-directed lesson input'.

Rocking on chair				
Tapping the table				
Fixed gaze away from the teacher				
Talking to peers (or other non-verbal interaction) at non-appropriate time				
Getting out of the chair				
Calling out inappropriately				
Fiddling (not with a fiddle aid)				
Dropped posture (on chair or on carpet)				
Head on table or head in hands				

Time stamp: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 2: End point staff survey, with answers

Name	The children in my class have benefitted from the increased time outdoors	I have managed to adapt my curriculum lesson to an enhanced lesson delivered outdoors weekly	On average, how much time have your class spent outside whilst in the test group	I have all of the resources that I need to deliver High Quality lessons outside	I fully support increasing the school day by ten minutes in order to ensure that all classes can benefit from a Forest School session per week	I have the following comments to make about my experience this year. Please consider staffing, lesson content, weather etc.
Adult 1	Yes - I can see a positive difference in the class, academically and socially/emotionally	Yes	I have completed the expected Forest School session and have taught more than one curriculum lesson outdoors per week	Yes	Yes	I have been able to adapt curriculum lessons using online resources and collaboration with other staff members - sometimes creatively depending on weather changes but have involved the children in this too. I have seen a growth in my chns PSED development as well as team work, resilience and a 'can do' attitude that is now coming back in to the classroom too. Children are keen to come to school and I have had parental feedback on this too, also accessing blogs to see updates.
Adult 2	Yes - I can see a positive difference in their social and emotional development	No, I have found this challenging	I have taught the Forest School session but have not managed to consistently teach one lesson outside per week	Yes	Yes	I have at times found resourcing the copse lessons tricky - knowing where the equipment is, having the right resources etc
Adult 3	Yes - I can see a positive difference in the class, academically and socially/emotionally	Yes	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly	This has become easier the longer I have done it, was more challenging in the beginning but now know which types of activities work best so they	Yes	I have enjoyed being outside with the class more and definitely seen an improvement in concentration. I have become more confident teaching curriculum lessons outside over the year and now feel the children still get a quality lesson and

				are still getting a quality lesson		meet the learning objective of that lesson. Was more difficult to manage the curriculum lesson when it's wet! A class set of clipboards would be useful for these lessons. Overall it has been a positive experience and I believe it has been beneficial to the children.
Adult 4	My class have been in the control group and have not had increased time outside	My class have been in the control group	NA	NA	Yes	I can't wait to get outside in the summer term! I'm fully on board and love the idea of more outdoor learning.
Adult 5	Yes - I can see a positive difference in their social and emotional development	Yes	We have continued our weekly sessions as normal	Yes	Yes	Occasionally staffing can be an issue. Weather has been a large factor this year.
Adult 6	Yes - I can see a positive difference in the class, academically and socially/emotionally	Yes	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly	Yes	Yes	I feel that outdoor learning is very beneficial for the children and definitely feel this should be incorporated more across the school.
Adult 7	Yes - I can see a positive difference in their social and emotional development	Yes	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly	Child safe peelers etc for whittling sticks, small water area/pond (tad poles)	Yes	"Coming from a previous setting which embraced 'forest school' I am all for this! My own son benefited from his FS time at nursery. Those who may be quieter in class have a confidence outdoors and are keen to show others their skills. Children have the freedom to explore using the natural environment, I often catch children baking mud pie or decorating the tree house ready for a party. It gives children a real freedom to be free and use their imagination. "
Adult 8	Yes - I can see a positive difference in their social and emotional development	Yes	I have also managed to do more parts of lessons and then nip back in	Yes	Yes	I have really, really enjoyed being outside and seeing the children in a different light. I think its great for relationships,

						resilience, strength and problem solving. I have really liked learning and being out of my own comfort zone in adapting lessons and leading Forest School Sessions. I have reflected a lot on my modelling and explanations when being in the copse as it is not as clear or sequential as I like to think it is inside the classroom. The chn and adults have embraced the rubbish weather, although the ditch water has made me nervous at times!
Adult 9	Yes - I can see an increase in their concentration	My class have been in the control group	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly	Lesson run by teacher	Yes	I have seen the benefits of the outdoor lessons, but have found it difficult when it is raining or very cold. Some children find this difficult to then concentrate
Adult 10	My class have been in the control group and have not had increased time outside	My class have been in the control group	Not been involved		Yes	
Adult 11	Yes - I can see a positive difference in the class, academically and socially/emotionally	Yes	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly	Yes	Yes	I can confirm that being outside has positively impacted all children in the test group.
Adult 12	Yes - I can see a positive difference in the class, academically and socially/emotionally	Yes	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly	Yes	Yes	The children look forward to this a lot. Regardless of weather they love being outside
Adult 13	Yes - I can see a positive difference in the class, academically and socially/emotionally	My class have been in the control group	I have completed the expected one Forest School and one taught curriculum lesson	Yes	Yes	Seeing the children using the copse has been one of my favourite parts of this year. Seeing the (child with) SEN and more quiet child come out of their shell more

			outdoors weekly			while being out in the copse has been a pleasure. Every child looks forward to it every week!
Adult 14	No - I do not think that my class have benefitted from increased time outside	No, I have found this challenging	I have taught the Forest School session but have not managed to consistently teach one lesson outside per week	Dependent on the lesson being taught	Yes	I think some of the children in my class benefit from completing some of their learning outside, however, this can be overshadowed by some of the negative behaviour in the class, making learning much harder for the children making the right choices.
Adult 15	Yes - I can see an increase in their concentration	Yes	I have taught the Forest School session but have not managed to consistently teach one lesson outside per week	Yes	No	I feel like there could be more support/ideas with the curriculum outdoor lessons.
Adult 16	Yes - I can see a positive difference in their social and emotional development	No, I have found this challenging	I have taught the Forest School session but have not managed to consistently teach one lesson outside per week	Class teacher to arrange	Yes	My class showed an improvement whilst outside in the copse. They interacted with children they wouldn't normally do and behaviour was considerably better whilst outside. Arguments were almost non-existent and they were compliant, listening and making right choices. Unfortunately, once back in the classroom, they reverted back to their ways.
Adult 17	My class have been in the control group and have not had increased time outside	My class have been in the control group	I have not been involved in Forest School	I have not been involved in Forest School	Yes	I have not been involved but do question the need for outdoor learning during extreme weather conditions especially when it is bitterly cold (sub-zero) or during heavy rainfall.
Adult 18	Yes - I can see a positive difference in their social and	Yes	I have completed the expected one Forest	Yes	Yes	It can be difficult to complete tasks outside if they are paper-based -

	emotional development		School and one taught curriculum lesson outdoors weekly			presentation can suffer. We have tried to be creative with this, but there are particular pupils within the class who find it difficult to maintain 'classroom rules' when they are learning outside. However, this has improved over the term and I feel that if they had always accessed learning outside (other than outdoor learning), this would not be viewed so much as a novelty and behaviour standards would be easier to maintain. Although we have completed outdoor lessons each week, the weather can impact this and it is useful to have flexibility around this.
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## **Forest School style learning Governor's Visit Report**

**Class and teacher: Class E (15 mins) and Class I (45 mins) with Rosie Hatchman**

**Focus: The impact of Forest School style learning on behaviour and attendance**

**Method: Pupil and staff voice, governor observations**

The governor gathered pupil and staff voice through two outdoor learning sessions in the school copse in order to evaluate the impact of such sessions on behaviour, engagement, and attendance.

### **Session 1:**

- Pupils participated in a focused talk circle, where they were able to clearly articulate their feelings about outdoor learning.
- Responses highlighted positive emotional impacts, including feeling “safe around the fire”, “happy”, and that “being in nature makes me feel safe”.
- Pupils shared enjoyment of activities such as playing with peers and creative tasks (e.g. making mud cupcakes).
- Some pupils reflected on improved wellbeing, with one noting they “felt sad at lunch but felt happy in the copse”.
- Pupil voice evidenced positive social development, including comments such as “I played with someone new today”.
- All pupils were fully engaged, demonstrating 100% focus, strong eye contact, and active participation through volunteering contributions.

### **Session 2:**

- A second group of pupils demonstrated a clear sense of excited anticipation when entering the copse environment.
- All pupils listened carefully and gave full attention to Health and Safety instructions.
- All pupils spoken to reported that they enjoy coming to school on outdoor learning days, describing the experience as “fun” and engaging.
- Two thirds of the group chose to sit around the campfire, patiently waiting for it to be lit and taking turns to toast marshmallows.
- During this time, pupils demonstrated positive communication, including sharing advice on how to toast marshmallows and discussing prior similar experiences.
- Pupils were observed to be highly supportive of one another, demonstrating

strong peer to peer relationships and sustained engagement.

- The teacher and teaching assistant commented on how calm, quiet, and focused the class were throughout the session.
- Pupils articulated that they feel safe in the copse because they understand how to keep themselves and others safe.
- All pupils questioned stated that time in the copse is the best part of their week.
- Staff reported strong cooperation skills, respectful relationships, and increased social mixing between pupils who would not usually interact.
- Staff further noted that pupils appeared more relaxed and “free” in the outdoor environment, with improvements in wellbeing transferring positively back into the classroom.

#### **Overall governor evaluation:**

- Evidence from both sessions demonstrates that outdoor learning has a strong positive impact on pupil engagement, behaviour, wellbeing, and relationships.
- Pupil voice indicates increased motivation to attend school on outdoor learning days.
- Staff observations suggest that the benefits of outdoor learning extend beyond the sessions themselves, contributing to improved behaviour and learning attitudes in the classroom.

**Lizzie Knights 23.3.26**