

### 3. Stepping Out: Valuing the Outdoors

Version 1: June 2020

*Establishing belief in the importance of **being** outside, trust that **learning** happens well in the outdoors, and commitment of increasing the **amount of time** and the **quality of experiences** children can access in the outdoor environment is a slow and long-term process that requires wide-ranging support, on-going energy and lots of small steps of success. White & Edwards (2018, p3)<sup>1</sup>*

#### It's all about

As early years practitioners, we need to value the essential and special nature of outdoors. Outdoor provision needs *equal status, equal time and equal thinking to indoor provision*. This means we need to reflect upon our personal values, beliefs and motivation in order to ensure each and every one of us plays our part in making our outdoor practice the best it can be. There are a suite of national guidance documents that emphasise the value of outdoor play. These can be accessed at <https://creativestarning.co.uk/international/significant-scottish-outdoor-learning-and-play-documents/>

#### Why does it matter

Our values, beliefs and motivation underpin our professional approach, that is what we do and why we do it. If we do not wholeheartedly support outdoor play, then it is much more challenging to develop high quality outdoor practice. Accessing the outdoors may require staff in some settings to be innovative around overcoming the perceived and actual barriers. It is important in these instances that a solution-focused approach that values tricky situations as learning opportunities is adopted and that staff look to other examples of how similar issues have been overcome.

#### Rights of a child

The Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan has the overarching outcome for early learning and childcare that states:

*“All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis... By its very nature ‘high quality’ is difficult to define, and will look different in different circumstances and locations. However, in terms of the provision of play opportunities and environments, in general we might expect ‘high quality opportunities’ to happen when: the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are put into practice, the environment provides stimulus for play to flourish and if adults are involved, they work to established ethical and professional standards.”*



<sup>1</sup> White, J. & Edwards, L. (2018) *Valuing the Outdoors Muddy Faces* <https://muddyfaces.co.uk/product/valuing-the-outdoors-by-jan-white-and-liz-edwards/>

### Further reading and helpful starting points

- Davy, A. (2019) *A Sense of Place: Mindful Practice Outdoors*, Featherstone. Chapter 5 explores practitioners' values in an accessible and friendly way that is all about high quality early years outdoor practice. It also considers children's values and beliefs about themselves, others and the environment. An important point to note is that values are not fixed. They change *as we are influenced by other people, experiences and environments. What children encounter in their early years will share the framework of their values for life* (Davy, 2019, p65)
- Holmes, T. et al (2011) *The Common Cause Handbook*, Public Interest Research Centre. This can be downloaded for free from <https://publicinterest.org.uk/the-common-cause-handbook/> It is helpful in that it considers the totality of values common to being human, both intrinsic and extrinsic. In our education system, often there is conflict between the two and finding our way in order to meet the needs of our children is essential in the work we do.
- White, J. & Edwards, L. (2018) *Valuing the Outdoors* and *Putting Values into Practice* Muddy Faces. These booklets make useful reading for a whole staff and are the start of a series called "Opening up the Outdoors."

*It is undeniable that daily, high quality outdoor play experiences have a direct and positive impact on children's physical, cognitive, social, mental health and emotional development. Realising the Ambition, p54*



### 3.1 Staff values and ethos

Overarching QIs: 1.2, 1.4 HSCS: 3.14, 3.19, 4.27

*Young children need all the adults around them to understand why outdoor play provision is essential for them, and adults who are committed and able to make its potential available to them. White & Edwards (2018)<sup>2</sup>*

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a team<sup>3</sup>, not all of us understand the distinct value of playing and learning outdoors. We do not know or have limited understanding of how to use and adapt the outdoors and create rich opportunities for play-based learning.</li> <li>We are unsure about our role in co-creating learning experiences with children outside. We have only a few, if any examples of this happening.</li> <li>We have yet to fully understand when to interact<sup>4</sup> and when to step back and observe and interpret the play that happens outside.</li> <li>We do not yet perceive the outdoors as a learning environment. It's a break from learning indoors.</li> <li>Almost all us have a superficial understanding of the environment and our responsibility to care and protect nature and the world around us. Our gestures are mainly tokenistic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a team, most of us understand the distinct value of playing and learning outdoors. We beginning to use and adapt the outdoors to create some rich opportunities for play-based learning.</li> <li>We are developing our role in co-creating learning experiences with children outside and are beginning to document or are able to show living examples of this.</li> <li>We mostly understand when interact and when to step back and observe and interpret the play that happens outside.</li> <li>We continue to place greater value on what happens inside but our beliefs and practice are showing a clear shift.</li> <li>Most of us have a reasonable understanding of the environment and our responsibility to care and protect nature and the world around us. This is reflected in our daily work outside.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a team, we understand the distinct value of playing and learning outdoors. We are skilled at using and adapting the outdoors to provide many rich opportunities for play-based learning.</li> <li>We are confident about our role in co-creating learning experiences with children outside. There are many documented or living examples of this happening.</li> <li>We fully understand when to interact and when to step back and observe and interpret the play that happens outside.</li> <li>We perceive the outdoors as an essential learning environment and can demonstrate how we give this equal value to our indoor provision.</li> <li>Almost all us have a deep understanding of the environment and our responsibility to care for and protect nature and the world around us. This is reflected in our thoughts and behaviours as well as in our interactions with children.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> White, J. & Edwards, L. (2018) *Valuing the Outdoors* Muddy Faces <https://muddyfaces.co.uk/product/valuing-the-outdoors-by-jan-white-and-liz-edwards/>

<sup>3</sup> Childminders can ask this of themselves directly, if lone workers. For ELC settings with more than one person, it is important that the whole team value outdoor provision and actively contributes to improving this.

<sup>4</sup> *Remember that your interactions with the child are a key aspect of the learning environment. Carefully consider when to step in and when to step back – this is a skill even the most experienced of us can often misjudge!* RtA, p65

## 3.2 Staff's skills, knowledge and understanding of outdoor provision

Overarching QIs: 1.2, 1.4 HSCS: 3.14, 3.19, 4.27

See also Section 10: Off-site Provision: 7. Staff Competence and Confidence

Many staff have a skillset and training that can be easily adapted to working outside. The leadership team must recognise that ongoing continuous professional learning will be required to further develop the team's knowledge, understanding and skills in outdoor provision and practice.

*When adults are comfortable and at home in the outdoors, they become enthusiastic and attentive co-learners with the children. A supportive leadership team builds confidence, competence and self-belief, enabling practitioners to articulate the philosophy and practices of Natural Play. Staff feel good about themselves, consulted and truly part of the team and are eager to learn about and reflect upon the children and their play outside. White & Edwards (2018, p27)<sup>5</sup>*

*Children and parents should have confidence in the people who support and care for them. If you have an existing staff team who are used to primarily working indoors they may not all be attracted to working outdoors at first. Giving them a broad understanding of what it means to work outdoors, and supporting with the right training, can dispel the myths and transform their confidence and enthusiasm. Out to Play, p77*

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One member of staff has responsibility for developing our outdoor provision. He or she may feel quite isolated or overwhelmed by the amount of work needed doing.</li> <li>Only one person gets to attend an outdoor training event or course, so the rest of us feel unsure about new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst one member of the leadership &amp; management team may have overall responsibility, all staff have responsibilities or specific remits to improve outdoor provision. At the moment the level of improvement and impact is patchy as it depends upon the commitment of the individual.</li> <li>All staff have the opportunity to develop their skills knowledge and understanding of outdoor provision. There is not always sufficient time to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst one member of the leadership &amp; management team may have overall responsibility, all staff have identifiable responsibilities to improve outdoor provision. This is identified through improvement priorities and staff appraisals. This approach has a clear impact both on the quality of outdoor provision and the confidence of staff to facilitate this.</li> <li>We have a system of sharing good practice to keep the whole team informed and involved about outdoor developments at a local and national level.</li> <li>Our staff actively ensure they develop their skills knowledge and understanding of outdoor provision through a variety of approaches such as:</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> White, j. & Edwards, L. (2018) *Putting Values into Practice* Muddy Faces <https://muddyfaces.co.uk/product/putting-values-into-practice-by-jan-white-and-liz-edwards/>



<p>developments or how expectations have changed around outdoor practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media is the predominant source of ideas and information used by staff for improving outdoor provision.</li> <li>• Our children's thoughts and ideas are not given much consideration when we make improvements.</li> </ul>	<p>share and embed what has been learned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media is welcomed as a source of ideas and information. We are making informed judgements as to the quality of the online conversations and judicious in their application. We use national and local guidance on outdoor practice to steer us.</li> <li>• Our staff are learning about how to improve their outdoor provision and practice through their interactions with children, listening to their opinions and acting upon them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading and reflecting upon relevant research, books, national and local guidance, websites and journals and applying what we have read.</li> <li>○ Visits to other ELC establishments to look at specific aspects of outdoor improvements <a href="http://bit.ly/2YKVrMB">http://bit.ly/2YKVrMB</a></li> <li>○ Undertaking small-scale action research on an aspect of outdoor provision.</li> <li>○ Participating in a local pilot project and using this opportunity effectively.</li> <li>○ Working with and alongside outdoor partners in ways that demonstrably improve staff's own skills and ability to effect positive changes.</li> <li>• Our staff ensure that children remain at the heart of all professional development and any improvement fully involves children in a range of participatory approaches. <b>HSCS 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.19. 4.25</b></li> </ul>
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### 3.3 Staff recruitment and induction

Overarching QIs: 1.2, 1.4 HSCS: 4.24, 4.26, 4.27

*Be aware that development requirements may vary considerably, depending on each person's training and experience. Some staff, for example, may have been trained in outdoor play-based learning at the start of their career but have never put it into practice... Where you have staff experienced in outdoors, it may be helpful to set up a formal buddy system ... especially those who might be nervous about working in an outdoor environment. Out to Play, p79*

Ensuring that recruitment and induction processes have a clear emphasis on the value of outdoors can make a substantial difference to the expectations staff have and their understanding of their role in developing high quality outdoor provision.

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have yet to review our recruitment processes to see if we are seeking staff who value the outdoors.</li> <li>• We have yet to undertake a staffing needs analysis.</li> <li>• Our induction procedures for staff include a tour of the outdoor space and checking they have read our outdoor policy and risk benefit assessment. We do not allocate an outdoor role or responsibility until they know what to do inside.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have reviewed our recruitment processes to ensure we attract and recruit staff who genuinely value the outdoors. This includes steps such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Referencing the importance and value of outdoor play in our overarching statement.</li> <li>○ Amending the job description and personal specifications to make outdoor experiences and values desirable.</li> <li>○ Seeking evidence of a track record in professional development for outdoor provision.</li> <li>○ Seeking evidence of how the candidate has actively contributed to making improvement in outdoor provision at their current setting or whilst on placement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As yet, we have not had the opportunity to see if our recruitment processes are effective in hiring the right people.</li> <li>• We have undertaken a staffing needs analysis to map the knowledge, understanding, skills, and qualifications of our staff. This has yet to be used as part of the recruitment or improvement processes.</li> <li>• Our induction procedures now include a greater focus on ensuring our newly-appointed staff feel comfortable working outside but they have yet to be implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our recruitment processes are effective in hiring staff who value outdoor play and have a track record of effectively contributing to outdoor improvements.</li> <li>• We have undertaken a staffing needs analysis to map the knowledge, understanding, skills, and qualifications of our staff. This is used to identify potential recruits who could add value and additional skills to our outdoor provision. It also helps our management to strategically plan improvements to our outdoor provision through identification of the strengths and weaknesses of our staff team.</li> <li>• Our induction procedures support newly recruited staff to acquire specific skills, knowledge or experiences needed to fulfil their role confidently and to a very good standard. The feedback from newly-inducted staff and their effectiveness in their role demonstrates this.</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Planning our outdoor provision

Overarching QIs: 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2

HSCS: 3.12, 4.1, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8,

*We provide both **responsive** and **intentional** learning for children in our day- to-day practice. By this we mean that we constantly respond to the needs of young children alongside planning and implementing intentional experiences to help them develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Responsive and intentional planning approaches start with our observations and interpretations of the baby or young child's actions, emotions and words. This tells us what the child needs for us to provide in their learning environment. A child-centred approach to planning learning will help the child connect each new discovery to what they already know. RtA, p63*

*We respect children when we involve them in planning outdoor play by:*

- *consulting with them about what they think, like, want or need outdoors*
- *listening to their views and choices about outdoor play*
- *giving their views and ideas equal weight and validity and more than our own*
- *treating them with dignity*
- *valuing their individuality*
- *protecting them to the level of their vulnerability but let them take some risks*
- *giving them space, privacy and time to be themselves and to follow their own interests.*



*Meaningful interactions of the kind listed above may mean that adults need to stop and think and make changes to their practices in relation to outdoor play. Adults need to consider whether their actions, in a leadership role, can inadvertently be seen as exercising power over children. Adults may choose not to be outdoors because of the weather, but is that what the children choose? To truly respect children we have to open our minds to the possibilities and the competency of children to lead the choices and decisions. My World Outdoors, p49*



An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have a box on our planning sheets for outdoor play or learning.</li> <li>Our children have a small and/or superficial input into the planning process, e.g. being asked what resources they want outside the next day.</li> <li>We occasionally remember to observe our children playing outside and try to plan next steps from this. Most of our observations focus upon what children are doing inside.</li> <li>We to take account of the seasons and one or two other aspects of outdoor provision such as minibeasts within our planning. If we're honest, it's project-based rather than coming from a child's interests and interactions with the natural world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our planning gives equal consideration to both indoor and outdoor experiences for children.</li> <li>Our children have increasing input into the planning process. We have started to diversify our approaches to ensure our children are involved regardless of their age or developmental ability.</li> <li>We regularly observe children playing outside and feed this into our planning processes. However, the emphasis remains on indoor observations.</li> <li>We are beginning to build on children's observations of and interactions with seasonal changes in nature and their community and cultural celebrations within our planning but it's yet to be fully embedded.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="680 718 1464 1313" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>This is an example of staff brainstorming about extending a child's learning through their passion for running about outside.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our planning gives equal consideration to indoor and outdoor experiences for children. It is based upon a clear curriculum rationale that all spaces are of equal learning value and importance.</li> <li>Our children have a genuine input into the planning process through a range of approaches that match their needs and abilities.</li> <li>Our observations of children outside are central to our planning processes and developing their learning. There is an equal balance of observations that happen outside and in for every child.</li> <li>We take full account of seasonal changes in nature, the garden and community and cultural celebrations as the backbone of our curriculum and planning. This is achieved through observations of children interacting with the environment and seasonal events alongside our knowledge of their community and cultural events.</li> </ul>



### 3.5 Sufficient time outside

Overarching QIs: 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 HSCS: 1.25, 1.32, 2.11, 4.2, 5.18

*Settings should offer flexibility and an appropriate balance of time between indoor and outdoor environments. To ensure this flexibility, we are required to be reflective, solution-focused and continually evaluating our pedagogical practice. Realising the Ambition, p57*

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We don't feel there's enough time to be outside on an equal basis to indoors. We have competing demands on our time, such as going to gym or assemblies, visiting specialists or together time that limit children's opportunities to be outside.</li> <li>We feel hampered by the time it takes to set up our outdoor space in addition to the indoor space.</li> <li>We have yet to reflect and consider how much time children spend outdoors, but we do know that for most children it is less than half the time they are in nursery, especially during the winter months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are aware of how time can impact on the way children experience the environment, outside and in. We have analysed our weekly routines and identified where the stress points exist. We have put in place adaptations or changes to enable children to spend more time outside, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible schedules and routines, such as a choice whether to have snack.</li> <li>Making gym, assemblies and other timetabled activities opt-in for children who show an interest.</li> <li>Ensuring the outdoor space is genuinely available for the whole session (see Section 4: transitions).</li> <li>Requesting visiting specialists to run their (opt-in) sessions outside as well as inside, on an equal basis.</li> <li>Having snack, gathering sessions or together times outside as much as inside.</li> <li>Allowing time for extended explorations that last over days or weeks, e.g. building and playing in a den outside that has been left up.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The atmosphere in our outdoor space is normally calm and unhurried<sup>8</sup>.</li> <li>Children have sufficient time to be creative, problem solve, to think, master skills and to wallow in their play. <b>HSCS 2.27</b></li> <li>The rhythm of the day has a balance of active and quiet times. It provides gentle consistency and security for children.</li> <li>The children's need to spend time playing outdoors is fully recognised by all who work within the ELC establishment. <b>HSCS 1.2, 4.1</b></li> <li>Time is used well. For example, children may sometimes have story or song just before or after lunch rather than interrupting the flow of a session.</li> <li>We continue to survey how much time our children spend outside. We can evidence that almost all children are outside at least 50% of the time on any given day (truly inclement weather, excepted). We support children who are the least inclined to be outside and find creative ways of helping them to acclimatise and have sustained high quality outdoor play experiences. <b>QI 1.1, HSCS 4.25</b></li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> An unhurried environment allows me time to concentrate on whatever catches my attention without being rushed. Rta, p31



*A teddy can be used to find out what children like to do outside or to help them plan and prepare for outdoor experiences*

- Ensuring children have sufficient time, e.g. for woodworking, without having to stop because of time-based turn-taking.
- Providing children with advance notice to prepare for tidying at the end of a session (see Section 4: transitions)
- We have organised our daily routines to enable staff and children to have sufficient time to set up the outdoor space.<sup>6</sup>
- We have undertaken a quantitative survey<sup>7</sup> of how much time our children are spending outside to ensure we have accurate data that reflects where we are at. We have examined the reasons for our results and have sought children's opinions too. We have set targets to improve if it is less than 50%. We have put in place strategies to reach our target but have yet to see how these strategies will impact on our practice.



*Creative outdoor display at Hill of Banchory School Nursery*

<sup>6</sup> One common error is to designate one person or two to set up the outdoor space. Instead, develop whole team strategies where everyone spends 5 minutes setting up outside at the start of the day and then goes inside to set up there. That way all staff are making connections between the indoor and outdoor spaces.

<sup>7</sup> This could include snap shot surveys where the outdoor space is photographed every hour from the same place so that a picture is built up over the course of the day about who is using the space. It could also include a registration board for going outside where children put their photo. This could also be monitored. It is worth discussing children's play preferences with their parent or carer as there could be cultural reasons why a child is not accessing the outdoor space. Other considerations include, how a child is introduced to the outdoor space and talking about feelings and preferences or looking for non-verbal indicators. Is the range of resources and experiences relevant and meaningful for a child. Finally look closely at the routines and transitions involved in getting outside. For example, they may not know how to change into outdoor clothing or it may be off-putting to them. Be patient and sensitive with children, especially those with ASN where it may take a child many months to feel at ease outside.

### 3.6 Our vision, values and aims

Overarching QIs: 1.3, 2.2 HSCS: 1.25, 1.32

*By using nature as a resource for teaching and learning, we can connect to values that are inclusive of all people, as well as values that honour the wider living world on which we all depend. Davy, 2019, p65*

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have no reference to outdoor provision in our vision, value or aims (VVA). We haven't really thought about this.</li> <li>We have an outdoor play policy or statement but it's needing up-dated and/or does not accurately reflect our practice.</li> <li>We have not yet considered if our outdoor space supports our vision, values and aims. It's a new idea.</li> <li>Our entrance area and family rooms do not yet have any displays or indication that we value outdoor play.</li> <li>Our outdoor space feels unwelcoming, unloved and not well cared for.</li> <li>Our outdoor space is not well used, particularly in winter or inclement weather.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have tried to reference the outdoors in our VVA but are not sure how to consult our children and parents on this aspect.</li> <li>We have an outdoor play policy or statement that was put together in consultation with children and parents. It accurately reflects our practice.</li> <li>We have audited our outdoor space against our vision, values and aims. We realised there is some mismatch that we plan to address.</li> <li>Our entrance area and family rooms have a display about outdoor provision but sometimes it is not kept fresh and up-to-date.</li> <li>Our outdoor space is beginning to look welcoming loved and cared for.</li> <li>Although we try and use the outdoor space all year round, we don't always do so, especially in inclement weather or as much in the winter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We take a participatory approach to developing our VVA that involves children and parents. We ensure that the VVA references "outside and in..."</li> <li>All our policies recognise the benefits of outdoor play and reference what happens in outdoor contexts. As a result, we no longer need a specific outdoor play or learning policy or statement.</li> <li>Our outdoor space and how it looks and is used fully supports our vision values and aims. Our children, parents and visitors can see this too.</li> <li>Our entrance area and family rooms clearly emphasise our outdoor ethos and commitment, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The displays are updated frequently.</li> <li>There are outdoor objects and items to look at and explore. These change in line with children's interests during the course of the year.</li> <li>There are up-to-date books and information about our outdoor provision.</li> <li>There are up-to-date leaflets and information that signposts parents to local outdoor events, activities and places to explore.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Our outdoor space is welcoming to children. It invites them to explore, investigate and play outside. <b>HSCS 5.18, 5.20</b></li> <li>It feels loved and cared for by children and staff. It is in a very good state of repair. <b>HSCS 5.17, 5.22</b></li> <li>It is well used in all weathers, all year round.</li> </ul>

### 3.7 Sustainable approaches

Overarching QIs: 2.2, 3.1, 3.3

HSCS: 1.25, 1.32

This is a theme which is referenced in almost all the Stepping Outside documents. The principles and values of learning for sustainability must underpin outdoor provision and be visible to children and practised by staff. It impacts on every part of a setting's outdoor provision,

*Exploring the natural environment goes a long way in teaching sustainability if supported by skilled adults who have good environmental awareness and model behaviours on protecting and promoting good environmental stewardship. Beginning to appreciate, care and love the outdoors inspires children to care for that environment. Enjoying and learning about using their green space responsibly and safely, caring for animals and plants, experiencing seasonal change all help to encourage a connection to the way their world works and how they link to it and ultimately should encourage a young person to consider other users and future generations. Out to Play, p53*

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have not yet thought about sustainable approaches within our outdoor provision.</li> <li>We have heard of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) <a href="http://bit.ly/2z9OI9J">http://bit.ly/2z9OI9J</a> and Vision 2030+ <a href="http://bit.ly/2P79SLj">http://bit.ly/2P79SLj</a> but have not yet thought about how our outdoor provision could help us make a difference.</li> <li>We are not yet aware of permaculture and how its ethics and principles<sup>9</sup> dovetail with learning for sustainability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are developing an awareness of the range of sustainable approaches we can take to developing our outdoor provision and are beginning to embed some of these into our practice.</li> <li>We have explored Learning for Sustainability and the UN SDG and are beginning to adapt our practice to ensure we are as economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.</li> <li>As a staff we have read up about the permaculture principles<sup>10</sup> and ethics and how they could apply to our outdoor provision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have a deep awareness of the range of sustainable approaches we have embedded into our outdoor provision. This is visible to all who visit and is evidenced through the interactions, experiences and spaces that demonstrate the principles and practices of sustainability with our learning environment.</li> <li>Our children are learning through positive hands-on approaches how to care for people, place and wildlife. They demonstrate this in their play and interests.</li> <li>As a staff, we are familiar with Learning for Sustainability and the UN SDG and are able to articulate how we have embedded these into our practice.</li> <li>We are thoroughly familiar with the permaculture ethics and principles. We apply these or similar approaches to our outdoor provision. As a result, our practice is growing increasingly financially, socially and environmentally more sustainable, year-on-year.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> If you search online for "12 Principles of Permaculture, David Holmgren: then you will find these, e.g. <https://permacultureprinciples.com/principles/>

<sup>10</sup> Visit the Children in Permaculture website – lots of free materials, advice and support. <http://childreninpermaculture.com>



### 3.8 Continuous improvement

Overarching QIs: 1.1, 1.3 HSCS: 4.19

*Staff had taken on leadership roles to further developing a number of key areas. This had improved staff knowledge and confidence as well as improving the quality of experience for children. For example, the outdoor area now provided an excellent range of exciting experiences for children to have fun as they explored and learnt. Staff also understood the positive impact on children's emotional wellbeing and resilience of spending time outdoors. They described the benefits that individual children had experienced as a result of the increased opportunities to be outdoor accessing high quality play opportunities.* Insch School Nursery, Care Inspectorate Report, 2018

An unsatisfactory or weak embedding (score 1 or 2)	An adequate to good embedding (score 3 or 4)	A very good embedding (score 5 or 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We occasionally put outdoor provision on our improvement plan, as a one-off improvement. We feel it is one of many competing priorities.</li> <li>We have yet to consider the impact of our efforts or what we want to achieve when outdoor learning or play is an improvement priority.</li> <li>We do not systematically engage children with the improvement process at a developmentally appropriate level or their parents and carers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We often, but not always, have outdoor provision featured on our improvement plan.</li> <li>We have started to baseline our outdoor provision and where we are at. We have clear measurable objectives for what we want to achieve based upon our vision, values and aims. As a result, we are better able to articulate the impact of our efforts.</li> <li>We always try to involve the children and their parents and carers in our improvements, but not always with success.</li> <li>Our approaches to quality assurance focuses solely on people. The place elements of our practice are not included yet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our outdoor provision is always included in our improvement plans, year on year even if it is not a specific priority in its own right.</li> <li>We always consider how our outdoor provision can benefit from other improvement foci and vice versa. This means it no longer competes with other priorities but complements and extends almost all of them.</li> <li>The impact of our improvements to our outdoor provision is always clearly baselined and evidenced, using improvement methodology that works in an outdoor context.</li> <li>Our children and families are almost always actively involved and their views heard and taken account of when undertaking improvements to our outdoor provision. We use a mosaic of approaches<sup>11</sup> to ensure children can contribute regardless of their age of developmental abilities. <b>HSCS 4.6, 4.7, 4.8</b></li> <li>We have embedded how we care for and actively manage our spaces, including off-site spaces and the impact of our efforts into our quality assurance procedures.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> For more information, have a read of Clark (2017) Listening to Young Children: A Guide to Understanding and Using The Mosaic Approach (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). This helps you consider a range of approaches to seeking children's perspectives which include taking account of non-verbal communication and the need to use a range of techniques to build up a complete picture.