

**INTEGRATING CHILD-LED AND ADULT-LED ACTIVITIES IN THE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT: A PRACTITIONER RESEARCH STUDY**

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**A group of people walking through a forest

Description automatically generated with low confidence**

**Abstract**

This thesis aims to explore the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years. It calls on contemporary interpretations of sociocultural theories, focussing particularly on pedagogical relationships between adults and children. It investigates the content and characteristics of the child/adult interactions in three different age-groups, 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds.

This is an interpretive research study carried out by a practitioner researcher drawing on qualitative ethnographic methods. The data were collected using video recordings, and semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents. It is a case study of provision and practice in a single nursery school carried out by the teacher as researcher.

This research explores the model of integrated pedagogical approaches (Wood,

2010) and shows how effectively it can work in practice to extend children’s learning in outdoor environments. The model is developed to indicate the dynamic flow of curriculum planning. Knowledge about children’s experiences and their learning is conceptualised and categorised, from the children’s interests, funds of knowledge, funds of identity and working theories, and from Early Years Foundation Stage goals. The research shows how the interests of the children were extended and developed into deep learning experiences through integrated pedagogical approaches. It is argued that building a curriculum through children’s interests can be achieved through the integration of child-led and adult-led activities and can lead to high levels of motivation and enjoyment in learning across each age group. The research highlights the importance of play, social relationships, and the mediation of learning, with examples of sustained shared thinking. The pedagogical relationships between adults and children also show high levels of intuition, empathy, respect and understanding. These attitudes help the children to develop trust and openness which, in turn, enrich learning through social encounters in the outdoor environment.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**1.1 Introduction to the chapter**

The introduction sets out the thesis plan and the overall aims of the research. First, there is an outline of the thesis’ context and of the value of the outdoor environment as the setting for the research. The research investigates the value of integrated pedagogy and its potential for supporting children’s learning in the early years. Next, the research question and the research aims are outlined. Then the personal motivation for this study and its contribution to a body of knowledge are discussed. Finally, the organisation of the thesis is outlined.

**1.2 Thesis outline and theoretical foundations for the thesis**

This thesis is based on a practitioner research study about integrating child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments in the early years in Woodharp Nursery School. ‘Woodharp’ is a pseudonym for the actual nursery school. It is a case study of provision and practice because the data collected comes from the activities carried out in one nursery school. Considering pedagogy and outdoor play in the early years, Waller argues that: ‘A clear pedagogy for the use of the outdoors as a site for learning has not been established and … there has been relatively little research on what actually happens in outdoor environments’ (Waller, 2007, p.1). My research focuses specifically on integrated pedagogy in the outdoor environment to address this gap. Throughout the review of literature, it was clear that early years practitioners sometimes struggle with how to resolve the dilemma between child-led and adult-directed education. The result is that the two are separated and child-led activity takes place whilst practitioners are doing other, possibly ‘more valuable’, activities. Integrated pedagogy, the subject of my research, potentially goes some way to solving this problem and offering a new way forward in supporting children’s learning in the early years.

**1.3 Research question and research aims**

**The research question**

What is the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years?

**The research aims**

I aim to break new ground by researching the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in three different age groups in a unique outdoor environment. The children who are taking part in the research are 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds. I aim to investigate the content and characteristics of the child/adult interactions and the outcomes for learning. Learning outcomes are understood from the children’s perspective, and from what the adults learn about their roles and the provision. These perspectives combine to provide a deeper understanding of integrated pedagogical approaches. I also aim to explore the ways in which the learning outcomes for children are different across the age groups in the setting of the outdoor environment at the nursery school where the research is located. This is breaking new ground because of the combination of integrated pedagogy, diverse age-groups of children and the outdoor environment in and around Woodharp Nursery School. This combination of features is unique to this research.

**1.4 Personal motivation for this study**

I started working with 3-year-old and 4-year-old children in 1988, after having my own two sons in 1981 and 1984. I was a qualified teacher and had taught in a reception class for a short time. When my youngest son was 4 years old, a group of his friends and other friends of friends gathered in my kitchen and outside in the garden once or twice a week and we explored an educational journey together. From these small beginnings, a nursery school grew and developed. I have been working in this setting for over 30 years and have also been interested in pursuing academic studies along the way. It is interesting to step back from the work in which I am immersed and see it from a theoretical perspective. I was especially interested in Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy, and in exploring this model through my research (Wood, 2010). Wood argues that ‘practitioners can harness the qualities of play by developing integrated pedagogical approaches, which combine the benefits of adult-directed and child-initiated activities’ (Wood, 2010, p. 20). Qualitative research methods and more specifically, practitioner research drawing on ethnographic methods, provides an ideal conceptual framework for my research study for investigating the potential of integrated pedagogy for supporting children’s learning in outdoor environments. I am aiming to explore new insights that might arise through my research and could be put into practise in any early years setting, especially those using outdoor environments. To some extent, I am seeking to join theory and practice in new ways in early years education, whilst also taking account of the policy context. The originality lies in the exploration of integrated pedagogy in this setting.

**1.5 Contribution to a body of knowledge**

Through my case study I aim to contribute to a body of knowledge in early years education. Although my research is specific to the setting in which I am a practitioner, Woodharp Nursery School, and involves only a small number of children, I would argue that the findings could be relevant to all practitioners in early years, in England, who are interested in expanding their understanding of integrated pedagogy, and how developing and expanding learning opportunities can be achieved through this approach. My research highlights a sociocultural approach to education based on relationships and developing understandings between adults and children. It resonates with recent research carried out by Hedges (2020) who explores funds of knowledge, funds of identity and children’s interests and agency in her development of sociocultural theory. Hedges and Cooper (2018) also highlight the value of relational play-based pedagogy as a core practice in early childhood education. Focusing on policy contexts, Wood and Hedges (2016) address questions about curriculum theory and practice in early childhood education and the value of working theories as a way to include social pedagogic and academic goals while continuing to value children’s play. These sociocultural theories are expanded later. In addition, my research highlights the value of the outdoor environment as more than just a place in which to locate activities. The garden, local off-road paths, the wood, the river and the reedbed become important material elements in influencing children’s interests, choices, and learning, as well as providing rich natural resources that adults can access as they plan and develop activities. Therefore, the research also contributes to a body of knowledge about how the outdoor environment can be used to inspire and provide resources for an integration of child-led and adult-directed learning.

**1.6 Organisation of the thesis**

The thesis follows a structure of:

* Chapter 1: Introduction
* Chapter 2: Literature Review
* Chapter 3: Research Methodology
* Chapter 4: Generating the Thematic Framework
* Chapter 5: Data Analysis
* Chapter 6: Discussion
* Chapter 7: An Expanded Model of Integrated Pedagogical Approaches
* Chapter 8: Conclusion

**Literature review**

The literature review starts with the historical background to child-led and adult-led activities and interactions in inside and outside environments. This is important because questions about who is leading those interactions and what role adults should take, go back to the foundations of early years education. Then there is a critical consideration of the effects of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014) on provision and practice. Following this, the integration of child-led and adult-led activities is considered in some detail because the outworking of this, is the focus of my research. Finally, research into learning in the outdoor environment is considered because this is the setting for my research.

**Research methodology**

In the section on research methodology, different theoretical perspectives and epistemologies are considered. The nature of practitioner research is discussed in relation to ethnography, and the use of the case study is explained. The research methods are outlined and ethical issues about practitioner research and about having children as participants, are considered.

**Thematic framework**

I am using reflexive thematic analysis to code and sort my data. The thematic framework sets out the framework for analysing the data that has been collected through video observations of child/adult interactions over 4 months

and explains some of the theoretical rationale behind this framework.

Acting as a practitioner researcher, I applied codes and selected themes from the data and then modified them as I engaged with the data.

Braun and Clarke say:

Themes do not passively ‘emerge’ from data but are actively produced by the researcher through their systematic engagement with, and all they bring to, the dataset. (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 8)

As a practitioner researcher, using ethnographic methods I am, on the one hand, an ‘insider’ collecting the data, and then an ‘outsider’ using researcher reflexivity to systematically engage with the data by identifying codes and themes. I decide which themes to prioritise over others and, in this sense, the themes are not ‘emerging’ so much as being identified by me as I familiarise myself with the data. During this process I keep an open mind as to where the research journey will lead.

At times I found it difficult to separate my own prior perspectives from the evidence provided by the data, but my role as practitioner researcher required me to work as an ‘outsider’ as well as an ‘insider’ in the research process.

**Data analysis**

As I studied the data it became clear that the outdoor environment has an important role to play in influencing children’s choices and the themes reflect this, more than I initially expected. The data selected for analysis is lengthy because it effectively shows the nature of the interactions between the children and the adults. I applied thematic analysis to the data, choosing codes and themes out of the data. The codes selected give insights into how the integration of child-led and adult-led activities work in each theme and give information about the learning that is taking place. The outdoor environment is the setting for all the activities. What stands out through all the themes is the provision of resources in this environment and the opportunities it provides for deepening children’s experiences of the natural world and firing their imaginations. The layering of inductive and deductive understandings in the analysis sheds light on the adults’ understanding of children’s learning. The adults’ understandings of children’s learning are also affected by sociocultural influences.

**Discussion**

In the discussion chapter, the research question is reconsidered in the light of evidence that has been presented in the analysis of data. First integrated pedagogy is examined, in relation to natural elements and historical and sociocultural perspectives. The importance of the influence of Vygotsky (1978) as a founder of sociocultural theory is considered. The theoretical perspectives are related to the data collected in the research. Then there is a discussion about how the data collected during the research relates to the model of integrated pedagogy developed by Wood (2010). Next, children’s learning, in the research study, is discussed and the relationship of learning to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) goals and wider perspectives is studied. Finally, there is a discussion about the impact of the outdoor environment in this research and a short review of the research methods used.

**An expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches**

In this section, I present a new model of integrated pedagogy that develops the existing one by Wood (2010) that I have explored in my thesis. It adds a third dimension to the model and expands it to take account of sociocultural influences on children’s and adults’ choices as well as shared planning and reflection.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion presents a summary of the findings of the thesis. The effectiveness of the research methodology is highlighted, together with the suitability of the children as participants in this research. The potential for supporting children’s learning through the model of integrated pedagogy (Wood, 2010) practised in this research in the outdoor environment is considered. The findings of this research also reflect the practice of sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009), and the sociocultural theories of funds of knowledge (Hedges & Cooper, 2016), funds of identity (Hedges, 2020), and working theories (Lovatt & Hedges, 2015). The content and characteristics of the child/adult interactions and outcomes for learning in this research for the 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds are highlighted. The findings of the research show the relevance of developing the curriculum through the children’s interests, with integrated pedagogy, rather than by the overdependence on EYFS goals. Finally, the implications of the research for the future are considered.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

**2.1 Introduction to the chapter**

**A Narrative**

One day, a child who has been playing in the garden starts bringing some interesting leaves to a table and arranging them. An adult who is watching this activity becomes curious. The leaves are all from the same tree but are different sizes. They are pretty, fern-like leaves. Together, the adult and the child arrange the leaves according to size creating both a pattern and a lovely picture. They spend a long time on this activity with the child collecting more and more leaves. Soon the table is covered with a beautiful display of leaves all ordered according to size. The child and the adult have both been active in deciding where the leaves should go, on the table. The adult takes a photograph to record the activity. The child is evidently happy with the result. This activity has been led by the child who has then been joined by the adult who interacts with the child in extending the activity, together, without the adult taking over. It moves from play to a more structured, playful activity that has been initially led by the child. The question of who is leading the activity and what kind of learning is taking place is at the heart of this research study.

**2.2 How the chapter is organised**

First, I look at the historical background of early childhood education and its influences on integrated pedagogy. Next, I discuss the effects of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework (DfE, 2014) on children’s learning and on child-led and adult-directed approaches. Then, different kinds of integrated approaches in early years education are considered with a particular focus on Wood’s model of integrated pedagogical approaches. Finally, I focus on the potential of the outdoor environment as a context for learning and pedagogy.

**2.3 A historical background to child-led and adult-led activities in inside and outside environments**

The current research is contextualised in the historical background to early years education in England. There exists a variety of different approaches to how adults can best interact with children to enhance their learning experience, and many of the debates about this resonate in contemporary research.

Hughes (2010) asserts that one of the most influential philosophers of the 17th century was John Locke (1632-1704). Hughes says: ‘Locke was representative of 17th century thinking in his belief that each child is a unique and valuable human being whose developmental needs must be recognized by adults’ (Hughes, 2010, p. 13). However, according to Hughes (2010), Locke regarded children’s minds as blank slates on which the knowledge, beliefs and ideas of adults could be written, mainly through adult-directed instruction. Hughes says: ‘Locke made it clear that work, rationality and discipline were the central ingredients in a child’s optimal development’ (Hughes, 2010, p. 14). It was the responsibility of adults to deliver these ingredients. Play was regarded as a distraction to be discouraged rather than as part of the educational process. Hughes (2010) claims that John Locke’s ideas, along with the Protestant beliefs of the day, favouring respect and discipline, were responsible for a strong bias towards adult-directed education for young children in England in the 17th and 18th centuries. This was a predominantly adult-led approach to learning, albeit one in which children and their educational needs were valued. Outdoor activities were largely regarded as breaks from formal learning and were seen as having no intrinsic value.

From the nineteenth century onwards, ideas about the education of young children were changing and developing. Pestalozzi saw education as the means of giving ‘true liberty of heart and mind, without which no other liberty can be enjoyed’ (Guimps, 1890, p. 420). He believed that children should find out things for themselves and become independent thinkers. Pestalozzi was one of the first pioneers of child-led education.

Froebel believed that children should develop in harmony with nature and should have plenty of access to the outdoor environment in order to do this. Froebel described a child-led task in an outdoor environment:

Behold, again, the child laboriously stooping and slowly going forward on the ground, under the eaves of the roof. The force of the rain has washed out of the sand small, smooth, bright pebbles, and the ever-observing child gathers them as building-stones, as it were, as material for future building. And is he wrong? Does not the child, in truth, collect material for his future life-building? Like things must here be ranged together, things unlike must be separated (Froebel, 1885, pp. 72, 73).

Froebel believed that natural elements had intrinsic educational value. He maintained: ‘The child’s need to make use of the most pliable and delicate material in his creative work is in accordance with the activity and phenomena of Nature which creates from light, air, water, earth and dust’ (Lilley,1967, p.115). Froebel had a holistic approach to early years education in which the outdoor environment played a central role and in which child-led activities predominated (Lilley,1967).

Steiner believed that a child should be viewed holistically, by adults who have insight into the nature of mankind:

For a long time now, it has been usual to hear in educational circles that this or that method should be used in teaching. Very frequently the training of teachers consists of little beyond the assimilation of certain rules and theories as to the treatment of the child. This, however, will never make the teacher fully aware of the greatness of the task which he cannot approach with true devotion unless he has a deep insight into the whole nature of man as body, soul and Spirit (Steiner, 1928, p.117).

Steiner advocated immersing children in an enriching environment with loving, supportive, and honest adults. He regarded play as a complex activity requiring ‘true insight into the nature of the child’ on the part of the adult (Steiner,1928, p. 129). He considered that young children learned through imitation of the environment around them and should be free from coercion.

If in education we coerce the impulses of human nature, if we do not know how to leave this nature free but wish to interfere on our part, then we injure the organism of the child for the whole of its later earthly life (Steiner,1928, p. 120).

From contemporary perspectives, this may seem an extreme statement, but it emphasises Steiner’s strong commitment to respecting children’s choices, in a stimulating environment, supported by insightful adults.

The significance of the outdoor environment for children’s health and well-being was emphasised in the twentieth century. Margaret McMillan wanted to bring about social reform through nursery education. Bradburn argues:

She (Rachel), with Margaret, saw good health as a prerequisite of education and both of them longed for children of every class to have the benefits of schooling. This concern made them open their minds to the creation of a new kind of school, an open-air school for children under five years of age (Bradburn, 1976, p. 34).

In her open-air school, McMillan sought to widen children’s experiences as well as providing a healthier environment. McMillan wanted children to have integrated, stimulating experiences, to see changing seasons, feel the earth and eat the vegetables (Bradburn, 1976). McMillan advocated a mix of child-led and adult-led activities and describes a form of integration when she says: ‘staff were expected to interact with all the children, not just to supervise their play’ (Bradburn, 1976, p. 95).

Susan Isaacs, another pioneering innovator, believed in giving children freedom rather than structure, plenty of space inside and outdoors and no fixed curriculum. In a biography of Isaacs, Gardner says:

She led them (other early years practitioners) to realise the seriousness of the child’s interest in solving problems and the reality of his [sic.] thinking when engaged in spontaneous play, and also to appreciate the intensity of the young child’s feelings and the reality of their emotional needs (Gardner, 1969, p. 73).

Isaacs encouraged children to express their feelings and sort out social disagreements for themselves, to engage in imaginative play unhindered by adult interference and to be outdoors as much as possible. Isaac’s approach was strongly child-led but with adults on hand to step in when needed to support and help.

Maria Montessori was a pioneer, originally working in a poor inner-city area in Rome, with children who had special needs and disabilities. She used structured resources to develop skills. She supported the idea of open access from indoors to outdoors according to children’s own choices (Tovey, 2007). Montessori’s ideas represented a form of integration of child-led and adult-led activities as children had a choice of which materials they wanted to use and for how long. While a child was engaged in an activity, Montessori believed that an adult should not interfere. She argued that an adult who helped a child unnecessarily was hindering his or her development (Wentworth,1998).

John Dewey was a pioneer of progressive, child-centred education. He highlighted the need for children to have ‘hands on’ experience in order to learn and for the curriculum to be more open, holistic and experiential. He said:

Again, we cannot overlook the importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got with nature at first hand, with real things and materials, with the actual processes of their manipulation, and the knowledge of their social necessities and uses (Dewey,1956, p. 11).

Dewey believed that children should be free to choose their own activities with minimal adult involvement. He supported children’s ownership of their play and learning (Dewey,1956). As Wood argues, these ideas were significant because:

Progressivism created new ideas about the nature of childhood, how children learn and develop and the developmental process of building knowledge. Education was conceptualised not as something that is done to the child, but as a complex process within which the child is an active participant, through agency, choice, control and ownership of play or project work (Wood, 2013, p. 3).

Tovey (2007) highlights the vision and work of Marjorie Allen. Lady Allen was instrumental in bringing adventure or ‘junk’ playgrounds to Britain. She maintained that young children needed outdoor spaces with loose materials so that they could be adventurous and creative. Allen promoted child-led activities, with adults providing the environment and then standing back to encourage children to become independent problem solvers, only intervening when necessary.

Most of the early pioneers above gave high priority to outdoor environments and contact with nature, in their ideas of an ideal space for children to play and learn. Froebel talked about children being ‘in harmony with nature’ (Lilley, 1967); Steiner felt that children needed a ‘natural’ environment to learn (Steiner, 1928); McMillan founded the first ‘open-air nursery school’ (Bradburn, 1976); Isaacs encouraged children to be outside ‘as much as possible’ (Gardner, 1969); Montessori pioneered ‘open access from indoors to outdoors’ (Wentworth, 1998); Dewey considered that children should have acquaintance with nature at ‘first hand’ (Dewey, 1956); and Allen set her adventure playgrounds outdoors. These historical roots give validity to the choice of the outdoor environment for this research study.

The ideas of these early pioneers, from the nineteenth century onwards, connect through valuing the benefits of the learning in outdoor environments through play and child-led activities, and their emphasis on the importance of free play and encouraging children to become independent thinkers. They generally support the holistic development of children. They deviate in their ideas about how adults should interact with children, some favouring a ‘laissez-faire’ approach and minimal adult input, others advocating different forms of adult involvement and setting up of resources. Their different practises arose from their own varied historical backgrounds and values. For example, Froebel was a German educator and a student of Pestalozzi. Their ideas spread and changed the course of early years education through their belief that children’s freely chosen play was the highest expression of human development in childhood. McMillan and Montessori were both advocates of early years education for the poor and vulnerable. They played a significant role in social and educational reform in Britain and Italy in the late 19th and early 20th century (DuCharme,1992). Marjorie Allen advocated the creation of ‘junk playgrounds’ so that children could find safe outdoor spaces to play in, after the Second World War.

Conflicting messages about the role of adults in children’s play and about how children learn through play are not a modern dilemma but have been present in the history of play and early years education (Wood, 2013). The current research study aims to shed new light in this area where the intentions, interests, and choices of children of different ages merge with adults’ desire to support children’s learning and development.

In recent years, as the measurement and assessment of learning has become embedded in government policy in the UK and internationally, confusing messages have emerged where play is highly valued on the one hand while being sabotaged by the need to meet prescribed goals and targets on the other. Some of the issues raised by the EYFS documents and guidance for England will now be considered.

**2.4 Early Years Foundation Stage Framework**

In this section, the 2014 version of the EYFS framework will be examined, especially in relation to references to the balance of child-led and adult-led activities. The EYFS statutory framework, published in March 2014, has been mandatory for all early years providers in England since 1st September 2014. The document makes it clear that no early years providers are exempt, including all private nurseries and childminders: ‘Early years childminder agencies are also under a duty to have regard to the EYFS in the exercise of their functions’ (DfE, 2014, p. 4). The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) carries out regular inspections to check that all providers are working within the EYFS statutory framework. The implementation of this framework poses a number of questions for practitioners: How does the statutory framework reconcile the need to promote the freedom and spontaneity of children’s play and learning, and at the same time monitor the effectiveness of early years settings in the light of government standards, goals, and targets? How freely can practitioners interpret the suggestions for good practice in the EYFS and find their own balance of child-led and adult-led activities, within the framework? Is it still possible for practitioners to be innovative, creative, and experimental within early years education as were the pioneers mentioned above?

The EYFS document states that the EYFS ‘… promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s school readiness and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life’ (DfE, 2014, p. 5). This statement implies that education is something that is ‘done to’ children rather than a shared learning journey in which children may take the initiative. It has echoes of the thinking of John Locke rather than that of the later pioneers who valued child-led play.

The 2014 version of the EYFS statutory framework has been used from the start of this research. The 2014 document, in England, requires that children make progress towards specified early learning goals with assessment arrangements for measuring this progress. The exact wording of the ‘requirements’ is as follows:

The EYFS learning and development requirements comprise:

• the seven areas of learning and development and the educational programmes (described below);

• the early learning goals, which summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children should have gained by the end of the Reception year; and

• the assessment requirements (when and how practitioners must assess children’s achievements, and when and how they should discuss children’s progress with parents and/or carers) (DfE, 2014, p. 7).

Because these requirements tend to encourage more intervention from adults and less freedom for children, practitioners struggle to maintain integrated approaches. ‘Play’ is in danger of being subverted from the freedom for children to choose their activities and to be in control of the process, the position supported by the pioneers of early years education, to ‘play’ activities devised and controlled by adults to meet prescribed goals and targets. The assessment process further strengthens the adult agenda since what is being assessed is progress towards the prescribed early learning goals determined by the EYFS.

For example, one of the suggested observations of ‘Physical Development’ in the 30–50-month age-group from the ‘Development Matters’ document is: “Walks downstairs, two feet to each step while carrying a small object”

(Early Education, 2012, p. 24). If practitioners cannot find any examples of children spontaneously carrying out this activity there is a temptation for adults to set it up, with the sole purpose of ticking the box. This does not come under the heading of ‘educational play’, since contrived in this way, the activity is not play at all, but a target-driven adult-led activity. Of course, the development of children’s physical coordination and control is important and there are probably many examples in child-led play where this development is happening. The problem lies in the over-prescriptive guidance towards fulfilling an early learning goal which militates against child-led learning through play, or learning through an interesting, playfully approached, adult-led activity. Pyle and Danniels identify this problem in current pedagogy:

Current research emphasises a narrow definition of play-based learning as a child-directed practice, resulting in teacher uncertainty about the implementation of this pedagogical approach (Pyle & Danniels, 2017, p. 274).

Definitions of play are complex. Some of the characteristics of play are described by Wood, drawing on the work of Garvey (1991) and Meckley (2002):

1. Play is child-chosen
2. Play is child-invented
3. Play is pretend but done as if the activity were real
4. Play focuses on the doing (process not product)
5. Play is done by the players (children) not the adults (teachers or parents)
6. Play requires active involvement
7. Play is fun

(Wood, 2013, p. 6,7 Fig 1.1)

Wood also summarises some children’s definitions of play:

Children’s definitions of play focus on their choices (rather than adults’ choices), their activities (rather than adults’ instrumental objectives), and their freedom (rather than adults’ expectations and directions). (Wood, 2013, p. 11)

Lilley uses Frobel’s definition of play:

Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling – an expression which his [sic.] inner life requires. It promotes enjoyment, satisfaction, serenity, and constitutes the source of all that can benefit the child. (Lilley, 1967, p. 84)

The EYFS learning and development requirements have been influencing practitioners away from the kind of child-led play described above, in favour of adult-directed activities. Practitioners continue to experience conflict between following principles of play and working towards targets and goals in the EYFS. It is difficult to observe children fulfilling all the EYFS goals through child-led play. Hence there are numerous documents, both statutory and advisory, that give detailed guidance and advice on adult-led intervention and planning. On the other hand, the suggested goals for children to meet are not designed as a tick box activity but as guidance towards good practice. If practitioners follow the broad principles of the EYFS there is, in theory, some freedom for them to encourage child-led activities. The EYFS advice given for practitioners working with the youngest children is that they should ‘focus strongly’ on the three prime areas of learning (DfE, 2014, p.9). These are ‘Communication and Language’, ‘Physical Development’ and ‘Personal, Social and Emotional Development’. This advice encourages an adult-led agenda where children’s own interest in creative activities or mathematical concepts may not be given much attention.

Part of the contradictory nature of the instructions given to early years practitioners in this statutory document is reflected in the following statement:

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of

development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development (DfE, 2014, p. 9).

In this quote there is an instruction to consider the needs and interests of the child, alongside another instruction, in the same sentence, to plan the experiences for each child in all areas of learning. On the one hand the child is to be considered, on the other the adult is to do all the planning. This guidance seems to privilege adult-led plans, with a focus on individualised planning that is based on developmental norms or expectations. There is less attention to the social nature of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and the potential that exists for children to learn from and with peers and adults, and the material environment.

The EYFS document does recognize the importance of play and child-led activities in the following statement:

Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an ongoing judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults (DfE, 2014, p. 9).

The contradictions about play are still inherent here in the phrases ‘planned, purposeful play’ and play which is ‘guided by adults’. Rogers and Lapping problematize the concept of ‘purposeful play’.

This merging of ‘play’ and ‘purpose’ within a discourse of accountability articulates with a performance model in which ‘play’ is constructed and evaluated in relation to perceived absences in the child’s practises, defined in relation to the criteria of an externally regulated curriculum (Rogers & Lapping, 2012, p. 11).

Hence play is being used for adult purposes with its freedom and spontaneity potentially being compromised. Rogers and Lapping also point out the inconsistencies in multiple uses of the word ‘play’ and the fact that there is no clear definition of play. They say:

In accordance with this ambivalence in relation to ‘play’ as a solitary signifier the EYFS guidance document does not offer a definition of ‘play’ as such, but instead provides examples to help practitioners to distinguish between ‘child initiated’ and ‘adult led’ play-based activities (Rogers & Lapping, 2012, p. 12).

According to the definitions of play already outlined, play cannot be made ‘purposeful’ or captured to fulfil adult agendas as in ‘play-based’ activities. The joy of play is in its playfulness and sometimes its wistfulness and ever-changing patterns. If play is largely child-led (initiated by a child) and spontaneous, and the planned activities are initially adult-led (initiated by an adult) then the sentence in the EYFS about the balance of child-led and adult-led activities makes more sense. However, this may maintain the binary between play (child-led) and work (adult-led). In both situations, either child-led play or adult-led planned activity, it is claimed that effective learning can be taking place and goals for learning can be met. There have been a number of researchers who have challenged this binary thinking and investigated ways to integrate these approaches. This issue of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities is at the heart of this research project.

Play does take a prominent place in a list of the characteristics of effective learning in the EYFS framework:

In planning and guiding children’s activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

• playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’;

• active learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and

• creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

(DfE, 2014, p.9).

These characteristics refer to what children do and encourage practitioners to be reflective. They appear to give more weight to child-led learning although the adults are still expected to ‘teach’, ‘plan’ and ‘guide’ activities. Again child-led and adult-directed learning seem to be mixed up in quite a confusing way.

In ‘Development Matters’ (the non-statutory guidance for the EYFS), detailed guidance is given in all 7 areas of learning and development under the headings “Unique Child (observing how a child is learning), Positive Relationships (what adults could do) and Enabling Environments (what adults could provide)” (Early Education, 2012, p. 2). This guidance aims to foster and support the characteristics of effective early learning mentioned above (playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically). However, one of the problems is that this is weighedtowards what the adults should do to guide children towards the EYFS learning goals rather than encouraging children to set out towards an open-ended learning adventure. The other problem is that the overwhelming amount of specific guidance on pedagogy could tempt practitioners to use the early learning goals as a checklist and ignore learning that falls outside of the goals, thus potentially limiting children’s learning opportunities. In fact, the advice given in the document advises against that scenario. A statement at the bottom of nearly every page reminds practitioners that:

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists

(Early Education, 2012, pp. 6-46).

However, given that there are 40 pages of lists of guidance for adults working with children aged 0-5 years of age, arranged in 3 closely typed columns on each page, it is difficult to keep track of the goals without some kind of checklist or system. There are also the added pressures on practitioners of needing to make the detailed assessments of children’s development and learning in relation to the EYFS framework, feeding this back to parents, and being ready for Ofsted inspections. Thus, the EYFS, and Development Matters mitigate against practitioners taking an open-minded, open-ended, and informed approach to early years education and risks imposing a straitjacket. Practitioners are required to make narrow assessments of children’s progress and attainment that can be used for statistical analysis as to whether settings are meeting the required standards. Roberts-Holmes has shown how the early years teacher’s work is “increasingly constrained by performativity demands to produce ‘appropriate’ data” (Roberts-Holmes, 2015, p. 1). He says:

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that the early years is increasingly subservient to the demands of the Primary National Curriculum as the strictures of datafication limit some early years teachers’ pedagogical interpretations of the EYFS. The teachers struggled to make sense of their deeply held child-centred values espoused by the EYFS principles, curriculum, and pedagogies and at the same time perform to the datafication requirements of the school readiness assessment regime (Roberts-Holmes, 2015, p. 7).

Where the concept of enabling environments is expanded in the ‘Development Matters’ document there is relatively little about the outdoor environment. However, the ‘Characteristics of Effective Learning – Playing and Exploring’ section says: ‘Arrange flexible indoor and outdoor space and resources where children can explore, build, move and role play… Ensure children have uninterrupted time to play and explore’ (Early Education, 2012, p. 6). The idea of flexible indoor and outdoor spaces, and the uninterrupted time to play resonate with the ideas of the early pioneers who support child-led learning through play but is at odds with much of the rest of the guidance and the demands of the EYFS framework. The advice and guidance of the ‘Development Matters’ document is not always consistent with the EYFS and, in some areas, is contradictory.

Finally, there is an online document to help parents understand the EYFS called ‘Parents’ Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework’. ([www.foundationyears.org.uk](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk)). After some of the principles of the EYFS are explained, there is a heading: ‘As a mum or dad how can I help with my child’s learning?’ This is followed by a diagram with bubbles listing activities that parents can do. There are 10 suggested activities, and all of these are adult-directed. These may all be laudable activities to do with children but there is no balance between child-led and adult-led activities, no mention of supporting play, no encouragement to understand a young child’s need for play or explanation of how a child learns through play. All these conflicting messages make for confusion and tension in current pedagogical practice. Stephen (2010) claims that there is a lack of cohesion in pedagogical practices amongst early years practitioners. She argues that pedagogical understandings make a difference to practice and to children’s learning and experiences (Stephen, 2010, p. 27).

Wood (2014) also highlights the complexities of issues of free play and free choice and the conflict with existing frameworks. She argues that the need for practitioners to align the choices they offer children to curriculum goals, in order to fulfil the demands of ‘outcomes-led’ policy has led to restricted versions of ‘planned and purposeful play’. This has led to adults’ choices rather than children’s choices being privileged:

… the child-centred theories that value free play and free choice are at odds with policy frameworks that maintain a discourse of universalism (most children following similar pathways through a defined curriculum). Paradoxically, where free choice and free play are privileged as the main ways in which children learn, this may reduce opportunities for children to choose activities alongside adults, in which they can share interests and intentions, through flexible and responsive engagement. Research that focuses on children’s perspectives provides a more nuanced understanding of these issues (Wood, 2014, p. 2).

The heart of the current research study is to examine how a mix of child-led and adult-led activities for different age groups can best be integrated in the interests of maximising the children’s learning potential, rather than in the interests of solely fulfilling an adult agenda. There is currently a fundamental dilemma in policy and in the research evidence between these two positions. The review of literature outlining the approaches of the early years pioneers has been included in this literature review because this historical background is important to current issues about early years education and especially issues of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities that are the subject of my research. The values and practises employed by the historical pioneers of early years education contrast with successive versions of the EYFS, especially describing children’s learning within prescriptive goals and targets. Furthermore, there is substantial research evidence that supports integrated pedagogical approaches, drawing on contemporary theories of learning.

As Leach argues:

Aspects of the EYFS which would be unfortunate and unhelpful if it were ‘Guidance’ only (as were earlier stages, such as Every Child Matters) are a truly grim reality for many practitioners and academics, because the EYFS is statutory. With every care-provider legally obliged to provide the EYFS and assess and record (and share with other carers) each child’s progress through it, the implications, not only for parental and professional choice in child-rearing but also for training and staffing, have been immense. The irony is that a well-meant attempt to legislate the foundations of the early years has unwittingly risked undermining them in some very specific ways (Leach, 2013, p.19).

The next section will consider the questions of how ideas about integrated pedagogical approaches have been developed, and their potential contribution to children’s learning and development.

**2.5 Integrated Approaches to Pedagogy in Early Years Education**

**2.5.1 Integrated pedagogy**

Broadhead, Howard and Wood argue that the status of play in education needs protecting, and that integrated pedagogy could offer a way forward in which ‘children’s sustained play and choices are respected and through deep, insightful engagement on the part of adults, their playful learning is enriched’ (Broadhead, Howard, and Wood, 2010, p. 185). Play can take place indoors or outdoors and can engage children in all the areas of learning and development in the EYFS. It cannot be contained or harnessed for adult purposes at the expense of children’s freedom but in integrated pedagogical approaches it can be enhanced and enriched by sensitive adult involvement. Wood says that practitioners need a ‘profound understanding of play’ in order to promote integrated pedagogies (Broadhead, Howard & Wood, 2010, p. 19).

This view differs from those who have approached early years education through developmental psychology and educational psychology where different stages of children’s development are categorised, and curriculum content is arranged in progressive sequences (Wood and Hedges, 2016), or where the curriculum is determined directly from contemporary policy frameworks. These approaches are linked where developmental theories have been used to inform ECE policy. Hatch has argued:

Curriculum content, the substance of early childhood education, cannot logically be identified based on knowledge of child development theory: that is, figuring out what subject matter knowledge should be taught does not follow from understandings of what children are like at particular ages and stages (Hatch, 2012, p. 46).

Wood (2010) has developed a model of ‘Integrated Pedagogical Approaches to Play and Learning’ that goes some way to potentially filling the gap in pedagogical understanding and addressing the tensions between the demands of education policies and the ideals of young children learning through play in rich and free environments where they can make their own choices and be in control of their own play worlds. This model is described in detail here because the ideas contained in it are central to my research.

Wood identifies a distinction between two different orientations towards early years education. The first is education that is delivered by adults who have an agenda in mind that they wish to transmit to children through activities such as planned play or other mainly adult-led activities. Wood calls this the ‘cultural transmission/directive approach’. Where adults’ plans are privileged in this way, there is an ‘outside-in’ perspective.

The role of educators is to transmit the knowledge, skills and understanding that are deemed valuable to children in the immediate and long terms. In relation to play, the main emphasis is on play as educational practice – a means of learning, progress and achievement…The cultural transmission/ directive approach incorporates learning as acquisition, because learning is seen as the individual’s gradual accumulation of knowledge and understanding, which become increasingly refined and organised into coherent conceptual structures (Wood, 2010, p. 13).

The second orientation is education that emerges from children’s own interests, meanings and purposes in self-chosen activities and is supported but not dominated by sensitive, skilful adults. Wood calls this the ‘emergent/responsive approach’. Where children’s thoughts, feelings and choices are privileged in this way Wood describes this as an ‘inside/out’ perspective. Wood says:

The emergent/responsive is more closely associated with play provision, because the focus is on practitioners responding to children’s choices and interests and to their emerging knowledge, skills and understanding…Knowledge is co-constructed with others…Ways of knowing and participating emerge in different socio-cultural practises, which embody the beliefs, rules, patterns of behaviour, language and interaction, routines and expectations within communities…These processes lead to the transformation of participation – as learners become more skilful, competent and knowledgeable, they progress towards deeper engagement and responsibility for assuming active roles in the management and development of activities over time (Wood, 2010, pp. 14,15).

These two orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is common practice for early years practitioners to favour the emergent/responsive approach while at the same time having to implement a certain amount of the cultural transmission/directive approach to meet certain aspects of the Statutory Framework for the EYFS. The latter includes elements of both approaches (which can be confusing for practitioners). However, key questions arise as to how much time should be given to adult-directed activity to stimulate new thinking, and to co-construct knowledge with peers and adults, to support the development of skills and concepts.

Wood suggests that practitioners develop ‘integrated pedagogies’ with an emphasis on inside-out perspectives and a deep understanding of play and the relationship between play and learning (Wood, 2010, p.11). In integrated approaches, children’s play, creativity, actions, interests, interactions, opinions, choices, and existing knowledge are observed by adults who then reflect on these elements and plan activities, provide resources, and adapt the environment, in the light of this information. Children can also be involved in the reflective process and the planning that comes from it. The resulting activities may be child-led, adult-led or somewhere on a continuum between these two positions. There also needs to be flexibility for children and adults to alternate between leading and following and for activities to change and develop in different directions. Planning for play and learning becomes an integrated, co-constructive process with dynamic interactions (Wood, 2010, p. 12). Educational goals can still be met in this process but are a reflection of children’s self-chosen activities and interests rather than a pre-arranged plan, organised by adults, to meet the needs of an assessment process. Wood says: ‘…educators need to be subtle, creative and skilful in order to use integrated pedagogical approaches in ways that connect children’s emergent knowledge and understanding…with more formally organised conceptual frameworks’ (Wood, 2010, p. 17).

Wood (2010 p. 21) has developed a model of integrated pedagogical approaches which is shown below:

Diagram

Description automatically generated

In this model, Wood (2010) sets out the recursive pedagogical cycle of ‘planning environment ‘, ‘planning activities and adults’ roles’, ‘activities’, ‘observing’, and ‘assessing, reflecting, evaluating’. From this circle there is an arc towards ‘adult directed activities’, and another towards ‘child-initiated activities’, with an arrow between these two, pointing in both directions thus implying a flexible and reflexive relationship between these two positions.

In describing this model of integrated pedagogical approaches Wood says:

The overarching pedagogical orientation uses the recursive cycle of planning the play/learning environment, interacting with children in a range of activities, observing, reflecting, evaluating and returning to further planning. The aim is to ensure a flow of information about children’s play and learning from two pedagogical zones – adult and child-initiated activities, both of which have contrasting but complementary forms of adult and child involvement, co-constructive engagement and pedagogical strategies (Wood, 2010, p. 20).

In the child-initiated zone children may choose free play on their own, with peers or with an adult as a co-player but they will be in control of the play. They may choose a more structured activity along the continuum between work and free play. In this zone children are setting their own goals or outcomes. In the adult-directed zone adults may engage children in activities that the adults have chosen with defined outcomes in mind. This may at times safeguard children and help them to become more independent. For example, adults may teach children how to wash their hands before eating at snack time. This activity may then stimulate child-initiated discussion about water, hands and taking turns or it may turn into an opportunity for rhymes or jokes. The possibilities for creative learning through play and non-play activities led at one point by children and at another by adults are endless. Wood says: “This integrated pedagogical model encompasses flexibility within a progressive cycle. Practitioners can move across zones in order to respond to children’s interests and activities, and to make connections between curriculum goals and the children’s own goals” (Wood, 2010, pp. 21, 22). Expanding on her model in a later book, Wood (2013) points out that where there is a strong adult-led structure, activities will be more like work and less like play, with predetermined goals. Where there is little or no adult-structure structure to activities and children are in control of what they choose to do, for their own purposes, this will be more like free play (Wood, 2013, p. 71). However, in a structured activity an adult might adopt an interactive, playful approach and in free play there may be some constraints such as time and behavioural issues.

Wood describes her model as ‘… a continuum between playing, learning and teaching’ and says that the model ‘reflects the principle that adults cannot plan children’s play, but can plan for children’s play and other self-initiated activities’ (Wood, 2013, p. 68). There is flexibility and a flow of different possibilities in this model of integrated pedagogy. It is not static. The arrows flowing in possible directions illustrate its flexibility. It allows for the adult direction that is inevitably present in every setting to guide and nurture the children in their care while emphasising the central importance of play in children’s learning and development.

Wood’s model has limitations. It gives a theoretical picture of integrated pedagogy, but the children’s roles are restricted to ‘child-initiated activities’, and ‘play’ and the adults still hold a lot of the power in observing, assessing, reflecting, evaluating, and planning. In practice, the elements shown in this model are likely to be more complex and three dimensional. My research investigates the degree to which interaction between adults and children can happen in all parts of the process – the overall planning, the responsiveness of the adults to the children’s activities and experiences, the learning that is evident in the different activities and the ways in which adults apply their approaches, informed by children’s choices.

My research investigates how integrated pedagogical approaches work in the outdoor environment. It looks at the ways in which child-initiated and adult-directed activities integrate, and the consequences for children’s learning for the 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds who are the subjects of this research. It investigates how the circular model for curriculum planning works in the environment of the outside spaces used for activities in this setting (Woodharp Nursery School). The research draws on Wood’s model of integrated pedagogical approaches (Wood, 2010) and supporting evidence from contemporary researchers.

I will now consider some other models of child/adult interactions in ECE. These are all relevant to my research in different ways.

**2.5.2 Co-construction of pedagogies**

There are many ways in which children and adults can interact. Broadhead, Howard and Wood argue: ‘Successful integration relies on different forms of adult involvement, including non-participant observation, focused interactions, direct teaching and sustained engagement as a co-player’ (Broadhead, Howard and Wood, 2010, p.183). These different forms of adult involvement can be seen in action in the analysis section of this research study.

Waite, Nichols, Evans, and Rogers (2009) argue for the co-construction of pedagogies. Their model concentrates on how ‘…place, in particular outdoor contexts, is observed to coincide with interactions between staff and children in the co-construction of ways of teaching and learning’ (Waite, Nichols & Roger, 2009, pp.1, 2). They go on to discuss how place is something to which children and adults bring meaning and shape according to their own purposes. Extending and developing their ideas, Waite and Pratt (2011) present a diagram where the three points of a triangle are ‘Child’, ‘Adult’ and ’Place’, with Pedagogy/Activity filling the centre of the triangle. This is a model of another type of integrated pedagogy that puts a particular emphasis on ‘Place’ as an integral part of the pedagogical process. ‘Place’ is of paramount importance in my research study of integrated pedagogical approaches for different age-groups as the setting for the research is the outdoor environment.

**2.5.3 The pedagogy of play and sustained shared thinking**

Broadhead, Howard and Wood (2010) refer to adults’ involvement with children as ’sustained engagement as a co-player’ (as seen above). This phrase is used slightly differently by Siraj-Blatchford who, observing the sustained nature of some of the interactions between children and adults, used the phrase ‘Sustained Shared Thinking’ to describe it:

To understand ‘Sustained Shared Thinking’ (SST) it is important to recognise firstly that it emerged as an analytic node or ‘condensation symbol’ in the process of qualitative research. These data were collected in the intensive case study analysis of 12 ‘effective’ preschools drawn from the 141 settings involved in the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) longitudinal study. The term came to be defined as SST because research respondents and observers specifically referred to the sharing of thinking, and to the particularly sustained nature of some of the interactions identified in effective (in terms of child outcomes) pre-school settings (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, p.1).

Siraj-Blatchford goes on to draw some parallels between the sustained shared thinking described above, and Vygotsky’s ‘zone of proximal development’ where an educator supports children’s learning within this zone (Vygotsky,1978). She says:

Child development progresses as children experience more challenging SST in their play initially with adults, then in reciprocal peer play and later in sophisticated collaborative play. We can support this process in early childhood education (ECE) by providing children with these more challenging forms of SST and by providing more sophisticated and abstract scaffolding props (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, p. 10).

The value of ‘Sustained Shared Thinking’ is relevant to integrated pedagogy and to my research because it describes a way in which children and adults can interact. In SST, children and adults are sharing thoughts and ideas, working together, and sustaining their interactions. As the different interactions between children and adults are recorded and analysed in my research, examples of ‘sustained shared thinking’ are identified.

In the following section of ‘Integrated approaches to pedagogy in early years education’, some other theories about adult/child interactions in ECE are discussed, including research from Northern Ireland, and Sweden. These international studies add further dimension to the issues involved in integrated approaches to ECE. The dilemmas that teachers express in balancing child-led and adult-directed activities and combining them in some forms of integrated approach are international.

**2.5.4 Playful structure**

Empirical research into another area of innovative pedagogy that combines child-initiated and adult-initiated activities has been undertaken by Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness and Trew. They have called it ‘playful structure’. They maintain:

Playful structure invites teachers and children to initiate and maintain a degree of playfulness in the child’s whole learning experience, even when the learning intentions demand a supportive structure. Thus playfulness becomes characteristic of child-initiated versus adult-initiated activities, or of play-time versus task-time (Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness & Trew, 2011, p. 1).

Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, and Trew (2011) begin by observing teachers in Northern Ireland who have different attitudes towards play. Some teachers value play and playfulness and easily become co-players with children while others make a distinction between playtime and more structured activities with less overall emphasis on play. They find that, in introducing all the teachers to the concept of playful structure, structure does not necessarily have to be sacrificed, just approached in a different way. Also, elements of play can be maintained throughout the course of different activities, whether these are structured or unstructured. They state:

Several strands of research point to the need for a more integrated early years pedagogy that honours the interests and autonomy of young children while also accommodating new thinking about the role of adults in scaffolding and co-constructing children’s learning (Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness & Trew, 2011, p. 17).

Eight years after the above article was written Sproule, Walsh and McGuinness were still addressing unresolved issues about play and adult direction. They say:

This paper addresses the incompletely resolved tension between play-based and direct teaching approaches to early years pedagogy and practitioners’ resultant difficulties in understanding and delivering high-quality practice. (Sproule, Walsh & McGuinness, 2019, p. 409)

They then present a three-dimensional pedagogical framework consisting of the degree of playfulness, degree of teacher initiation and control, and type of learning taking place (Sproule, Walsh & McGuinness, 2019). In this model, playfulness has a central role and children can have varying degrees of autonomy but there is also provision for the practitioner to ‘channel the child’s experience’ towards some of the demands of long-term curriculum goals. By putting ‘playfulness’ at the heart of their theory they attempt to join practitioners’ desires that children should learn through play, together with meeting some of the demands of the curriculum.

Sproule, Walsh and McGuinness discuss the ‘troubled space’ of early years education in Primary schools:

Research has consistently shown that, while most early years teachers in the primary context are enthusiastic about the value of play for children’s learning, they are often confused about how they might continue to captivate the interest and engagement of young children through the medium of play while still ensuring that they meet required academic curriculum goals and targets. (Sproule, Walsh & McGuinness, 2021, p.1)

The fact that play-based and direct teaching approaches to education are still considered unresolved in 2019 and in 2021, makes my research in this thesis particularly relevant. Sproule, Walsh, and McGuinness (2019) are concerned with creating an original theoretical approach for early years education that values play, playfulness and play-based approaches while still meeting necessary goals.

My research aims to show how curriculum goals can be met through adults valuing and extending children’s choices and interests that first emerge through play, and then working together to create a meaningful curriculum that also fulfils the EYFS goals.

**2.5.5 Interactive pedagogy and metacognition**

Focusing on pedagogy in Swedish pre-schools, Samuelsson and Carlsson also discuss the need for a new preschool pedagogy:

This pedagogy for early childhood should be different in nature from the traditional teaching at school and be formulated with a basis in research on children’s play and learning (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008, pp. 13,14).

Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja and Verma (2012), consulted leading play researchers from 8 European countries about their work on the important aspects of play for learning and development. They also identified problems about the role of the adult in interactive pedagogy and argue that:

The role of adults in supporting children’s play is complex, often poorly executed and counter-productive, and different views were expressed. This is an area which would benefit from further research. (Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012, p. 6)

Samuelsson and Carlsson describe a form of interactive pedagogy when they talk about adults helping children to focus on metacognition, similar to ideas expressed by Whitehouse (2010). They say that when they play, children spontaneously use communication and meta-communication:

The equivalence in the learning approach is that, assisted by the teacher, the children’s interest is focused on thinking and reflecting about something. When the children have expressed their ideas, either verbally, in drawings or other ways, the teacher focuses their attention on how they think about something, that is, the meta-cognitive aspect of learning. This means that the teacher’s task is to try to make the invisible visible for children (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008, p. 20).

By asking the question ‘What is the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years’, my research contributes to a body of knowledge in early childhood education and addresses the call for ‘further research’ into effective practice and the role of the adult in supporting and developing children’s play, development, and learning.

After writing my initial literature review, I became aware of the importance of more recent research involving sociocultural theoretical framing and its influence on integrated pedagogy.

**2.5.6 Sociocultural theory and its effect on integrated approaches to pedagogy**

At the heart of the integration of child-led activities and adult-led activities is the relationship between the child and the adult and their respective roles in the learning process. Current research has highlighted the need for sensitive, informed, focussed engagement with children while respecting their agency in their play and learning. Hedges and Cooper summarise some of the debates about adults’ roles in play:

Historically entrenched views that child-centred play should dominate early childhood practices have positioned teachers as observers of children’s play and may have discouraged deeper level teacher engagement. Developmental psychological theories proposed that learning was somehow intrinsic to play-based provision rather than at times requiring adult language input or extension, that is, pro-active and intentional teaching. (Hedges & Cooper, 2018, p. 371)

Hedges and Cooper further highlight the responsibility of teachers to play an active role in engaging with children’s play in order to extend their learning and development:

Sociocultural theories derived from the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) foreground the roles of relationships – including pedagogical relationships with teachers – context and culture in determining learning. These perspectives emphasise the importance of interactions and conversations that support complex activities such as play. It follows then that teachers have a responsibility to move from being passive observers at the periphery of play, or didactic instructors in sessions that do not involve play, to being knowledgeable participants alongside children during and inside play. (Hedges & Cooper, 2018, p. 371)

They claim that ‘relational pedagogy’ acknowledges the sociocultural context and places interactions and communications as central to supporting children’s learning.

Much of the recent research in early childhood education has been based on understanding children’s learning and development through sociocultural theoretical framing (Hedges, 2014). Vygotsky was one of the pioneers of a sociocultural approach to education in which the engagement between children and adults, and the cultural context of those engagements were the important factors. Subero, Llopart, Siqués and Esteban-Guitart say:

…from a Vygotskian socio-cultural perspective, we could argue that the origin of meaningful learning (an intrapsychological process) is a social situation involving teaching and learning. In other words, we could consider that there is no significant meaningful individual-cognitive learning without meaningful social activity. And by meaningful social activity we mean a situation in which not only is the prior knowledge of the learner recognized and legitimized, but also their socio-cultural practices, the contexts of their lives and their funds of knowledge and identity. (Subero, Llopart, Siqués & Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p.160)

Vygotsky introduced the concept of ‘mediation’ which Moll (2014) divided into 5 categories: social mediation, instrumental or tool mediation, semiotic mediation, anatomical mediation, and individual mediation. Many of these types of mediation are present in the integrated pedagogy for supporting children’s learning that is the focus of my research.

Recent sociocultural research by Lovatt and Hedges (2015), Hedges and Cooper (2016), Subero, Llopart, Siqués and Esteban-Guitart (2018), Hedges and Cooper (2018), and Hedges (2020) amongst others, have identified some orienting concepts that are relevant to conceptualising the role of the adult in supporting children’s learning. These include children’s interests, funds of knowledge, funds of identity, and working theories.

***Children’s interests***

Hedges and Cooper argue that, in early years education, the curriculum should be based around children’s interests:

There is substantial international research that supports using children’s interests as a basis for curriculum in early childhood education in ways that might counterbalance calls for more content-driven outcomes that meet school readiness agendas…Interests form the means for children and teachers to spontaneously inquire into and explore intuitive ideas, and the content relating to these in highly participative and interpretive ways. (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 303)

They argue that when a child’s interests emerge from their everyday experiences in their families and communities, they are especially valuable for promoting self-motivated learning. They also point out that ‘Key opportunities for children to represent matters of interest arise during play in early childhood settings’ (Hedges and Cooper, 2016 p. 306). These opportunities have the potential to influence pedagogy by directing what practitioners pay attention to, their priorities, how they construct the curriculum and the management of resources.

Hedges and Cooper (2016) differentiate between psychological research that defines interests in a limited way through children’s choices of activities, and sociocultural theoretical interpretations that: ‘suggest that children’s interests might instead be linked to interpretations and meaning derived from children’s participatory learning in family and community experiences’ (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009 in Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 304). It is also important to understand how children express their interests, and whether this differs and changes according to age, and the influence of the preschool environment (including adults and peers) on their participation. Such differences have implications for adults’ pedagogical roles, for example in the choices they make about communication, interaction and conceptual development (Hedges & Cooper, 2016).

Hedges emphasises the importance of adults attaching significance to children’s interests and choices and valuing their actions and ideas. When they do this, they are acknowledging children’s agency. She says:

Agency manifests in purposeful actions that are mediated by “social, interactional, cultural, institutional, and other contextual factors” (van Lier, 2008, p.171). For example, attaching purpose and significance to the choices of activities that children select in early childhood settings assumes that the institutionally-mediated provisions of resources and equipment allows children to represent their everyday cultural experiences in their choices. (Hedges, 2020, p. 5)

Children’s interests and choices are affected by their ‘funds of knowledge’ and ‘funds of identity’.

***Funds of knowledge***

Hedges and Cooper assert that:

…funds of knowledge represent a range of possible interests and a different potential interpretation of the nature and content of the interests, children might bring to, and represent in, early childhood settings through the available resources and equipment. (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 306)

Funds of knowledge are embedded in a family or social community’s everyday cultural practices in which the child has been involved and every child brings these sociocultural influences with them into whatever educational setting they are attending. In a qualitative, interpretivist study in New Zealand it was found that:

Funds of knowledge as a theoretical and methodological framing … illuminated important interests that children enacted in the centre environment. (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 310)

The funds of knowledge that underpin children’s choices and interests in this research study and how they affect integrated pedagogy will be considered in the analysis of data. Hedges and Cooper assert that ‘…funds of knowledge frame understandings of children’s interests’. (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 307)

***Funds of identity***

Children build their identities through being immersed in socioculturally mediated human encounters, from the beginning of their lives. Hedges says:

…as a theory for researching and interpreting identity development, funds of identity focus on participants’ interests, experiences and choices during socioculturally mediated engagements. These are made explicit in data as participants consider their past and present experiences, and project their desired selves, both in the present and the future. (Hedges, 2020, p. 6)

Subero et al discuss the concept of ‘funds of identity’ and define it as:

Funds of identity are understood as the source (and, at the same time, the substance) of the definitions people make of themselves…everything you conceive of or experience as ‘yours’ can be considered as a feature of your identity (Subero, Llopart, Siqués & Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p.162).

All the children in this research study have come to Woodharp with ‘funds of identity’ that have emerged through the sociocultural influences they have experienced in their lives from their families and communities. One of the roles of the adults at Woodharp is to understand and nurture these ‘funds of identity’ so that children feel known and valued. Adults can also help children by fostering the development of further ‘funds of identity’ that build their sense of self and their interaction with the world around them. Integrated pedagogy is likely to be more effective when adults understand and take account of children’s ‘funds of identity’ while interacting with them to explore learning opportunities.

Hedges poses the questions:

How might environments and interactions foster children’s development of funds of identity? How might environments and interactions reflect children’s families and cultures to enable exploration of identity development that is authentic and relevant to their lives? (Hedges, 2020, p. 11)

In this practitioner research study, I am investigating these questions as I look at the interactions between adults and children in outdoor environments at Woodharp Nursery School.

***Children’s working theories and states of disequilibrium***

The children in this research study will have built up working theories that arise from their funds of knowledge and funds of identity. In order to utilise children’s working theories and potentially deepen their learning experiences, adults need to pursue a ‘pedagogy of listening’. They need to be aware of children’s working theories to have a deeper understanding of how to take the integration of child-led and adult-led activities forward and support children’s learning more effectively.

Hedges elaborates the concept of children’s ‘working theories’ which are embedded within the New Zealand early childhood curriculum:

The notion of working theories is argued as a way children attempt to connect, edit and extend understandings in creative ways. Teachers can utilise working theories to mediate children’s development and learning to foster thinking and intellectual curiosity…Interest in explicating children’s thinking and theorising has become prominent internationally through the influential Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. Unconstrained by external policy or curriculum requirements, this innovative, localised approach has fostered an image of children as active and competent learners who continuously construct and test theories about themselves and their worlds. In particular, the use of ‘progettazione’ and a pedagogy of listening (Rinaldi, 2006) have become well known as approaches that build children’s knowledge and enable their theorising to occur in areas of self-motivated interest (Hedges, 2014, p. 36).

As Lovatt and Hedges explain:

The purposes of working theories are for children to ponder, learn, think, inquire, theorise, reason, problem solve, wonder, listen to other views, build knowledge, and, in general, make sense of the world as children themselves experience it…Knowledge formation is cumulative as experiences connect together through thinking, puzzling, reflecting and reasoning, and build new learning in order to understand the world (Lovatt & Hedges, 2015, p. 911).

Working theories can be challenged when children test them out in practice. They may need to be adapted in the light of new experience or information. Lovatt and Hedges describe this as a process of ‘equilibrium and disequilibrium’. They say:

When children are challenged with new information that does not fit their current thinking, a state of disequilibrium or cognitive dissonance occurs. As sense is made between the existing and new information, the conflict is absorbed and new thinking results. The individual’s thinking returns to a state of equilibrium…

The desire to achieve equilibrium can provide intrinsic motivation for a child to learn. (Lovatt & Hedges, 2015, p. 911)

Taken together, contemporary theories about funds of knowledge, funds of identity, and children’s interests, direct attention to what children and adults do in collaborative relationships and contexts. Moreover, it is argued that these theories, along with contemporary understanding of playful pedagogies, offer potential for addressing the dilemmas and challenges identified in the EYFS.

**2.6 The Potential of the Outdoor Environment as a Context for Learning and Pedagogy**

There has been substantial research in recent years about learning in the outdoor environment, where my research is located. Playing outdoors reflects some of the values of the pioneers of early years education mentioned earlier, who highly valued this environment. The research reviewed below is set in several different countries reflecting the international interest in this area of study. Key issues that emerge from this review include the benefits and potential of the outdoor environment for children’s learning, tensions between curriculum policy frameworks and practice, the mix or balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities, and the mix or balance between formal and informal pedagogical approaches.

Maynard and Waters (2007) discuss the findings of a research project that aimed to document the use of the outdoors by a group of early years teachers working in South Wales. They maintain that there were missed opportunities for providing different kinds of learning experiences for children in the outdoor environment and they attributed this partly to the teacher’s focus on meeting specific outcomes. Paradoxically, in trying to meet these outcomes they also missed providing the kind of learning experiences that are suggested in the Wales Foundation Phase framework. These findings reflect the policy-practice tension, mentioned previously, between children and adults working together to experience new and exciting learning opportunities and a restriction of learning opportunities because of pressure on practitioners to meet prescribed outcomes. This ongoing dilemma presents tangible difficulties for early years practitioners in relation to their continuous provision between indoor and outdoor environments.

Maynard (2007) reflects on the use of the outdoor environment for learning, the balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities, and ways forward. She says that in introducing more informal, play based approaches to learning across the Wales Foundation Phase, teachers are being encouraged to make greater use of the outdoor environment. Drawing on her previous research, Maynard claims that teachers have struggled to move away from pre-determined, content-based curricula, to let children take a lead in their learning, and have failed to make use of the outdoors (Maynard, 2007, p.3). Maynard reflects on the fact that these issues are probably not unique to Wales. Looking for ways forward, she proposes similar ideas to Wood (2010) regarding integrated pedagogy that incorporate both adult-initiated and child-initiated activities, inside or outside, and which ‘move flexibly across a continuum that spans play, playfulness and work’ (Maynard, 2007, p.4).

Maynard’s work highlights the need for more research around children’s autonomy and learning experiences in outside environments and of the necessity of developing new ways of looking at early years pedagogy in this area.

Similar issues are identified in research by Waller (2007) who discusses pedagogy and outdoor play in relation to findings in a research project in a setting in England and a setting in Wales with children aged 3-7. Waller discusses the lack of clear guidance on outdoor pedagogy, different perceptions of outdoor spaces, the benefits of outdoor play within a setting and out in more ‘wild’ environments, and the unclear role of the practitioner. From his research findings he concludes that: “meaningful early years practice requires a cultural shift from one-off listening events to a sustainable participatory culture with children, leading to the construction of knowledge through shared reflection and collaborative enquiry” (Waller, 2007, p. 9). He highlights the need for further research into early years pedagogy and the role of the practitioner, both indoors and outside.

Bilton (2010) outlines many of the benefits of outdoor learning. Echoing the early pioneers, she suggests that children need fresh air, sun, and daylight for their well-being and that being physically active also contributes to good health:

It is not a case of needing to prove that outside is better than inside; both environments have benefits. It is a case of being aware that outside is a part of our life and benefits us physiologically, psychologically, physically, socially and so on. It is of mind and body benefit (Bilton, 2010, p. 11).

Stephenson (2002) presents a case study of young children’s outdoor experiences and finds that defining characteristics could be identified between the indoor and outdoor environments. She characterises the outdoors as an open environment and the indoors as an encompassing environment. She says that the outdoor environment lends itself to play that is complex and multi-faceted. In her case study, adults in the outdoor environment were responsive and enthusiastic in supporting and extending children’s play and a wide range of learning occurred (Stephenson, 2002, pp. 29, 30, 31).

Both the outdoor environment and the range of resources that can be used have implications for children’s learning. Maxwell, Mitchell and Evans (2008) investigate the value of having loose parts to play with in the outdoor environment. Through their research they find that children prefer non-specific action-orientated equipment over static equipment and that loose parts enhance constructive and dramatic play. They argue: ‘While the outdoors is often viewed as a place primarily for non-goal directed play, the outdoors can be just as supportive of the same variety of developmental skills as indoor play’ (Maxwell, Mitchell & Evans, 2008, p.37).

Tovey asserts that the outdoor environment is a ‘qualitatively different’ space that offers unique advantages and learning opportunities to children (Tovey, 2007, p.13).

Waller and Davis (2014) highlight the importance of children having access to physically active play in the outdoor environment. They say that this has an impact on ‘motor development, cardiovascular fitness, bone and muscle strength and children’s mental health and feelings of wellbeing’ (Waller & Davis, 2014, p. 150). They emphasise the value of whole body, expansive movement outdoors where there is space and scope for adventure and challenge.

Clark and Moss (2005) carried out a project in which young children were active participants in planning the design of their own outdoor environment. Children and adults worked together to bring about the changes. Children made maps of their photographs and drawings as a way of expressing their ideas, in addition to discussion (Clark & Moss, 2005, p.16).

The outdoor environment is also seen as offering qualitatively different experiences and resources for children, again with a range of benefits. In an article entitled ‘Nature’s Playground’, Nebelong argues in favour of a natural environment for children to play in, with natural materials. She says that children can then use their own imaginations to bring colour to their play and bring things to life:

Children need to be able to relax their eyes and their minds when they come outside…They are longing for natural spaces, where they can meet one another – prearranged or spontaneously – and be challenged physically, psychologically and socially (Nebelong, 2004, p. 28).

Titman conducted research into the hidden curriculum of school grounds and found that external environments, especially natural environments, gave children a range of exciting and adventurous things to do that are not possible indoors. Children in this study prefer the areas that are not specifically designed for them where they can take ownership and express themselves in their own original ways (Titman, 1994, p. 41).

Wood studied children playing with the natural elements of sand, dirt, and mud – along with water. He found that through their play and interaction with these natural materials, children develop an understanding of what sand and dirt are and how they relate to one another, to water and to other substances (Wood, D. 1993, p. 19).

Fjortoft, in a Norwegian research study, investigates the impact of playing in a natural environment, as opposed to a constructed playground, on motor development in children. She finds that ‘Physical activity play in a natural environment improved all the motor abilities tested, except for flexibility’(Fjortoft, 2004, p. 39). The improvement in these motor abilities, including balance and coordination, is greater than the improvement recorded in a control group who are playing in a more traditional playground. She also argued: ‘Nature, whether a forest, seashore, creek, or mountain area, represents a dynamic environment and a stimulating and challenging playground for children’ (Fjortoft, 2004, p. 36). Fjortoft proposed that there should be more research into the value of the natural environment as a playground and learning arena for children.

Chawla argues that: ‘Research shows that young children, like older children and adults of all ages, derive a range of benefits from having access to nature’ (Chawla, 2012, p. 48). She claims that studies show links between ‘access to nature and ability to sustain concentration, delay gratification and cope with stressors’ (Chawla, 2012, p. 48). She also says that ‘Ethnographic observations of children’s play show that games are more imaginative and creative in natural habitats than in built play environments’ (Chawla, 2012, p. 49).

My practitioner research, using ethnographic methods, will be carried out in an outdoor environment that is neither completely wild, nor planned as a traditional playground. It is more of a rambling garden with access to many natural loose parts. There is also a walk in each session that goes along an off-road path alongside some wild bushes and a river, outside the boundaries of the Nursery School. At the end of the path is an area of woodland on one side and a reed-bed and access to the river on the other side.

The ‘forest school approach’ to learning in the outdoor environment has become popular in recent years. O’Brien and Murray describe Forest School as: ‘an inspirational process that offers all ages regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in a woodland environment’ (O’Brien & Murray, 2007, p.1). O’Brien claims: ‘Forest School allows for constructivist learning to take place in which the children construct understanding and meaning through the activities they undertake on their own and with others’ (O'Brien, 2009, p. 8).

Knight maintains that Forest School facilitates learning. She gives a definition of Forest School as:

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees (Knight, 2013, p.16).

Whitehouse looks at the impact of the forest school approach on pedagogy in early childhood education. When analysing interview data, she found that practitioners viewed forest school as a child-centred approach, where children were empowered to take control of activities in a more relaxed and flexible environment. It encouraged mutual trust and respect. Children were taught simple rules to keep them safe. In contrast to their normal indoor practises, practitioners reported that they had more time for observation, fewer distractions and could allow children to take more risks and engage in more messy activities. They considered that the experience of Forest School had allowed them to see children as being more competent and therefore led to a greater level of trust in adult/child relationships (Whitehouse, 2010, p. 29). There was a unanimous view that Forest School could provide links for learning across all areas of the curriculum (Whitehouse, 2010). Practitioners in this research acknowledged their role in giving children time in the outdoor environment, respecting children’s choices, having a more flexible routine and using observation more widely. However, they did not extend their thinking to how they might participate in children’s playful learning in the forest school environment, except for teaching the children basic rules to ensure their safety. It is this further step, having deeply and insightfully reflected on observations, and then taken some action, that lies at the heart of integrated pedagogy and the further extension of children’s learning.

Swarbrick, Eastwood, and Tutton explore the relationship between self-esteem and successful learning in a forest school environment. They point out that not all outdoor experiences will be positive for children. They argue that: ‘For the younger participant in forest school, independent exploration needs careful nurturing’ (Swarbrick, Eastwood & Tutton, 2004, p.143). They go on to point out that an unfamiliar environment can produce a challenge to young children and needs careful handling.

Leather has published a critique of Forest School and he challenges some aspects of its application in the UK:

This paper is premised on the notion that the rapid development of Forest Schools in the UK has seen pragmatic concerns overtake conceptual understanding. This has meant that practitioners are emulating practises without necessarily understanding why they are doing things in certain ways and not others. It has also meant that training of practitioners has been speedily institutionalised, perhaps exacerbating this issue of understanding. In order to counter this I open up discussion and further discourse in three areas: (1) awareness of the cultural underpinnings of Forest Schooling and the associated consideration of Forest School as a social construction; (2) the theoretical underpinnings for the pedagogical orientation of Forest School, especially considering the notion of play; (3) the problems accruing to the commodification of Forest School in association with the inadequacy of current attempts to adequately substantiate claims for the outcomes of Forest School. (Leather, 2018, p. 5)

The second area, ‘the theoretical underpinnings for the pedagogical orientation of Forest School, especially considering the notion of play’ is of particular relevance to my research. Leather argues that outdoor activities have traditionally been adult initiated but that now Forest School is being introduced to children in early years a more play-based approach is needed. He says:

The Forest School focus on younger children with its associated pedagogy of play brings an extra-dimension to contemporary outdoor practice. The concept of child-centred and child-initiated play as a central tenet is new and potentially exciting for outdoor educators and it challenges the current orthodoxy (Leather, 2018, p. 9).

Leather then raises questions about the pedagogy of play in the outdoor environment and what children are learning. He says that play remains a problematic concept for theory and practice and needs a theoretical basis. He suggests that Wood’s model of integrated pedagogical approaches offers a way forward:

In order to address these issues, Wood (2010) proposes a model of integrated pedagogical approaches… This includes child initiated as well as adult directed activities, and reflects sociocultural theories of learning, with practitioners playing important roles in responding to children’s ranges of choices, interests, and activities. I argue that this is a useful model for outdoor education practice, including Forest School (Leather, 2018 p.9,10).

My research explores Wood’s model of integrated pedagogical approaches and investigates how this theory works in the outdoor environment.

**2.7 Chapter conclusion**

This literature review has identified a number of critical areas for my research. The work of the pioneers of early years education remains influential, but the challenges posed by the demands of the EYFS framework in England mean that established principles do not meld easily with policy. Recent research has established the importance of sociocultural theory and its effect on integrated approaches to pedagogy. The development of ideas of integrated pedagogy and the co-construction of knowledge is supported by researchers who have been looking at learning in outdoor environments and points towards the need for more research to clarify and develop pedagogy for practitioners in early years education. This research study asks the question ‘What is the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years?’ I aim to contribute original insights into learning and pedagogy in outdoor environments through my research.

**Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

**3.1 Introduction to the chapter**

In my research I have conceptualised and categorised knowledge about children’s experiences and their learning. This is a qualitative practitioner research study drawing on ethnographic methods, that seeks to provide insights into social phenomena, as opposed to quantitative research that is more concerned with measurable phenomena and statistics. There are historical, philosophical foundations to research in the social sciences. Lewin and Somekh assert:

Social science research is concerned with people and their life contexts, and with philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge and truth (epistemology), values (axiology) and being (ontology) which underpin human judgements and activities. (Lewin & Somekh, 2011, p. 2)

Crotty (1998, p.10) gives the following definition of ontology: ‘Ontology is the study of being. It is concerned with “what is”, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such.’

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) claim that epistemological assumptions are ‘ways of researching and enquiring into the nature of things’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p.3). An epistemology provides a way of explaining and interpreting knowledge. I have used the epistemology of constructionism, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and the methodology of a practitioner researcher drawing on ethnographic methods, in my research.

**3.2 How the chapter is organised**

First there is a short discussion about constructionism. This is followed by a consideration of the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and an outline of the nature of qualitative, naturalistic, practitioner research using ethnographic methods. Then I consider the importance of reflexivity as a practitioner researcher with ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives, and my use of reflexive thematic analysis as a framework for my research. Next my research as a ‘case study’ is discussed, followed by an outline of the research methods I have used. Finally, issues about children as participants in the research are raised and the ethics of the research are considered.

**3.3 Epistemology of constructionism**

Constructionism is an epistemology in which meaning is constructed from our experiences. Positivism is an epistemology that assumes that there is an objective truth to be discovered independently of the activities of participants and researchers. In my research I do not assume that there is an objective truth to be discovered. I am interested in the construction of social realities. Crotty defines constructionism as follows:

It is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

Constructionism brings some aspects of objectivity and subjectivity together. Outcomes will emerge through the research. There is not an ‘objective truth’ to be discovered. There is a set of relationships to explore and knowledge to construct out of the interaction between all the people involved within their environment. Most early childhood studies are about relationships and the construction of knowledge out of their relationships. This is true of my research, where I am exploring the relationships between children and adults and how they interact in the outdoor environment and constructing knowledge out of their interactions. There is not an objective truth to be ‘discovered’.

My research uses interpretive and qualitative approaches. It embraces investigation, uncertainty, and subjectivity as I explore Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy (Wood 2010), include the influences of sociocultural perspectives, and create a new extended model of integrated pedagogy.

**3.4 Theoretical perspective of interpretivism**

Interpretivism is one of the ways of understanding and explaining human and social reality. Crotty asserts: ‘The interpretivist approach...looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Crotty traces the historical roots of interpretivism and contends that understanding in any study of society must be substantiated by empirical evidence (Crotty, 1998, p. 69). Cohen, Manion and Morrison state that interpretive researchers ‘begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013 p.18). In my research, I begin with making observations of social interactions between children and adults, in the outdoor environment, doing a variety of activities, and then set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them. Interpretation is integral to the reflexive thematic analysis that I use as a framework for my research. At all stages of reflexive thematic analysis, data is being interpreted in different ways. Interpretation is never neutral or objective. Power structures in the wider society and personal perspectives, contextualise my interpretative practice (Braun & Clarke 2022).

**3.5 Qualitative practitioner research using ethnographic methods**

Qualitative research methods fit better with investigations into social phenomena that cannot easily be quantified. Cohen, Manion and Morrison claim:

There is no single blueprint for naturalistic, qualitative or ethnographic research, because there is no single picture of the world. Rather, there are many worlds and many ways of investigating them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p.219).

This type of research can provide ‘an in-depth, intricate, and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 219).

Berg says:

The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures.

Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings…

Qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe (Berg, 2009, p. 8).

**3.5.1 Practitioner research and ethnography**

My research, carried out as a practitioner researcher, has many close parallels with ethnography because of my positioning as an ‘insider’ in the setting and the research process. Ethnography has been described as ‘a process that attempts to describe and interpret social expressions between people and groups’ (Berg, 2009, p.191). Berg also argues that researchers are placed in the middle of what they study and from this vantage point can study what happens, as perceived by the participants (Berg, 2009). Ellen describes the ethnographic process as ‘subjective soaking’. Ellen asserts: ‘The idea of subjective soaking is that the fieldworker from the outset abandons the idea of absolute objectivity or scientific neutrality and attempts rather to merge him/herself into the culture being studied’ (Ellen, 1984, p. 77).

In planning my research, I realised that my own Nursery School would be the ideal place in which to carry out practitioner research using ethnographic methods. I knew all the children, staff, and parents. I was already ‘merged into the culture’ of the Nursery School. I had been practising ‘subjective soaking’ for many years. In fact, I was deeply immersed in the setting, having been the creator and leader from the beginning, over 30 years ago.

The disadvantage of using this methodology was the challenge of stepping back in an open-minded way, as an observer and a researcher, to see afresh exactly how and why the integration of child-led and adult-led activities supported children’s learning and not be so ‘immersed’ that I made assumptions that could not be substantiated by the evidence in the research data.

Konstantoni and Kustatcher say:

Ethnographic research often involves multiple methods (most commonly participant observation and interviews) and data sources (e.g., talk, behaviour, interactions, texts). …Ethnographers are interested in an understanding of people’s everyday lives, and practices, in naturalistic settings, people’s views and understandings of their social world…While qualitative research generally considers the role and impact of the researcher in designing and analysing the research ethnographic approaches, in particular, stress the constructivist and reflexive nature of the research process (Konstantoni & Kustatcher, 2015, p.224).

The research methods and data sources described by Konstantoni and Kustatcher (2015) are also applicable to my practitioner research. The focus of understanding people’s (children and adults) everyday lives and practises in a naturalistic setting and interpreting their views and understandings of their social world is at the heart of my practitioner research.

I considered other settings for my research, such as asking local schools if I could visit them to collect data. This would have positioned me as an ethnographic researcher. However, I could not have had the access that I had at Woodharp Nursery School, and I would not know the children or be part of the culture, so using ethnographic methods might have been less effective. I would not be positioned as teacher researcher with insider perspectives. Also, the outdoor environment at Woodharp Nursery School is particularly rich in natural resources and therefore an ideal location for my research.

**3.5.2 Positioning myself as a practitioner researcher**

In my research, as discussed above, I examine integrated pedagogy and how it supports children’s learning, as a qualitative and interpretivist practitioner drawing on methods that originated in ethnography. My research is that of a practitioner researcher because I was already immersed in the setting and had relationships with all the participants in my role as headteacher and founder of the nursery school, before starting the research. I am conducting the research from the position of an ‘insider’. I am also an ‘outsider’ in my role as a researcher.

Drake and Heath say:

Professional doctoral researchers are negotiating learning in at least two communities of practice. These are the professional setting that the researcher sets out to illuminate and the higher educational setting in which academic practice must be demonstrated. These researchers must successfully position themselves in a watershed that brings both of these sets of practices together, whilst recognising that the communities of practice themselves do not remain fixed and that part of this ‘unfixing’ is connected to the nature of new knowledge, the arrival of practitioners with new ways of working and the adaptions of practice that take place in accommodating these (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.20).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle highlight the question of the validity of teacher researchers creating new knowledge through research:

For those who see the possibilities of learning from teacher researchers, it is precisely their inside perspectives as participants and the distinctive lenses they use to make sense of classroom life over long periods of time that promise to illuminate new aspects of teaching, learning, and schooling. The debate here is not, as Huberman seems to suggest, one of generalizability and truth, on the one hand, versus context-specific and biased information, on the other. Rather the debate is related to larger questions about the kinds, forms, and perspectives on knowledge that will ultimately help to improve educational practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1988, p. 26).

Although I am positioned as both a practitioner and a researcher in my research, there is a subtle distinction to be made between researching my practice to gain new insights that can be used to improve my practice and using my practice as a source of data for my research into integrated pedagogy, that can have wider implications. The former is more like action research. The latter is more like ethnography where I am immersed in the setting and use my position to collect data from which I can make multiple interpretations, while keeping an open mind about where the research will lead. The aim of my research is to investigate integrated pedagogical approaches in early years education. The aim of my research is not primarily to investigate my own practice, although there may be ways in which my practice is impacted and influenced by the research. There are close parallels between my position as practitioner researcher and an ethnographic researcher. Therefore, I would describe myself as a practitioner researcher using ethnographic methods.

Fetterman (2009) describes an ethnographer as a person who adopts a cultural lens to interpret observed behaviour. I am a practitioner researcher who is already part of the culture. I use my researcher subjectivity as an ‘insider’ to practise reflexive thematic analysis. From this position, I also interpret observed behaviours and give meanings to data.

Fetterman says:

An open mind also allows the ethnographer to explore rich, untapped sources of data not mapped out in the research design. The ethnographic study allows multiple interpretations of reality and alternative interpretations of data throughout the study. As discussed, the ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic, or insider's perspective. The ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist; the closer the reader of an ethnography comes to understanding the native's point of view, the better the story and the better the science (Fetterman, 2009, p. 2).

As a practitioner researcher I also explore ‘rich sources of data’ from my own practice. My position as ‘insider’ with many years of experience enables me to understand and have insight into children’s meanings and points of view. My position as ‘outsider’ enables me to carry out researcher reflexivity in my investigation of the research question. I am both the storyteller and researcher.

**3.6 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity involves critically reflecting on my role as practitioner researcher, interrogating what I do, how and why I do it, and the impacts and influences of this on my research (Braun and Clarke 2022). A definition of reflexivity is given by Berger:

It means turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one’s own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation. As such, the idea of reflexivity challenges the view of knowledge production as independent of the researcher producing it and of knowledge as objective (Berger, R. 2015 p.220).

In the following sections I examine some of my own background and life experiences, including my professional experience, so that I can recognise and take responsibility for my own situatedness within the research.

**3.6.1 Personal reflexivity**

*Descriptive personal narrative*: I was born into a position of social privilege, as a white female from a wealthy home. In the holidays, my childhood experiences included playing freely with my siblings in extensive grounds including fields, woods, a walled garden, some deserted farm buildings, a stream, and a waterfall between two large ponds. We were unsupervised by adults but called in for meals. I was brought up in a culturally Christian environment. In my late teens I questioned everything about my upbringing, gave away all my possessions and sought to work with people who were vulnerable or socially disadvantaged. I wanted to put my Christian faith into action. Eventually I accepted an inheritance but wanted to use it to serve others. These experiences shaped how and why my husband and I set up Woodharp Nursery School in our home, while bringing up our two sons. My husband and I share our values and ideology. Over the years we have welcomed children from all socio-economic groups. We live on the edge of a socially diverse area. We have worked with many children with challenging needs including children who were deaf and blind; had cerebral palsy, autism, Down’s syndrome, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, inability to walk, inability to swallow food, no speech, and other less extreme needs. We have welcomed families and children with diverse ethnicity, different religious beliefs, and a variety of family structures. We have sought to be welcoming and inclusive to all.

*Analysis:* This personal background and ideology has affected my practitioner researcher relationships, researcher assumptions and subjective bias. I value children’s autonomy, their choices, their neurodiversity, and their opinions. I have an assumption that outdoor play without too much planning or adult direction will benefit children. These values and assumptions affected my desire to carry out research that is located in the outdoor environment and that investigates the value of integrated pedagogy for supporting children’s learning.

**3.6.2 Practitioner reflexivity**

As a practitioner who has worked in the early years setting of Woodharp Nursery School for over 30 years I have extensive experience of interacting with children and supporting their learning. During this time there have been a variety of different government policies and methods of assessing children’s learning and development and of inspecting early years settings. This has ranged from a cursory visit from a social worker to check health and safety issues and the general well-being of the children, to detailed inspection of every aspect of the setting by Ofsted. Ofsted inspect our practice, our policies, our training, our assessment of children’s progress and more. While I welcome being held to account over standards of care, non-discrimination, staff training, staff ratios and children’s welfare, I have been dismayed at their approach to the assessment of children’s learning and development. Once the EYFS learning goals were suggested as guidance for what children should be learning at different ages and Ofsted were inspecting how these goals were being applied, early years pedagogy was being strongly influenced by Government policy rather than ideology and research. In my experience, many children with special needs and others with non-typical development have a learning trajectory that is outside the standardisation of the Early Learning goals. In addition, the assessment of children’s progress and development in relation to the great number of EYFS goals tends to lead to more adult-led practice and less child-led freedom.

These are subjective, practitioner, ‘insider’ views that affect my research, my research question, and my research methods. In fact, they are the motivation for doing this research. Once I came across Wood’s theory of integrated pedagogy (Wood 2010, 2013) and socio-cultural theoretical perspectives developed by researchers such as Hedges (2014, 2020, 2021) and Hedges and Cooper (2016, 2018), I was excited about the possibility of adding to a body of research where pedagogical theory includes the development of learning through an the integration of child-led and adult-directed activities and acknowledgement of the influences of children’s funds of identity, funds of knowledge, working theories and relationships in the learning process. Reflecting on my positionality as practitioner researcher, I would say that I started my research journey stronger as a practitioner than a researcher. However, I would argue that my unique ‘insider’ experiences and perspectives add dimension to the research.

**3.6.3 Researcher reflexivity**

My background, my practitioner experience, my original degree and undertaking some post graduate studies, led to the desire to do research in Early Years Education, using my own setting as the location for the research. My positioning as practitioner makes me an ‘insider’ in the research process. This position has strengths and weaknesses. As a practitioner I am in a position of power and influence which affects the reactions of children and adults towards me in the research. I have subjective views and bias formed over years of life experience and practitioner experience, as described above. As researcher, taking the role of ‘outsider’, I step back and concentrate on qualitative research paradigms, using my researcher subjectivity as a tool of the research rather than regarding it as a hindrance. Braun and Clarke say: “Viewing subjectivity as something valuable, rather than problematic, is a key aspect of a qualitative sensibility” (Braun & Clarke 2022 p. 12).

I have different perspectives as an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ at various stages of the research. Hellawell (2006) talks about an insider-outsider continuum, and the need for the researcher to develop the ability to practise reflexivity throughout the research process. In my research I am positioned as an ‘insider’ as a practitioner in the setting, the co-owner of the setting and the fact that the setting is also located in my home. I am positioned as an ‘outsider’ as I reflect on the research process and the implications of my findings. As a practitioner researcher, I oscillate between the two positions throughout my research journey. Hellawell refers to subtly varying shades of ‘insiderism’ and ‘outsiderism’.

He says:

…Many contemporary researchers would argue that you can simultaneously be to some extent an insider and to some extent an outsider if you’re involved in qualitative research…There may be some elements of insiderness on some dimensions of your research and some elements of outsiderness on other dimensions (Hellawell, 2006, p. 490).

Even when I am more of an ‘outsider’ in the research process I will still be using some ‘insider’ perspectives because I am so embedded in the setting and come with all the subjective bias that I hold as a practitioner. Reflexivity will continue to be discussed in the use of thematic analysis as a framework for my research.

**3.7 Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

Braun and Clarke describe the analytic process of reflexive thematic analysis as having six phases:

* + - 1. Dataset familiarisation
      2. Data coding
      3. Initial theme generation
      4. Theme development and review
      5. Theme refining, defining, and naming
      6. Writing up

(Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 6)

As this process is applied, the thematic analysis takes shape. Braun and Clarke point out that this process is ‘embedded in, and surrounded by, a bigger set of values, assumptions, and practices, which collectively make up the method’ (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 6).

As a research practitioner I am an ‘insider’ in the research process and have a subjective viewpoint (as discussed earlier), Braun and Clarke contend that this can be an advantage rather than a disadvantage in thematic analysis. They say:

Researcher subjectivity is the primary tool for reflexive thematic analysis, as knowledge generation is inherently subjective and situated. Your subjectivity is not a problem to be managed or controlled, to be gotten rid of, but should be understood and treated as a resource for doing analysis (Gough & Madill, 2012). This means the notion of researcher bias, which implies the possibility of unbiased or objective knowledge generation, and the potential to control such bias, makes little sense within reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.8).

Braun and Clarke (2022) claim that reflexivity is key to high quality thematic analysis and that researchers should strive to understand and own their perspectives.

Throughout my research I am working as a reflexive practitioner researcher. I have identified and named some of my own researcher bias and subjectivity in the section on reflexivity above. Reflexivity continues throughout the reflexive thematic analysis framework.

Data familiarisation in my research involves me working both as an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’. I am an ‘insider’ because I am interacting with the children who are the subjects of my research and working as a practitioner in the setting even while I am collecting data. I am an ‘outsider’ as a researcher who is holding the video camera during activities and conversations and deciding what to record. Even as an ‘outsider’ I am making subjective decisions and assumptions. As a researcher I begin reflecting on the data and interpreting the data even as I am collecting it, although these initial interpretations are likely to be changed and modified as the research progresses.

The data coding and theme generation, develop through a process of close scrutiny of the data, separating and sorting of the data, and decisions about which codes and themes to highlight, that will most effectively address the research question. The details of the codes and themes used in my research are presented in the ‘Generating the Thematic Framework’ chapter. In my research the sorting and categorising of data took a long time. It required me, as a practitioner and ‘insider’, to step back and to look at the data through the lens of a researcher and ‘outsider’. I made many notes beside my data. I colour coded different sections. I refined my selection of themes, rejecting some and including others. These choices required reflexivity and interpretation at all stages. As already mentioned, I am the practitioner researcher who is simultaneously ‘inside’ the data as practitioner and ‘outside’ the data, reflecting on it and categorising it. I have subjective bias, but I acknowledge it and work with this, using it as a strength in my research.

When writing up my research and presenting my findings I identify myself within the data as *CA.* I am an adult practitioner, an ‘insider’. In the analysis of data, I look through the lens of a researcher, an ‘outsider’, as I apply my codes and themes to interpret the data, in order to address the research question and construct new knowledge. My analysis of the thematic data includes inductive and deductive elements. The interpretations of which parts of the data show evidence of integrated pedagogy are inductive while the application of EYFS goals to the data is deductive. The ‘narrative’ sections of the analysis are more like the subjective views of an ‘insider’ but the give valuable nuance to the data. Throughout the write- up of my research I am operating on the insider-outsider continuum previously discussed.

**3.8 Case study**

Thomas (2011) offers an overview of case study. He quotes Simons (2009, p.2) who argues: ‘Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a real-life context’ (Thomas, 2011, p. 512). Cohen contends that: ‘A case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 289).

In choosing a subject for the case study, Thomas claims:

The subject will be selected because it is an interesting or unusual or revealing example through which the lineaments of the object can be refracted…The first route in its selection may be followed because of the researcher’s familiarity with it – a local knowledge case – and this will be relevant particularly for the practitioner or student researcher. In one’s own place of work, one’s placement, or even one’s home, there will be intimate knowledge and ample opportunity for informed, in-depth analysis (Thomas, 2011, p. 514).

Thomas (2011) notes that the subject of the case need not be ‘typical’ but that the important factor is the dynamic between the subject and object. The object may emerge as an inquiry progresses.

My research is a case study of my nursery school, where I both live and work, providing a real-life context for the research. This is a unique rather than a typical setting and provides an opportunity for the in-depth analysis referred to by Thomas (2011). The ‘subject’ is the Nursery School, containing the children, adults and environment that are the focus of the research. The ‘object’ is the research process and application of research methods leading to some illumination of the research question that emerges as the study progresses.

The limitations of a case study approach are that the results may not be generalizable, they may be selective, biased, personal, and subjective, they may be prone to observer bias and lack reflexivity. However, case studies can be strong in reality, recognising the complexity of social truths and providing a resource for other researchers. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013)

**3.9 Research methods**

Berg asserts the need to corroborate raw data rather than accepting everything at face value. He argues: ‘Ethnography then becomes a process of gathering systematic observations, partly through participation and partly through various types of conversational interviews’ (Berg, 2009, p. 198). In my role as practitioner researcher, using ethnographic methods, I have gathered systematic observations as described above. I have collected data through video observations of the children and adults in the outdoor environment and conversational interviews with staff and parents.

**3.9.1 Observation**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison point to the value of observation as a research tool because it facilitates the gathering of data from naturally occurring situations and offers a snapshot of what is taking place. It is a flexible form of data collection and is generally non-interventionist (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 457). However, the choice of what to observe and when to observe could give rise to a criticism of bias and needs careful management. I could have made more observations of one age-group than another or left out some activities when collecting my raw data. Bell notes that observation can be ‘structured or unstructured, participant, or non-participant (Bell, 2014, p.211). Structured observations are more planned and systematic but may also be more biased and affected by the researcher’s choices because activity outside of the structure is not being recorded. Participant observations may be less intrusive but again may be more subjective than a non-participant observation. The observer may give more attention to one child than another or record more data from one activity than another.

I conducted structured participant observations using videos on Friday afternoons, over four months. I recorded the activities and conversations throughout the session and initially transcribed all the data. Later I reduced the data and applied thematic coding.Friday afternoons were a session when I was normally present in the setting and taking part in activities. This plan reflected many of the characteristics of qualitative, naturalistic, ethnographic research mentioned above by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013). The sessions on Friday afternoons were conducted in the outdoor environment and involved a mixture of activities. I continued observing throughout the 3-hour session. The activities in the outdoor environment were partly child-led and partly adult-led and were therefore ideally suited to my research study. It is the integration of these approaches, in this environment, that is the focus of my research. I started my data collection on 24 February 2017 and continued until 30 June 2017. I observed 2 four-year-old children, 2 three-year-old children, and 2 two-year-old children. Each age-group included one boy and one girl. I selected the children by their ages, choosing the two eldest children, the two youngest children and two in the middle of the group, in terms of age. The sequence of observations is described in detail in Chapter 4 of the thesis. The research involved observation in 14 Friday afternoon sessions overall.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison quote from Bailey (1994, p. 243-4) in identifying the following advantages in the participant observation approach:

* Observation studies are superior to experiments and surveys when data are being collected on non-verbal behaviour.
* In observation studies, investigators are able to discern ongoing behaviour.
* Because case study observations take place over an extended period of time, researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with those they are observing, generally in more natural environments than those in which experiments and surveys are conducted.
* Case study observations are less reactive than other types of data-gathering methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 298).

They also point out that direct observation is faithful to the real-life, holistic nature of a case study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 299). A criticism could be made that there were only 6 children involved in this case study and therefore the results could not be generalised. On the other hand, the fact that there were only 6 children made an in-depth research project possible and enabled a detailed investigation to take place exploring the effectiveness of integrated pedagogy to support children’s learning, as can be seen in the data analysis in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

**3.9.2 Conversational interviews**

Blaxter says: ‘The interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. It can be a very useful technique for collecting data which would not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires’ (Blaxter, 2010, p.193). An interview may be structured or unstructured and may be recorded in a number of ways. I held conversational interviews with children, staff and parents in the course of my research.

At the end of the sessions that I was observing, I conducted conversational interviews with the children and adults involved. These were naturalistic, semi-structured interviews. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) claim: ‘The popularly used interview technique employed in qualitative research is the semi-structured interview, where a schedule is prepared that is sufficiently open-ended to enable the contents to be reordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included, and further probing to be undertaken’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, pp. 235, 236). I had discussions with parents of participating children to gain more understanding about their attitudes towards child-led activities in outdoor environments. This also gave me insight into children’s funds of identity and funds of knowledge. These were semi-structured, open-ended discussions. I used a video recorder for recording the interviews. The issues of data storage and confidentiality have been considered. My ethical approval letter from the University of Sheffield is included in Appendix 7.

**3.9.3 Children as participants in the research**

Mayall (2008) in Christensen and James says that ‘the adult researcher who wishes to research with children must confront generational issues’ (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 109). She notes that much research carried out with children is based on assumptions of the superiority of adults and adults’ knowledge as opposed to the immaturity and unreliability of children. She goes on to say that participant observation of children needs to involve becoming part of the child’s world in as unobtrusive a way as possible, with an open mind. She claims that ‘good information about childhood must start from children’s experience’ (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 110). She suggests that research should be carried out not ‘on’ children but ‘with’ children.

Chesworth acknowledges that ‘young children’s involvement in research can be understood to be emergent, dynamic and unpredictable’ (Chesworth, 2018 p. 859). She says:

This has significant implications for those of us who choose to enter young children’s worlds as researchers. We do not enter as neutral onlookers, but instead become part of the places and spaces that children inhabit. (Chesworth, 2018, p,859).

As a practitioner researcher I am already part of the children’s world in the nursery school. This positions me as a familiar adult who is part of the ‘places and spaces’ inhabited by the children in my research and helps me to be a relatively unobtrusive researcher.

Punch discusses why research with children is potentially different from research with adults. He says: ‘The way in which researchers perceive childhood and the status of children in society influences how children and childhood is understood’ (Punch, 2002, p. 321). He discusses ‘not imposing the researcher’s own perceptions, issues of validity/reliability, clarity of language, research content and setting, building rapport, taking care not to impose inappropriate interpretations, and using appropriate research methods’ (Punch, 2002, pp. 326,327). Some people have difficulty in giving children the same status as adults or paying attention to their thoughts and ideas. My perceptions of children have influenced this research because I have the greatest respect for children as people who are capable of taking the lead in play and other activities, and of joining with adults to work together.

**3.10 Ethics**

Vanclay, Baines and Taylor identify some current principles for ethical research involving people:

The identified ethical principles include: respect for participants, informed consent, specific permission required for audio or video recording, voluntary participation and no coercion, participant right to withdraw, full disclosure of funding sources, no harm to participants, avoidance of undue intrusion, no use of deception, the presumption and preservation of anonymity, the presumption and preservation of anonymity, participant right to check and modify a transcript, confidentiality of personal matters, data protection, enabling participation, ethical governance, provision of grievance procedures, appropriateness of research methodology, and full reporting of methods (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013, p. 243).

They also consider conflict of interest, moral hazard, and duty of care to be important principles in ethical research.

I will now consider each ethical principle in relation to my research:

**Respect for participants**

As practitioner researcher I have respect for all the participants in my research whether they are children, staff members or parents. There is evidence of this in the recorded conversations and actions in the ‘Data Analysis’ chapter where I listen carefully to what children or adults say or take time to observe what they are doing. I aim never to belittle children’s opinions or talk about participants disrespectfully.

Morrow and Richards explore ‘some of the ethical dilemmas that researchers face when conducting social research with children’ (Morrow & Richards, 1996, p. 90). They maintain that adults in society tend not to be respectful of children’s views and opinions and, as a result, research with children can be unrepresentative of their true thoughts and feelings. After quoting a section from the UK Government ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child they say: ‘This set of principles acknowledges that children have the right to be consulted and taken account of, to have access to information, to freedom of speech and opinion, and to challenge decisions made on their behalf’ (Morrow & Richards, 1996, p. 91). As a practitioner researcher I agree with these principles and aim to put them into practise in my research.

**Informed consent**

Information about the research study was given to all the staff in the setting and it was discussed. Letters were given to staff who were involved in Friday afternoon sessions, requesting their consent to take part in the research. A copy of the letter informing them about the research is in Appendix 2. They were given time to think this through and invited to ask questions about the research. An example of a staff participant consent form is in Appendix 3.

Information about the research study was given to all the parents and carers of children who attended the Friday afternoon sessions at the setting when the research was being conducted. An example of the letter sent to parents and carers informing them about the research is in Appendix 4. An example of a participant consent form is in Appendix 5.

An outline of the research study was shared with children who attended the Friday afternoon sessions.

Staff and parents signed the consent forms. After explaining the research as simply as possible to the children involved, they agreed to take part.

**Permission for video recording**

Permission for video recording was included in the information letters and consent forms signed by staff and parents or carers. Children gave me verbal agreement to take part in video recordings on each day that video recordings were being conducted.

**Voluntary participation and no coercion**

Participation in this research study was voluntary and this was made clear in the consent forms signed by staff and parents. Participants’ rights to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ throughout the research process were respected. Alderson and Morrow maintain that participants should be aware of their right to drop out of a research study and should be under no coercion to be involved (Alderson & Morrow, 2011, p. 112). Children were consulted on each day that observations were being made in case they wanted to withdraw their consent at any time. I talked to them and used props to explain what I was planning to do. The props were especially important for the 2-year-olds whose language skills were less developed. I listened to their verbal and non-verbal responses and was sensitive to their wishes.

There was no coercion to take part in this research study, either for children or adults. However, my position as practitioner researcher and joint owner of the Nursery School gives me a certain amount of power and status. This means that there could have been a conscious or unconscious bias towards agreeing to take part in the research, on the part of the recipients. Thomas and O’Kane (1998) talk about the ethical dilemma of the disparities in power and status between adults and children, which is also mentioned by Morrow and Richards (1996, p. 98). Thomas and O’Kane say ‘Part of the task is to redress the power imbalance between child participant and adult researcher, in order to enable children to participate on their own terms’ (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998, p. 337). They then describe how they encouraged children to take part in their research with, as far as possible, equal status. I also invited children and adults to take part in my research with, as far as possible, equal status.

**Participant right to withdraw**

I made the research process as non-threatening and non-invasive as possible for participants but always gave them the right to withdraw. I followed the principle outlined by Alderson and Morrow:

To ensure participants are aware of their right to drop out, researchers can remind them later, ask if they are happy to carry on and tell them that if they do that it will not affect any care or service they are having that is linked to the research. They will still get the best possible care (Alderson & Morrow, 2011, p. 112).

I did tell participants in my research that they had the right to drop out at any time with no adverse consequences.

**Full disclosure of funding sources**

I did not receive funding for my research.

**No harm to participants**

There was no harm to the participants in my research. We continued to apply the safeguarding policies of the setting throughout the research process. For example we ensured that children were safe when crossing the road outside the boundaries of the setting, when climbing trees, going near the river and playing with sticks in the garden.

**Avoidance of undue intrusion**

I have avoided undue intrusion into the setting by carrying out the research during a normal Woodharp Nursery School Friday afternoon session with the staff and children who attend this session. I am also usually present in this session as a practitioner. While I undertake the data collection, I am taking on the role of practitioner researcher, but I do not introduce any strangers into the setting.

**No use of deception**

There is no use of deception in my research.

**The presumption and preservation of anonymity**

All the parents or carers of children involved in the research were asked for permission for their children to take part and were assured of the anonymity of participants. Some of the children in our setting were adopted and special care was taken not to use any photographs or video recordings of these children during the research, in line with the Nursery School’s existing policy. I sought consent from parents or carers to take part in interviews and assured them of the anonymity of all who take part. All the participant names in the research data are pseudonyms, as is the name ‘Woodharp’ for the Nursery School.

Robson addresses some of the challenges of ensuring participants’ anonymity:

A particular advantage of using video data is its potential for capturing rich data. A major challenge is to ensure participants’ anonymity and confidentiality. Whilst technology allows for the anonymisation of images, this may have an impact on quality, particularly where aspects such as facial expression and gaze are important. In addition, the nature of recording may mean that non-participants are also captured, necessitating either further negotiation of permission, or editing of potentially valuable data (Robson, 2011, p. 187).

In my research staff and parents were assured of their anonymity. Parents were assured of the anonymity of their children. In my written analysis I did not include the actual video recordings, but used transcripts taken from the videos. I did include some photographs taken from the videos, but only chose photographs that did not show any participants’ faces.

**Participant right to check and modify a transcript**

Participants could at any time request to check and modify a transcript.

**Confidentiality of personal matters**

In the consent forms signed by participants there was an assurance that all the participants’ responses would be strictly confidential. Bell maintains that confidentiality and anonymity don’t always mean the same thing to all people and that it is important to clarify exactly what is meant by this to all the people involved in the research (Bell, 2014, p. 51). In the case of my research, it means that what children or adults do or say during the research is confidential and will not be talked about outside of the research process, in which they are anonymous. None of the videos used in the research are used for children’s assessments but are confidential and are used only for the research purposes.

**Data protection**

Data used for this research is confidential and is stored on my personal computer. No-one else has access to my computer. Videos will be deleted after the research is completed.

**Enabling participation**

Children were able to participate in the research during sessions they normally attended the nursery school. As practitioner researcher I aimed to minimise the disparities in power and status between children and adults and to give children an authentic voice, whether verbal or non-verbal, in interviews and observations. Non-discrimination was practised in inviting children to take part in the research. As far as staff were concerned, they were taking part in the research during their normal working hours. Parents were invited to take part in discussions or conversations at times and dates that suited them.

**Ethical governance**

Ethical governance is defined as a set of processes, procedures, cultures, and values designed to ensure the highest standards of behaviour. As practitioner researcher I am committed to these standards.

**Provision of grievance procedures**

During the research there is the provision of grievance procedures as outlined in our setting policies.

**Appropriateness of research methodology**

The research methodology is appropriate for the setting, the participants and myself as participant researcher.

**Full reporting of methods**

In the letter informing participants of the research, the research methods are outlined. The methods are also set out earlier in this chapter.

I am positioned as a practitioner researcher and both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ in the research. There are ethical considerations that apply particularly to practitioner researchers. Drake and Heath say:

In the intersections between professional and research ethical practices, challenges and dilemmas arise for the insider researcher. At institutional levels, ethical practices and processes may be formalised and conventional, as indeed may be professional codes of conduct. The researcher, however, is in a position of developing an ethical perspective that is situated in and arises from the research in context. Importantly this is informed by the personal ethical values that researchers bring to their studies, as well as by the various ethical codes and practices that are in place…Insider researchers are members of an organisation with a particular culture, ethos, and workplace mission (Drake and Heath, 2011, p. 47).

In my research I have an ethical perspective that is situated and arises from my own practice, the policies of the setting, my life experiences, my ideology and my values. Drake and Heath (2011) go on to outline the importance of sensitive handling of interpersonal relationships within the workplace that might be affected by the research process or the results of the research. My practitioner research is about an exploration of integrated pedagogy in early years education rather than research about practices in our own setting. This focus has been interesting to my colleagues rather than threatening.

There are uncertain elements in my research. Chesworth considers that the acknowledgement of uncertainty in research encounters with young children strengthens ethical practice. She says:

Research as an ethical practice requires us to acknowledge, act upon and make visible the elements of uncertainty that permeate throughout the research process. In part, this constitutes an alertness and responsiveness to the dynamic relationships and interactions associated with the research encounter (Chesworth, 2018, p. 859).

The children in my research are aged 2, 3, and 4 years old. Their responses to questions and my interactions with them are likely to have uncertain elements. I aim to make this uncertainty visible in the research.

My research project was approved by the University of Sheffield’s ethics reviewers on 21/02/2017. (See Appendix 7)

**3.11 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has set out the theoretical basis on which the research is built and the research methods that are used during the research. The research is a practitioner researcher’s case study using ethnographic methods, based on the principles of constructionism and interpretivism. I use reflexive, thematic analysis throughout the research, routinely reflecting on my assumptions, expectations, choices, and actions throughout my research process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The research is qualitative and naturalistic. It examines and interprets interactions between children and adults and looks at how these interactions support children’s learning in the early years.

**Chapter 4: Generating the Thematic Framework**

**4.1 Introduction to the chapter**

I am using reflexive thematic analysis to generate the thematic framework for my research. I have framed the thesis within an exploration of Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy (Wood 2010) and I have included existing policy context, the EYFS, and the assumptions it carries about pedagogy and learning. In addition, I have considered the potential contribution of sociocultural theories. I am not approaching this analysis in a ‘theory-free’ mode, but I am choosing to engage with the themes that are present in the data, regarding integrated pedagogical approaches in this setting, and the wider theoretical framework of the study. The following sections set out the processes and methods for collecting the data and moving to analysis.

**4.2 How the chapter is organised**

First the collecting of data is outlined. Then the data analysis is discussed, including data reduction, thematic coding, selective coding, narrative analysis, and sociocultural theoretical framing. Finally, there is a section on the analysis in relation to the EYFS areas of learning and development.

**4.3 Collecting the data**

Data has been collected using videos of outdoor sessions on Friday afternoons at Woodharp Nursery School. Silverman (2019, p. 352) notes three clear advantages to recordings and transcripts of actual occurrences in their actual sequence. These are:

1. *Recordings are a public record.*
2. *Recordings can be replayed, and transcripts improved.*
3. *Recordings preserve sequences of talk.*

One of the disadvantages has been the time it has taken to transcribe all the videos without editing them first. Nevertheless, transcription has provided rich data to work with, both visual and audio, so that actions as well as conversations could be recorded.

The social context of this research data is the people, the interactions between them, the physical environment of the setting, and the structure of the sessions. The people can also be subdivided into adults, who are either staff or parents and children, aged 2, 3, or 4, and either boys or girls. Six children have been observed altogether. For each child, there are observations of an unplanned session (child-led) followed by observations of a planned session (adult-led). The planning is done between the children and adults together, and exemplifies the pedagogical approach in the setting, namely the integration of child-led and adult-led activity. The table below shows the sequence of observations.

In each session, lasting 3 hours from 1pm – 4pm, there is a structure that includes:

***PLAYING IN THE GARDEN***

***GOING FOR A WALK BY THE RIVER***

***GATHERING AROUND THE BONFIRE***

There is also video data of discussions with staff and parents. A number of these have been transcribed and included in the analysis of data.

The table below shows the sequence of observations of the children:

**Observations**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Session** |  | **Activities** | **Age** | **Names** | **Videos** |
| 24-Feb-17 |  | Unplanned | 4 | Oliver and Mary | 1-22 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 03-Mar-17 |  | Planned | 4 | Oliver and Mary | 1-17 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12-May-17 |  | Unplanned | 4 | Oliver and Mary | 1-16 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19-May-17 |  | Planned | 4 | Oliver and Mary | 1-25 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21-Apr-17 |  | Unplanned | 3 | Harry | 1-32 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28-Apr-17 |  | Planned | 3 | Harry | 1-19 |
|  |  | Unplanned | 3 | Melody |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 05-May-17 |  | Planned | 3 | Melody | 1-29 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 09-Jun-17 |  | Unplanned | 3 | Harry and Melody | 1-17 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16-Jun-17 |  | Planned | 3 | Harry and Melody | 1-17 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17-Mar-17 |  | Unplanned | 2 | Arnold | 1-18 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24-Mar-17 |  | Planned | 2 | Arnold | 1-37 |
|  |  | Unplanned | 2 | Greta |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 31-Mar-17 |  | Planned | 2 | Greta | 1-26 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23-Jun-17 |  | Unplanned | 2 | Arnold and Greta | 1-22 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30-Jun-17 |  | Planned | 2 | Arnold and Greta | 1-19 |

**4.4 Data analysis**

I use reflexive thematic analysis to sort and code the data. The first separating and sorting of the data was done through data reduction. Then, thematic codes were identified and explored. These were open codes which then developed into previously uncharted sub-themes as the analysis progressed. Cohen, Manion and Morrison refer to this as ‘inductive category formation’ which, they say, ‘proceeds through summarising content analysis by inductively generating categories from the text material’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013 p. 567). This is followed by the application of selective codes that particularly relate to the research question. There is narrative analysis, as well as coding, in order to fully explore the data. Finally, the question of how children’s learning is supported in the activities recorded in this data is addressed by using the 2012 Early Years Foundation Stage ‘Areas of learning and development’. This second stage of analysis is deductive because the ‘codes’ refer to the early learning goals in the EYFS (Appendix 1). The aim is to provide inductive and deductive layers of understanding to contrast the adults’ understanding of children’s learning, and the ways in which they are required to assess this against the EYFS goals.

**4.4.1 Data reduction**

Data reduction was applied to draw out the themes and patterns in the research. Berg (2009, p.54) says: ‘Data reduction acknowledges the voluminous nature of qualitative data in the raw. It directs attention to the need for focusing, simplifying and transforming raw data into a more manageable form.’ In this ethnographic research there were a total of 316 videos recorded over 14 sessions. Each session lasted 3 hours but recording was not continuous during each session. Nevertheless, there was a great volume of raw data that needed reduction, since initially all the data was transcribed.

**4.4.2 Thematic Coding**

I selected the thematic codes used in this analysis after reading and re-reading the raw data and making reflexive, analytic notes. Charmaz (2006, p.45) says: ‘Coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis.’

The themes were coded as follows:

1. Imaginative play
2. The natural world
3. Physical activities
4. Sensory experiences
5. Communication interactions

**Theme (A): Imaginative play**

Imaginative play takes many forms. It can have a narrative, use props, involve one child or a group of children, be brief or sustained for a length of time, have a theme, or change direction in its focus. It is open-ended and largely child-led, as is all true ‘play’. The imaginative play, in this research study, was initiated by the children in the back garden in the first hour of the session, on the path going towards the ‘deep, dark wood’ and in the reed bed near the river. Sometimes the themes and interests within children’s imaginative play turned into a planned activity in another session. The planned activity in this context was inspired by children but framed by adults.

**Theme (B): The natural world**

The children in this research were constantly interacting and engaging with the natural world. They were immersed in the natural world and all the recorded videos of activities took place in the natural world. This theme provided a rich source of data regarding adult and child-led activities. Sometimes it was children who led in exploring the natural world, sometimes the adults brought something to the children’s attention. Interactions then reflected children’s questions and enquiries and adults’ responses, which could have led to further investigations.

**Theme (C): Physical activities**

The garden in which the children played invited physical activity. There was an abundance of space for running around in, there were trees to climb and swings hanging from the branches of a big ash tree. The children naturally explored physical activity in this environment and the adults keyed into this interest and introduced activities that developed and extended children’s physical skills in the garden and beyond.

**Theme (D): Sensory experiences**

The children were engaged in many sensory experiences in the outdoor environment in this research study. The ‘sensory experiences’ theme explored the children’s interest in mud, fire and water. These are three of the basic elements of nature on our earth. The children were therefore connecting in a very fundamental way with the world they lived in and, through a mixture of free play and adult directed activity, developed and extended their learning.

**Theme (E): Communication interactions**

There were many forms of interaction in the current data, and these varied according to the age of the children, the context, and the type of activity. These variations were captured in the analysis; for example, the four-year-olds, Oliver, and Mary, constantly used speech to work things out and to test out their thoughts, ideas and working theories. For younger children, attention to body language and gestures was significant in this theme.

In practice, these themes overlapped, but they were separated for the purpose of analysis. For example, every theme contained communication interactions. In all the themes, sociocultural concepts were present in adult/child interactions. The data could have been coded differently. There was so much raw data that other themes could have been included. I chose the themes that had more cohesion and where play led on to integrated planning and extended activities.

**4.4.3 Selective coding**

Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 206) say: ‘Selective coding involves identifying a corpus of “instances” of the phenomenon that you are interested in, and then selecting those out.’ In the current research, the main focus is on the integration of child-led and adult-led activities. Therefore, who leads an activity or conversation and then what happens next is of paramount importance. These sections of data take priority in the analysis so as to answer the research question.

Data was organised in sections that included the following categories:-

* Free play and observations – adults observe child-led play
* Conversations and observations – conversations are recorded between children and adults that highlight children’s ideas and interests
* Reflection / assessment / evaluation of unplanned activities – children and adults reflect on the unplanned play, conversations and activities that have taken place
* Planning resources, activities, environment, adult roles – children and adults (but mostly adults) plan for an extension of a child-initiated idea or activity
* Planned activities – planned activities are carried out based on the children’s declared interests or ideas
* Discussions / reflections on planned activities – adults and children reflect together on the planned activity

Activities are classified: Adult-directed activities (AD), Child-initiated activities (CI)

These categories have been informed by E. Wood’s model of integrated pedagogical approaches (Wood, 2010, p.21). Between (AD) and (CI) there were many interactions taking place. Input from adults was coded as (AD)>>>. Input from children was coded <<<(CI).

The assessing / reflecting / evaluating of activities and the planning, arising from observations in the unplanned session, may have been adult-directed (AD)>>>, child-initiated <<<(CI), or an integration of the two (AD)>>><<<(CI).

**4.5 Narrative analysis**

The narrative analysis was by its nature subjective because of my own experience and positionality in the setting and in the thesis. However, its purpose was to add nuance and additional explanation to the coded analyses, based on my experience and knowledge of the children. Cohen, Manion and Morrison say:

Narrative not only conveys information but brings information to life…Narratives not only pass on information, but they meet people’s psychological needs in coping with life or help a group to crystallise or define an issue, view, stance or perspective…Narratives are a foil to the supremacy of coding and coding-derived analysis’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p.553).

**4.6 Sociocultural theoretical framing**

There is a section on sociocultural theoretical framing at the end of each theme. This provides an analysis of how sociocultural theory underpins and affects the choices children make in the integrated pedagogical model.

**4.7 Analysis in relation to EYFS ‘Areas of learning and development’**

The EYFS document ‘Areas of learning and development’ (DfE, 2014) was used as an analytic tool in the deductive analysis of data. They were used to indicate the areas of learning that were taking place in an activity that had been selected for analysis, because they had been the framework for assessment in early years education in England during the time of this research. The EYFS areas of learning and development are often referred to as ‘Early Learning Goals.’ However, this thesis questions whether the concept of ‘goals’ facilitates in-depth learning for young children. The aim of the deductive analysis was to identify the extent to which the EYFS goals were fulfilled during activities outlined in the data. However, the EYFS is not the dominant framework in this setting. If ticking boxes representing ‘goals met’ in the EYFS was the main focus of attention, then no further depth in children’s learning may be noticed or encouraged by the adults in the setting. Adults may miss the significance and development of children’s funds of knowledge and identity. If there is evidence that the early learning goal is met, then the point of the activity has ended, and the learning is completed in line with the EYFS requirements. However, if there is freedom, within a framework, for activity and learning to continue for as long as the adult and child are engaged, then infinite new dimensions of learning can take place, like a picture that keeps deepening into ever extending multidimensional depths. The EYFS framework for ‘areas of learning and development’ for two-year-olds, three-year-olds and four-year-olds, which was used in the analysis of data, is included in Appendix 1.

**4.8 Chapter conclusion**

The thematic framework sets out the structure for the data analysis. The video recordings generated so much data that the transcribing of data and then the data selection and data reduction took a very long time. However, the reflexive thematic analysis approach did enable rich seams of data to be identified and thematic codes were selected that shed light on the research question in a deep and detailed way. The analytic tool of the EYFS goals enabled deductive analysis of learning alongside the inductive analysis of the themes and emerging understandings of integrated pedagogy, underpinned by sociocultural theory.

**Chapter 5: Data Analysis**

**5.1 Introduction to the chapter**

In this chapter, the data is analysed using the methods outlined in the thematic framework. I have used thematic analysis in coding the data and sorting it into different themes. The data includes a balance of data from the 3 different age groups comprising the children involved in the research. The 5 themes and subthemes contain evidence of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities, and evidence of children’s learning. The analysis also includes critical reflection on the extent of the integration, including what adults notice and how they respond to the children’s activities and communications. All the recorded activities took place in the outdoor environment.

**5.2 How the chapter is organised**

There are 7 different themes in the data analysis chapter. In each of the first 5 themes there are subthemes for the different age groups as follows:

*Theme (A) - Imaginative Play*

*Subthemes: Pirates (4-year-olds)*

*The Gruffalo (3-year-olds)*

*The Jungle (2-year-olds)*

*Theme (B) – The Natural World*

*Subthemes: Minibeasts (4-year-olds)*

*Flora (3-year-olds)*

*Sticks (2-year-olds)*

*Theme (C) – Physical Activities*

*Subthemes: Swinging (4-year-olds)*

*Climbing and balancing (3-year-olds)*

*Running and rolling (2-year-olds)*

*Theme (D) – Sensory Experiences*

*Subthemes: Mud (4-year-olds)*

*Fire (3-year-olds)*

*Water (2-year-olds)*

*Theme (E) – Communication Interactions*

*Subthemes: Gender, shadows & the weather (4-year-olds)*

*Rubbish in the wood & reeds from the reedbed (3-year-olds)*

*Babies & walking together (2-year-olds)*

The subthemes in themes A, B, C and D each have several different sections that are organised according to slightly different combinations of the categories outlined in the thematic framework. These are:

* Free play and observation
* Conversations and observations
* Reflection and planning
* Planned activities
* Discussions / reflections on a planned activity

There are a variety of different headings in the sections because each subtheme for each age group is unique and different and the analysis needed some flexibility, but they all relate to the categories above. In theme E, the communication interactions were all spontaneous and unplanned whether initiated by a child or an adult. Therefore, the data in the communication interaction subthemes is analysed within each subtheme, without different sections.

In each of the sections, and in the subthemes of the communication interactions, there is a selected piece of text transcribed from the original data, followed by an analysis of the text under the headings:

* Integrated pedagogy
* EYFS areas of learning and development
* Narrative

At the end of each theme, there is a section of analysis under the heading:

* Sociocultural theoretical framing

In the transcripts of data, a small A next to an initial means that it is an adult who is talking. I am the adult, Caryll, shown in the data as *CA* .

**5.3Theme (A): Imaginative Play**

The imaginative play theme has the subthemes ‘Pirates’, ‘The Gruffalo’ and ‘The Jungle’.

**5.3.1 PIRATES**

**Section 1 - Free Play and Observation** (Pirates)

The 4- year- olds, Oliver (O) and Mary (M), are keen on the topic of pirates. They enjoy pretending to be pirates.

*Transcript from 24th February*

*Oliver and Mary are sitting in the willow house. “We’re in a pirate ship!” (child’s voice in background)*

*CA →O + M Okay you 2 can just sit in here and chat or play or do whatever you want to do.*

*……..*

*“Walk the plank, walk the plank” (being chanted in the background) CA →O + M What do you want to do now? O →CA Um um – join in the pirate game*

*CA →O Oh that’s a good idea - join in the pirate game.*

*They walk to the ‘pirate ship’, which is the tree.*

……..

*Oliver and Mary play on the tree, climbing around and pretending to be pirates*

*O + then M (join in chant) Walk the plank,,walk the plank*

*O → M Uh Oh quick quick quick M → O I’ll go down this way O → M Um right I’ve got to get down here – Whoa whoa whaa OK, uh,eh*

*Oliver navigates a difficult branch and climbs down the rope ladder.*

*CA → O Oh well done Oliver*

………

*Mary and Oliver are laughing. Mary swings down the rope ladder. Oliver starts climbing again.* *CA → M Have you fallen into the water Mary?*

*Mary and Oliver laugh. Oliver climbs along the branch again.*

*Mary lies on ground waving her legs around*

*CA → O+M Is this a pirate ship? O + M →CA Yes, yes CA → M Did you fall in the water Mary? O → All This is a fun thing to do. If only I could get up that bump. Whoh Hooray, this is really good.*

*Oliver pushes himself along a big branch. M → O Better than ever*

*Mary follows along the branch.*

*O → M This is fun Whahoo. All done .*

*Oliver jumps off and Mary follows.*

*O → All Oh - This is brilliant. A a choo*

*M → O A a choo*

*Oliver and Mary are climbing around the ‘pirate ship’. Oliver goes down the big branch.*

*O → All Whoa – down and down and down and down and down and down and JUMP.*

*Oliver jumps down when he gets to the end.*

*Mary jumps down too.*

*H → All Aarhaar (in pirate fashion) O → All Aarhaar*

*A picture containing outdoor, ground, person

Description automatically generated*

On 12th May, Oliver and Mary return to the pirate theme, again using their imagination to see the tree as a pirate ship.

*Transcript from 12th May*

*CA → O + M Now – what would you like to do today? Shall we go down the garden and have a look?*

*………..*

*Oliver points to his head.*

*O →Self Thinking, thinking, thinking – play pirates.*

*O →M Come on Mary. Let’s go.*

*M →O I’m going, I’m going, I’m going, I’m going.*

*Oliver and Mary run towards the ‘pirate ship’ tree.*

*CA →O You’re going to play pirates Oliver? O → CA That way’s a secret. CA →O In the pirate ship? This is the secret way?*

*O →CA Yea, we’re going to show you.*

*Oliver leads the way towards a different entrance to the ‘pirate ship’, along a path.*

*He disappears into the bushes, followed by Mary and the adult,*

*………..*

*CA →O Ah ha and here we are. Is this a pirate ship? =*

*O →CA Yes Mary climbs along a branch and Oliver follows her. They climb around freely in the ‘pirate ship’ tree, using ropes and branches.*

**Analysis** (Section 1 - Pirates)

Integrated pedagogy

* The ‘playing pirates’ activity is unplanned and child- initiated <<<(CI)
* It is a free play activity <<<(CI)
* The role of the adult has been to frame the session, by taking the adults and children outside into a large garden with a climbing tree in it and some ropes and giving the children time to play in the garden with no directions or plans. (AD)>>>
* An additional role of the adult is to be present, to observe closely what the children are doing and saying and to pay attention to their ideas and interests. (AD)>>>

In Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy (Wood, 2010), this section of text is associated with ‘activities’ on the part of the children and ‘observing’ on the part of the adult.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The following EYFS goals can be applied to the activities that the children choose:

*PSED 1.9 Initiates conversations - attends to and takes account of what others say.*

*(e g. Oliver and Mary: Walk the plank. Walk the plank*

*Oliver Uh Oh quick quick quick Mary I’ll go down this way)*

*CL 3.18 Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations.*

*(Oliver and Mary are using language to imagine being pirates.)*

*PD 1.22 Experiments with different ways of moving.*

*(Oliver and Mary climb around in the pirate ship - the tree.)*

*1.23 Jumps off an object and lands appropriately.*

*(Oliver and Mary jump down from a branch to the ground.)*

*1.25 Travels with confidence and skill around, under, over and through, balancing and climbing*

*equipment.*

*(Oliver and Mary travel around, over, under and through the branches of the tree as they climb.)*

*EAD 2.17 Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme.*

*(Oliver and Mary and others are all pretending to be pirates on board the pirate ship.)*

Narrative

Oliver tends to initiate more conversation than Mary. They both take initiative at different times in the physical play. They are both fully engaged in the activity and are clearly enjoying it. There is all the difference in the world between the active learning that Oliver and Mary are experiencing through this exciting, imaginative, self-chosen activity that happens to meet EYFS goals, and an adult planned activity set up purely to meet EYFS goals. For example, this is illustrated by Oliver and Mary jumping down from the tree in the course of their pirate play, as opposed to jumping off an object that adults have set up for the purpose of ticking off that particular EYFS goal. In this unplanned, free play activity, it is the integration of the free play of the children and the observation of the adult that unlocks the potential for further learning to take place, as a ‘pirate topic’ subsequently evolves from this small beginning. Oliver and Mary are both bringing some ‘funds of knowledge’ about pirates to this activity. This enables them to join in with the game that others have started.

**Section 2 - Reflection and Planning** (Pirates)

I open up a new conversation about planning a ‘pirate’ activity for the following week. Oliver and Mary both express their ideas.

*Transcript from 12th May (cont.)*

*Oliver and Mary continue to climb around the ‘pirate ship’.*

*CA →O+M How about – would you like - next week - would you like us to search for treasure –*

*on the walk?*

*O+M Yea, yea CA →O+M We could be pirates O Yea T → CA And can we um hide some treasure here?*

………

*Oliver and Mary continue climbing around as they chat.*

*CA →O+M What – What sort of treasure should we find d’you think?*

*O →CA Gold treasure CA →O Gold treasure? O →CA Yes*

*M →CA And, and, and jewels*

*CA →M Jewels?*

*M →CA Yes, yes and jewels. CA →O+M D’you think we ought to have a treasure map?*

*O+M →CA Yes, yes CA →O+M We all need a treasure map d’you think? M →CA No pirates can go without a treasure map. CA →M No pirates can go without a treasure map. M →CA Yes – otherwise you won’t find the treasure – You have to draw a treasure map.*

*CA  →M You have to draw a treasure map? O →CA Yes T →CA And if you um if you do, X marks the spot – that’s where the treasure is.*

*……… CA →O,M,T X marks the spot – we could all do an X marks the spot, couldn’t we? O →CA  Yes – no one can approach them without an X marks the spot on their treasure map. M →CA Yea – no pirate can find the treasure without an X marks the treasure map. CA →O+M No, so no pirate can find treasure without X marking the spot on the treasure map that’s true.*

*O →CA Yea*

While on the walk, I ask Oliver and Mary what they would like to eat round the bonfire next week.

*Transcript from 12th May (cont.)*

*Myself, Oliver and Mary are walking along the path, on the way back to Woodharp.*

*CA→O+M Er – next week, what d’you think we should eat round the bonfire?*

*O →CA Um um um popcorn. CA →O I think, I think we’re having popcorn this week – so what shall we have next week?*

*O →CA OK sausages CA →O+M Sausages? M →CA Yes CA →O+M OK - Do you think pirates like sausages? M →CA Yes O →CA+M Wait – they like fish. What about fish fingers? CA →O+M They like fish? D’you know Oliver, I think that’s right because they, they live by the*

*seaside, don’t they?*

*O →CA+M They like fish so why don’t we cook fish fingers next week? CA →O Fish fingers? M →CA I don’t like fish fingers.*

*................*

*O →CA And I don’t like fish fingers and I don’t like potatoes. M →CA I don’t like potatoes either. CA →O+M D’you think we should try? Shall we try fish fingers?*

*M →CA Err yes. CA →O+M If I make some special ones? M →CA Yes O →CA Yes CA →O+M Because I think you’re right – I think pirates might like fish fingers.*

*M →CA Um – because pirates live by the sea and they eat fish. O →M Yes – because that’s the only thing they can get. M →O Yes – because they have no food on the um pirate ship. They only have treasure. O →M So all they can really get really is sharks and fish. M →O So we could only cook fish fingers on the fire. O →M Yep M →O Not, not, not, not, not sharks because we don’t live by the sea. O →M No, you’re right – pirates do eat sharks. CA →O+M I think pirates might eat sharks. What do you think Mary?*

*M →O I think they eat sharks too – massive ones. O →M Yea CA →M Yea M →O+CA  They have sharks for breakfast, sharks for lunch, sharks for dinner. O →M And fish fingers. CA →O+M I don’t think our fish fingers will have shark, any shark meat in them.*

*O →CA  No CA →O+M Because I don’t think – I don’t know any shops which sell shark meat.*

Some more planning also takes place in a discussion, at the end of the

session on 12th May.

*Transcript from 12th May (cont.)*

*Oliver and Mary are sitting on a sofa indoors. They jump up and down a bit, with excitement.*

*CA →O+M So – what would you like to do next week?*

*…… Shall we be pirates?*

*M →CA Yes*

*O →CA Yes – arrgh*

*Oliver jumps up and swings round in a circle with 1 arm extended while saying “arrgh”.*

*Mary jumps up too.*

*CA →O+M Um what do we need before we do the treasure hunt?*

*M →CA Um pirate hat.*

*CA →O+M Pirate hat – and what else? O →CA Um um um um um um um*

*Oliver and Mary are feeling excited so they jump around – on the floor and on and off the sofa.*

*CA →O+M Shall we make treasure maps?*

*M →CA Yes*

*O →CA And swords*

*………..*

*O →CA I’ll bring my toy sword – so I can fight. CA →O Your toy sword – that’d be great. Who are you going to fight? The enemy?*

*O →CA Yes M →CA I’ve got a sword. I’ve got – I’ve got a sword um sword, but it’s bent. I’ve got 2 ones.*

*We can have another one and one of my swords is like a pirate sword because it has a*

*er um a cross and an X um and X.*

*Oliver jumps onto the sofa and then falls off by mistake.*

*CA →O Are you all right Oliver?*

*CA →O+M We’re got some swords upstairs - they’re quite soft swords so they wouldn’t*

*hurt anyone – that would be quite good wouldn’t it?*

*M →CA And my one is plastic and it’s got an X*

*………*

*CA →O+M OK – so we’ve got it all planned = haven’t we?*

*O →CA Yep.*

**Analysis** (Section 2 - Pirates)

Integrated pedagogy

* The children, Oliver and Mary, and I, reflect on what pirates are like and what they need when looking for treasure. Together, they begin to plan a pirate topic for next week (AD)>><<(CI).
* I ask some leading questions (AD)>>>>.
* Oliver and Mary make suggestions and reflect on what pirates like to eat <<<<<<(CI).

In Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy (Wood, 2010), the transcribed sections of text in ‘Pirates Section 2’, above, are associated with the ‘assessing / reflecting / evaluating’ part of the model, along with planning activities. The adults and children plan together. The adults’ ideas are not privileged over the children’s ideas. Both children and adults have important contributions to make. It is the integration of ideas, and the children’s funds of knowledge, that generate the creative plans for the pirate topic.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The following EYFS goals can be applied to Oliver and Mary’s reflection and planning:

*PSED 1.10 Explains own knowledge and understanding and asks appropriate questions of others.*

*(When planning what to eat round the bonfire, Oliver says “What about fish fingers?”. Oliver explains that pirates like to eat fish because it’s the only thing they can get. Mary says that pirates have no food on the ship – only treasure.)*

*2.9 Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions.*

*(Mary says that she doesn’t like fish fingers.)*

*CLL 2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.*

*(Oliver and Mary listen and respond to ideas expressed by others throughout the discussions.)*

*3.18 Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations.*

*(Oliver and Mary suggest what sort of treasure the pirates might find.)*

*3.19 Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention.*

*(Oliver and Mary stick to the theme of pirates throughout the recorded conversations.)*

*3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.*

*(As the reflection and planning progress, ideas for the pirate topic become clarified.)*

The CLL goals listed above can be regarded as a stimulus for language development at the 40-60+ month age group, rather than as a task that has been completed. The stimulus can be developed into wider dimensions of learning as imaginative discussions unfold, such as shown in the transcript above.

Narrative

I reflect on whether Oliver and Mary would like to be pirates next week, based on observations of their interest in pirates on 24th February and 12th May. The children come up with some excellent suggestions about what pirates need, including gold treasure, jewels, an X on the map, fish fingers to eat round the bonfire, pirate hats and swords. However, the children will not be able to access these resources by themselves. They need help with framing the activity as well as collecting resources to extend their ideas and stimulate further learning.

In the transcript, the children use language to extend their thinking and ideas, very creatively. For example, in their discussion about what to eat around the bonfire, Oliver comes up with the idea of fish fingers <(CI). Mary thinks pirates won’t have anything on board except treasure and therefore agrees with Oliver that they would eat fish <<(CI). Oliver extends his idea to include sharks <(CI). Mary agrees <(CI). I think shark meat might be difficult to find and that they should go with the ‘fish fingers’ idea (AD)>>. I also encourage the children to try the fish fingers next week (AD)>>, even though the children initially say they don’t like them. In the light of the fact that pirates obviously do eat fish fingers, the children are both ready to take a chance and try them <<(CI), thus extending their food choices in the cause of imaginative play.

At the end of the session on 12th May, the adults on the team reflect on the children’s interest in pirates and consider how to facilitate their ideas. Adult Harriet offers to make clues for a treasure hunt. The adults plan the environment. The treasure hunt will take place in the area outside the setting, alongside the river, where we usually walk at this time in the session. Adult Sue agrees to make pirate hats. I will buy the fish fingers and encourage healthy eating (AD)>>>.

Throughout the planning and reflection section above there is evidence of the integration of child-led and adult-led suggestions and ideas within a meaningful social context. Without the adult-directed framing and provision of resources, the activity will not take place. The children’s funds of knowledge – the gold coins, the X on the map, the hats, the fish fingers, and the swords provide the fun, inspiration, and the rich potential for further learning. The style of interaction between children and adults here is mainly one of questions and answers.

**Section 3 – Planned Activity - Becoming Pirates** (Pirates)

On 19th May, activities are planned around the topic of ‘pirates’. First the children draw treasure maps on paper bags and write X’s on them, in the front garden. Then they are given their pirate hats and pirate swords.

*Transcript from 19th May*

*Oliver , Mary and I are sitting round the table in the front garden.*

*There is a group of 9 children round the table.*

*CA →O+M Right, Oliver and Mary, now, in a minute, we’re going to become pirates and we’re going to look for treasure.*

*O →CA Good*

*M →CA Good*

*………*

*CA →All …these are bags for the treasure – but we’re going to draw a treasure map on the outside.*

*…Right, now what do you need on a treasure map?*

*E →CA X marks the spot?*

*CA →O X marks the spot – is that what you think Oliver? O →CA Yes M →CA Yes CA →O OK*

*O →CA Well Dad drawed me a treasure map once and he made some treasure using*

*tin foil and buttons and he wrapped the tin foil around the buttons. CA →O Yes O →CA - and he sellotaped so it stayed on. CA →O That sounds like a good thing to do. O →CA And he put it in a pot – then he put it somewhere – and he drew me a*

*treasure map… with no X … and I couldn’t find it anywhere.*

*I give out the paper bags.*

*CA →O+M This is for your treasure map and Susannawill give you a hat – because you thought we needed hats didn’t you Oliver?*

*O →CA Yes*

*Adult Susanna gives out pirate hats that have been sellotaped together*

*CA →O+MPirate hats – and then you’ll have your pirate hat and your pirate treasure map*

*and then all we need is -*

*O →CA X marks*

*CA →O+M An X marks the spot*

*…….*

*Oliver and Mary draw their maps on their bags and write X’s on them.*

*CA →O+M+T Well done, T’s done some brilliant X’s. We definitely need an X to mark the spot*

*where the treasure is. I can see your X, Mary. O →CA There’s mine.*

*CA →O Good*

*……*

*O → M Mary can I see? Round and round and round and round in circles – d’you like mine?*

*Oliver looks across at Mary’s map.*

*A picture containing text, person

Description automatically generated*

*…….*

*Adult Harriet gives out toy swords to Mary and Oliver. They have brought their swords from home.*

*M →O I can’t wave my sword.*

*…….. O →HA Yea – that’s mine*

*HA →O Be safe with it though – can I trust you not to hurt anyone?*

*O →HA Yea HA →O You can you can chop down any trees or bushes that are in our way can’t you? O →HA Yes*

*……….*

*O →CA Aargh M →CA Aargh O →CA I’ll fight these brambles =*

*Aargh aargh, aargh.*

*Oliver slashes at the plants round the bottom of the holly tree – with his sword.*

*CA →O Fight the brambles – yes O →’brambles’ Aargh, aargh, aargh…*

*M →’brambles’ Aargh, aargh, aargh…*

*CA →O+M And they say things like “Ahoy there me hearties”.*

*O →CA Ahoy there me hearties. M →CA Ahoy there me hearties. O →CA  Naughty brambles*

*Harry touches Oliver’s sword with his ‘sword’(a stick).*

*O →H No – we’ve got to fight the brambles. =*

*Then Harry joins in – attacking the brambles.*

A picture containing tree, outdoor, red

Description automatically generated

**Analysis** (Section 3 - Pirates)

Integrated pedagogy

* The activity ‘Becoming Pirates’ is framed and set up by adults. Adults have brought the plans together based on their previous observations and interactions (AD) >>.
* The initial inspiration for ‘Becoming Pirates’ came from the children’s free play <<(CI).
* The resources for the treasure maps and the pirate hats are provided by the adults (AD) >>.
* The drawing of treasure maps and writing X to show where the treasure is hidden is free for children’s own interpretation << (CI).
* The wearing of hats and wielding of swords is child-led <<(CI).
* Taking the initiative to bring swords from home is child-led <<(CI).
* The instruction about the safe use of swords is adult-led (AD)>.
* The application of the instruction to use swords safely is child-led <(CI).
* The use of pirate vocabulary is initially child-led ‘Aargh’ <(CI)
* The adult then extends the vocabulary by suggesting saying things like ‘Ahoy there me hearties’ (AD)>.
* Once they are equipped, Oliver and Mary engage in some child-led imaginative play, fighting the brambles, while shouting out pirate sounding words <<(CI).

The ‘Becoming Pirates’ activity is an example of integrated pedagogy where children and adults, working together in cooperation, provide enough ideas and resources between them, to enable the group to imagine and feel as if they are a band of pirates ready to search for treasure.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The following EYFS goals apply to the ‘Becoming Pirates’ activity:

*PSED 1.9 Initiates conversations. attends to and takes account of what others say.*

*(Oliver starts a story about a treasure map – Mary says she can’t wave her sword.)*

*1.11 Takes steps to resolve conflicts with other children*

*(Oliver resolves a conflict with Harry)*

*3.14 Aware of the boundaries set, and of behavioural expectations in the setting.*

*(Oliver and Mary understand about being safe with swords and fighting brambles, not people)*

*3.15 Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression*

*(Oliver solves the problem without aggression when Harry touches his sword)*

*CL 1.11 Two channelled attention - can listen and do for short span.*

*(Oliver and Mary listen while drawing their maps.)*

*3.17 Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming. exploring the meaning and sounds of new words.*

*(Oliver and Mary learn a new pirate phrase.)*

*3.18 Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations.*

*(The pirate vocabulary helps Mary and Oliver to ‘become’ pirates.)*

*PD 1.27 Uses simple tools to effect changes to materials.*

*(Mary and Oliver use swords to change the brambles, as they hit them.)*

*1.31 Begins to form recognisable letters.*

*(Mary and Oliver write recognisable X’s on their treasure maps.)*

*2.16 Shows understanding of need for safety when tackling new challenges and considers and manages some risks.*

*(Mary and Oliver understand the need for safety when waving their swords around.)*

*2.18 Practises some appropriate safety measures without direct supervision.*

*(Mary and Oliver apply safety measures for themselves and only touch brambles with their swords.)*

*L 2.4 Gives means meaning to marks as they draw, write and paint.*

*(Mary and Oliver draw treasure maps and write X’s)*

*EAD 2.14 Initiates new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences.*

*(Mary and Oliver, in their pirate role play, initiate new combinations of movement and gesture.)*

*2.17 Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme.*

*(Mary and Oliver become ‘pirates’ and play alongside others engaged in the same theme.)*

Narrative

The ‘Becoming Pirates’ activity provides a rich source of learning opportunities as children contribute different ideas and funds of knowledge to the play.

When Oliver and Mary are drawing their treasure maps, they are keen to

write an X to show the location of the treasure and Oliver tells a story

about his dad to illustrate the point. Although the ‘Becoming Pirates’ activity

is structured by the adults (AD) >>>, once Oliver and Mary have their hats,

self-drawn treasure maps and swords, they feel like pirates and enter

into child-initiated imaginative play as they wield their swords and use

some pirate-inspired vocabulary <<<(CI). The simple hat and materials inspire imaginative role play.

**Section 4 – Planned Activity - The Treasure Hunt and Bonfire** (Pirates)

The group (children and adults together), set off on the treasure hunt. This takes them out of the setting into the surrounding area of the riverside path leading down to the reed bed.

*Transcript from 19th May*

*Everyone is gathered by the gate, wearing pirate hats and carrying ‘swords’ and paper bags with treasure maps drawn on them. They are lined up ready for the walk/treasure hunt. Adult Harriet gives instructions for the treasure hunt. She has laminated photos which are clues showing where to go next. Adult Harriet points to the first picture clue.*

*HA  →All Let’s go and find the first clue – then shall we pass it back down the adults so you can all see them – would that be easiest? When we get to the next clue - when we get to this place … we’ll find the next clue which will tell us where we need to walk next. So, you’ve got to follow these picture clues to find the treasure – but don’t tell anyone. Shhh.*

*……*

*All the children are now pretending to be pirates who are searching for the treasure.*

*O →All Hoist the mainsail.*

*CA →All Hoist the mainsail*

*CA →O Where d’you think the first clue is Oliver? Look at it.*

*Adult Harriet gives Oliver the picture clue to hold.*

*O →HA I think I know where that is. CA →O Where do you think that is? O →CA I think it’s just at the turning.*

*CA →O+M Let’s see O →M What do you think Mary? M →O Yup*

*Oliver looks up at the sign on the corner.*

*O →CA+M Ohh it’s a different one.*

*Oliver and Mary turn the corner and look at a different sign around the corner.*

*O →M Um – Yes M →O Yes*

*CA →O Yes – pass it down.*

*Oliver passes the picture back to the people behind.*

*HA →All Pass it down ….*

*HA →CA D’you want to start the next one?*

*Oliver passes the picture to the people behind him – and takes the next one which I am offering him.*

*CA →O+M: OK come up here. This is our next clue. Where is this one?*

*…….*

*M →CA The red sign. CA →O+M The red sign – where is there a red sign? O →CA+M This – this way – There’s a red sign just by the brambles and it has words on.*

*CA →O It has words on and it’s just by the brambles?*

*O →CA Yes - I can already smell it. I can already see it*

*CA →O I can see it too. O →CA+M We’ve seen the next clue. M →O+CA Yep*

*………..*

*Oliver and Mary and I, go through the gate.*

*………*

*CA →O+M There it is.*

*Oliver, Mary, and I, walk up to the red sign next to the path.*

*O →CA  Right*

*CA →O+M D’you know what it says? O →CA No CA →O+M ‘Warning – Public Footpath to Tam. Incomplete - Passable with Care At Low Tide”. Low Tide is when the river goes down.*

*CA →All Here’s some more pirates.*

*The rest of the group catch up*

*………*

*O →M+CA I wonder where the treasure is? I’m following my treasure map.*

*Oliver looks at the treasure map that he has drawn on his bag. Mary also looks at her treasure map.*

Oliver and Mary and the rest of the group continue to follow Adult Harriet’s picture clues, only stopping for a drink at the bench, until they get to clue number 12. Along the way various ‘pirates’ shout out things like “Aaargh” and “Land ahoy” and wave their swords around, hitting things like nettles and the railings.

*Transcript from 19th May*

*Oliver points to the next picture clue that I am holding (clue 12).*

*O →CA Oh so that’s the next clue.*

*CA →O That’s the next one.*

*O →CA It’s this way.*

*CA →O+M OK – on you go*

*Oliver and Mary walk down the path towards the river*

*O+M Ohhhh, Ohhhh*

*There are gold coins scattered on the ground.*

*HA →O+M What have you found? = Children start collecting them.*

*CA →O+M Wow!*

*………..*

*HA →All One piece each. CA →O+M One piece – put it in your bag and then you can help someone else find a piece.*

*Oliver and Mary collect their treasure and put it in their bags.*

*………..*

*A picture containing grass, outdoor, fire, red

Description automatically generated*

*Adult Susanna, Adult Harriet, and I, stand between the children and the river,*

*to keep everyone safe.*

*CA →O+M Now, Oliver and Mary, on the way back you can look for more treasure - any kind of treasure.*

After returning to Woodharp, the whole group sit on logs round the bonfire. Some of the adults are handing out hot chocolate. I show Oliver, Mary, and others a book called Portside Pirates while the fish fingers are cooked on the bonfire and given out.

*Transcript from 19th May*

*CA →O+M: Here’s my – here’s the pirate book. D’you want me to sing another bit of it?*

*O →CA Yes*

*O →CA Yes*

*…………….= CA sings: “I sailed with you to Timbuktu = The day I went to sea =*

*I lived on board a pirate ship =*

*And the captain said to me – =*

*Oh we go this way, that way,*

*Portside, starboard over the deep blue sea = This way that way, portside, starboard = Over the deep blue sea.” = Aarghh.*

*…………….*

*CA →O+M+All We’re cooking fish fingers because that’s what pirates eat – perhaps. HA →CA  Allegedly CA →O+M Allegedly - We think that might be – well we think pirates might have eaten fish anyway*

*don’t we Mary? =*

*M →CA  Yes*

*O →CA  Yes*

*Fish fingers are handed out in cone cups*

*…………*

*CA →O Do you like fish fingers Oliver? O →CA Yes*

*………….*

*M →CA I don’t like them, Catherine. CA →M You don’t like them – just put it back – that’s fine. Mary - go – walk round the outside and*

*put it on the table.*

**Analysis** (Section 4 - Pirates)

Integrated pedagogy

The treasure hunt is an example of structured play.

* The structure has been framed by Adult Harriet who has made picture clues for the children to follow and that lead to the treasure. (AD)>.
* Within the structure, the children find many opportunities for child-initiated role play as they follow the clues, consult their treasure maps and run around saying pirate phrases and wielding their swords <<<<(CI).
* At the bonfire, the pirate song is adult directed, but Oliver and Mary say they do want to hear it. (AD)>
* Mary and Oliver both want to try the fish fingers. Oliver likes them but Mary doesn’t. They are both happy to explore the taste (AD)><<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The EYFS goals that apply to the treasure hunt and bonfire are:

*CL 1.10 Maintains attention, concentrates, and sits quietly during appropriate activity.*

*(Oliver and Mary sit quietly and maintain attention when sitting round the bonfire.)*

*2.9 Responds to instructions involving a two-part sequence.*

*(Adult Harriet says: Let’s go and find the first clue – then shall we pass it back down the adults so you can all see them?)*

*3.21 Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.*

*(The storyline is - being pirates who are looking for treasure.)*

*PD 1.22 Experiments with different ways of moving.*

*(Being a pirate with a sword gave rise to lots of different ways of moving)*

*1.24 Negotiates space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children, adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles.*

*(Pirates race around and need to negotiate space successfully)*

*2.13 Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food.*

*(Fish fingers are a healthy food, being full of whole pieces of fish.)*

*L 1.27 Knows that information can be retrieved from books and computers (or signs when outside).*

*(Oliver says: This - this way - There’s a red sign just by the brambles and it has words on.*

*…. CA: D’you know what it says? O: No*

*CA: ‘Warning – Public Footpath to Tam. Incomplete - Passable with Care At Low Tide’ - Low Tide is when the river goes down”).*

*EAD 1.18 Begins to build a repertoire of songs and dances.*

*(Mary and Oliver listen to a popular pirate song round the bonfire)*

*2.13 Create simple representations of events, people and objects.*

*(The children draw treasure maps)*

*2.14 Initiates new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences.*

*(The pirate role play gives rise to new combinations of expressive movements and gestures.)*

*2.16 Introduce a storyline or narrative into their play.*

*(The storyline is - being pirates who are looking for treasure.)*

*2.17 Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme.*

*(Theme – pirates)*

*2.18 Plays cooperatively as part of a group to develop and act out a narrative.*

*(Mary and Oliver play as part of a group acting out a narrative about pirates finding treasure.)*

Narrative

The swords add to the amount of imaginative play that happens along the way, while searching for clues. One of the surprising things about the treasure hunt was how much the children keep in character and enjoy the imaginative role play, despite it being a highly structured activity. The other surprise was that the ‘Reflecting and Planning’ and ‘Becoming Pirates’ activities generated as much, if not more, learning than the actual ‘Treasure Hunt’. In the process of co-constructing the activities, the children’s thinking is being stimulated and their learning extended.

**Section 5 – Discussions about pirate activities – assessing, reflecting, and evaluating** (Pirates)

On the way back to Woodharp, Oliver and Mary and I reflect on the treasure hunt, the use of swords and whether pirates are real. When the group is back at Woodharp, Adult Hannah and I reflect on the pirate activities.

My Discussion with Oliver and Mary

*Transcript from 19th May*

*Oliver and Mary and I are walking along the path going back towards Woodharp.*

*CA →O+M Well, we found the treasure. O →CA Yes (Mary nods) CA →O+M: And we followed all the clues. M →CA Yup O →CA Yes – CatherineCA →O Yes? O →CA Could I take my bag and my treasure um home? CA →O Yes you can*

*M →CA Me too?*

*CA →M Yes you can*

*O →CA+M I can’t wait to show Mummy. M →CA+O: I can’t wait to show my Mummy either. CA →O+M: That’ll be nice. You can’t wait to show your mummies your treasure maps and your*

*treasure.*

*O →CA Yes CA →O And to tell them about being pirates. O →CA Yes - Oh and can I also take my hat home CA →O Yes – you can also take your hat home. M →CA Me too CA →M Yes, you too Mary. O →CA+M: Then we’ll have the whole gear. CA →O+M: It was a very good plan wasn’t it? O →CA Yes CA →O+M: And we’ve still got the fish fingers to go. O →CA Yes*

*…………….*

*Oliver and Mary are hitting the nettles and brambles along the side of the path with their swords. M →O You hit me.*

*O →M Oh yea that’s ….*

*CA →O+M D’you think it’s different if we hit someone by accident because we’re trying to hit the*

*bushes? =*

*O →CA Yea CA →O+M Or if we’re trying to hit someone on purpose? M →CA Yes CA →O+M Which is the worst thing to do? CA →M What do you think Mary – which is the worst one to do? M →CA Er O →CA Hit someone on purpose. M →CA Hit someone on purpose. CA →O+M: Yes – hit someone on purpose – then we would take their stick away or their sword*

*wouldn’t we?*

*M →CA Yea*

*…………*

*O →M+CA Pirates are real.*

*CA →O+M Pirates are real – pirates steal things from ships at sea. O →CA Yep – other ships – once my Daddy tried sailing -*

*CA →O Yes O →CA And he caught a lobster CA →O OK O →CA And the next day he tried sailing again. CA →O Yes O →CA On the same boat – but the lobster was gone. CA →O Oh O →CA So maybe pirates are real. CA →O+M: Maybe pirates – there are pirates - some real pirates – that do steal things from other people at sea. D’you think then they hide what they steal?*

*O →CA Yes CA →O+M: I think they hide it somewhere. I don’t know where.*

*…………*

*Oliver drops his bag by mistake. It falls off the end of his sword. Then he steps on it.*

*Oliver and Mary are pretending to be parrots and have been repeating lots of parrot-like phrases. They are now walking along the pavement and are nearly back at Woodharp.*

*O →M Pieces of 8, pieces of 8.*

*M →O Squawk squawk*

*O →M Black rock*

*Oliver stands on his bag again with one foot. Mary laughs.*

*O →CA+M: Pirates do get some things dirty. CA →O+M: Pirates do get some things dirty – they don’t keep everything immaculately clean.*

*O →CA  No M →CA No O →CA But they can always wash it in the sea water. CA →O+M: They can wash it in the sea water – yes. =*

*M →CA But it might get all sticky CA →M+O: Yes things do get sticky when they’re washed in sea water. M →CA+O: And and they might get sticky and they might lose it. O →CA+M: Pirates do get things dirty. CA →O+M: Pirates do. CA →M OK, this way – this way Mary.*

*Oliver, Mary, and I turn towards the road ready to cross. We walk across the grass.*

*CA →O+M: OK, pirates – even pirates have to stop at roads. Stop.*

*O →CA+M: All pirates drop the box and lose it.*

*M →O+CA: All pirates drop the box and lose it. Or they might lose it in the sea water.*

*Oliver, Mary, and I stop at the road. =*

*CA →M+O: They might lose it in the sea water – it might float away. M →CA Yes*

Discussion between myself and Adult Hannah

*Transcript from 19th May*

*Adult Harriet and I are in the kitchen*

*CA →HA  Harriet, did you feel this afternoon went well?*

*HA →CA I thought it was a brilliantly successful afternoon. The children were so excited –*

*and I think the fact that we had so many different elements to the afternoon worked really*

*well and the fact that it was all kind of linked together was – I just think the children*

*enjoyed and got into the whole pretend pirate – and all that creative, imaginative play – it*

*was really good.*

*CA →HA And do you think Oliver and Mary were pleased to see their plans kind of being helped*

*along and worked out by adults?*

*HA →CA Definitely – definitely – I think the 2 of them came in this morning talking about the*

*prospect of doing the treasure hunt and their treasure maps and came in with their*

*swords didn’t they, so even – they’d obviously thought about it before they came and*

*literally from this morning they’ve been excited about finding treasure – so yeah – I just*

*think they were so excited by the whole idea – and the fact that it was their idea was even*

*better really.*

*CA →HA So they were engaged. HA →CA Engaged – very much – but actually not just those 2 but the whole – it managed to be the*

*whole group, didn’t it?*

*CA →HA Yes, yes. HA →CA And sort of – really enjoyed it. CA →HA And the children were very good with their swords weren’t they?*

*HA →CA Very good – dare I say amazingly good with them. CA →HA Yes HA →CA I think setting out sort of the expectations clearly at the beginning made the difference*

*and then they knew what they could and perhaps couldn’t do. CA →HA Yes*

*HA →CA So there were no incidents I don ‘t think – it all – it just seemed to work really well – but*

*it also just added to the fun of it didn’t it – having a sword.*

*CA →HA And d’you think it helps actually, with their exercise? =*

*HA →CA I think so – in some ways yes – yeah very much so – um and this afternoon was*

*horrible weather to be fair – but no one was complaining – they were just so engaged*

*and sort of on task that in fact the amount they walked, as well, didn’t seem to be an*

*issue – because they’re so busy running on to the next clue.*

*CA →HA And they’re using their imagination? HA →CA Very much so – they were almost in their own world weren’t they? CA →HA Yes HA →CA A lot of them. CA →HA And thank you so much Harriet for doing all those lovely clues for the treasure. HA →CA That’s all right. CA →HA Thank you.*

**Analysis** (Section 5 - Pirates)

Integrated pedagogy

* I open a discussion about the treasure hunt with Oliver and Mary. I make the evaluation “Well, we found the treasure…and we followed all the clues.” (AD)>
* Oliver and Mary reflect on what to do with the treasure now. They are both excited at the thought of taking the treasure, the treasure maps and the pirate hats home to show their Mummies. Oliver asks the questions and initiates the ideas. Mary agrees. <<<(CI).
* Mary is hit by Oliver’s sword while they are both hitting nettles and brambles along the side of the path <(CI). This leads to a discussion about the difference between hitting someone accidentally or on purpose. I ask some leading questions (AD) >>. The children make the assessment that it is worse to hit someone on purpose. <<(CI).
* Oliver initiates a discussion about whether pirates are real <(CI). I give an opinion (AD)>. Oliver tells a story about a missing lobster that might have been stolen and comes to the conclusion: “So maybe pirates are real.” <<(CI).
* Oliver drops his bag and steps on it before observing “Pirates do get some things dirty.” <(CI). This observation leads to a discussion about how pirates can clean things. Oliver thinks they can wash things in the sea <(CI). Mary thinks this might make things sticky and that they might get lost in the sea <<(CI). All the ideas in this discussion come from the children.

The discussion between myself and Adult Harriet is about Adult Harriet’s evaluation of the afternoon’s activities. She described it as a ‘brilliantly successful afternoon’. The following extract of the text shows how the integration of child-led and adult-led initiatives led to the successful outcome:

*Transcript from 19th May*

*CA →HA And do you think Oliver and Mary were pleased to see their plans kind of being helped*

*along and worked out by adults?*

*HA →CA Definitely – definitely – I think the 2 of them came in this morning talking about the*

*prospect of doing the treasure hunt and their treasure maps and came in with their swords*

*didn’t they, so even – they’d obviously thought about it before they came and literally from*

*this morning they’ve been excited about finding treasure – so yeah – I just think they were*

*so excited by the whole idea – and the fact that it was their idea was even better really.*

*CA →HA So they were engaged. HA →CA Engaged – very much – but actually not just those 2 but the whole – it managed to be the*

*whole group, didn’t it?*

Adult Harriet also commented on how well the children handled the swords. She thought that it was the adults setting out expectations clearly at the beginning that made the difference. Having swords was the children’s idea <(CI), but instruction on the appropriate use of the swords was given by adults for the good of the whole group (AD)>. These discussions between adults and children contain a mix of assessing, reflecting, and evaluating.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The areas of learning that are most relevant to the ‘Discussions About Pirate Activities’ are PSED and CL.

*PSED 1.9 Initiates conversations, attends to and takes account of what others say.*

*(Oliver initiates more of the conversations. Oliver and Mary attend to what others say.)*

*1.10 Explains own knowledge and understanding and asks appropriate questions of others.*

*(Oliver and Mary ask questions about taking things home and explain how pirates can clean things)*

*1.11 Takes steps to resolve conflicts with other children*

*(Oliver and Mary discuss the situation when Mary gets hit by Oliver’s sword and resolve it.)*

*CL 2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.*

*(Oliver and Mary both listen to each other in the discussion about how pirates can clean things.)*

*3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence, and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.*

*(Oliver and Mary use talk in all the discussions to organise and clarify their thinking.)*

Narrative

The discussions above have been included in the theme of imaginative play because they are all related to pirates and the imaginative pirate activities that the children have been engaged in during the afternoon session. The children’s discussions are very creative and more diverse than the discussion between the adults. There is evidence of ‘sustained shared thinking’ as the children and the adults develop the conversation from what pirate-related objects they can take home, to the rights and wrongs of hitting and finally to whether pirates are real and what happens if you drop something in sea water. The children and the adults are exploring ideas together, about the activity they have just been experiencing.

The adult discussion is more focused. Adult Harriet expresses surprise at the lack of incidents involving swords, although Oliver and Mary did have one incident that they quickly resolved, with help from me. This incident was another example of co-constructive engagement between the children, Oliver and Mary and myself.

**5.3.2 THE GRUFFALO**

**Section 1 – Conversation - Options for the walk** (The Gruffalo)

In the next excerpt from the transcript, dated 21st April, there is a conversation about where to go on the walk that afternoon. The 3-year-old, Harry (H), makes a choice to go to the deep dark wood.

*Transcript from 21st April 2017*

*Harry and I are having a conversation in the front garden about where to go on the walk.*

*CA →H Harry, would you like to be the leader on the walk today?*

*H →CA Yes*

*CA →H Where do you – where do you want to walk to?*

*H →CA Um*

*CA →H D’you want to go to the bench, the, the end of the…(pause). D’you want to go to the deep dark wood, or the river or the reed bed? H →CA Deep dark wood. C A →H You want to go to the deep dark wood? OK - and Harry - so we’ll walk all the way to the*

*deep dark wood, OK?*

*H →CA Where is it? C A →H It’s at the end of the path. When we get to the deep dark wood we’ll see what you want*

*to do – OK?*

*H →CA Mm (Harry nods) CA →H OK.*

**Analysis** (Section 1 – The Gruffalo)

Integrated pedagogy

* I ask Harry questions about the walk (AD)>
* Harry responds, choosing the deep dark wood, although he is not sure where it is <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*CL 1.5 Listens to others one to one or in small groups when conversation interests them.*

*(Harry listens to me and responds.)*

*3.13 Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.*

*(Harry makes his meaning clear to me, with a few correctly chosen words)*

There is very little in the EYFS (30-50 month) goals about making choices, even though this is an important area of development for Harry in this conversation. ‘Making choices’ does come up in the EYFS document ‘Characteristics of Effective Learning’.

Narrative

In this excerpt, Harry chooses where to go but the suggestions about different possibilities come from me. By calling the wood ‘the deep dark wood’, I may be influencing Harry’s thinking and firing up an imaginative connection between the popular story of the Gruffalo and the walk the group is about to embark on. The walk has been pre-planned as part of the structure of the session, but the route and activities on the way have not been planned. The choice that Harry makes, walking to the deep dark wood, sets the scene for the imaginative play that follows.

**Section 2 - Conversations and Observations - The walk**

(The Gruffalo)

Harry has imaginative thoughts on the walk about what they will find in the wood. He plays with ideas about a Gruffalo, a mouse, an owl, and a snake. As the walk progresses, he finds the ‘Gruffalo’s cave’ and ‘owl’s house’. This is an unplanned, child-led session where I am observing Harry’s choices and ideas.

*Transcript from 21st April 2017*

*The group are walking along the path beside the fence and then up through the gate.*

*CA →H Right Harry – Were you saying something about the hole?*

*H →CA Big – there’s going to be a big bad derho. CA →H A big badger hole?*

*H →CA A big bad derho*

*Harry is trying to make himself understood. I am not there yet. CA →H D’you think we might find a big badger hole? H →CA Big bad derho CA →H Where would we find it? H →CA In the woods. CA →H In the woods – we might find a big badger hole in the woods? H →CA A big a big moho derho. Now find babies in the forest. Now find mohos in the forest.*

*Harry is quite excited about what he is talking about – but I don’t have a clue what this conversation is about (yet).*

*……………*

*H →CA A der ho CA →H Sorry? H →CA A der ho CA →H Duck hole? H →CA A der ho CA →H A hole – a hole for a …?*

*The group are walking along the path, towards the bench.*

*H →CA Derho HA →H Deer? H →HA+CA: Derho CA →H Derho? H →CA Derho Adult Harriet looks confused – I am confused too. Harry knows exactly what he is trying to say but no-one can understand him – yet H →CA Derho with a mouse in there. CA →H A mouse in there? HA →H A door hole? H →CA+HA A derho – a derho too. A derho CA →H Who might be – who might be in there Harry? H →CA A der ho*

*CA →H Who might be in the derho? HA →H A dog hole? H →CA+HA A derho – a derho*

*CA →H Who lives in there? H →CA A derho, derho CA →H Yes – who lives in that? A big bad derho? HA →H A gruffalo? H →HA+CA  Yes – derho CA →H A gruffalo? H →CA Yes – a bad one. CA →H A Gruffalo – wow – A Gruffalo - there might be – there might be a Gruffalo.*

*I am very excited now! I have, at last, understood what this conversation is about.*

*H →CA+HA A bad one – a bad one*

*CA →H In the deep dark wood d’you think Harry? H →CA Yes – It’s a bad one. CA →H A bad ….. H →CA Gruffalo CA →H And a mouse H →CA And a mouse – and an owl – and snake CA →H And the owl and the snake.*

*…………….*

*H →CA It’ll be really scary. CA →H Scary? H →CA Yes ­– Not we’ll like it. CA →H Well we’ll keep – Molly and Adult Patrick and Adult Harriet and Adult Esther and Adult*

*Susannah will keep us all safe won’t they Harry?*

*CA →All Harry thinks that there might be a Gruffalo in the deep dark wood – but we’ll go and see.*

*I think we’ll be fine.*

*Everyone reaches the bench and stops for a drink.*

*…………………….*

*The whole group sets off again, walking along the path towards the wood.*

*CA →H We’re going – where are we going Harry? H →CA To the deep, dark, scary woods. CA →H Yes – to the deep, dark wood.*

*………*

*The group walks into the wood*

*CA →H Right, Harry, this is the deep, dark wood.*

*……………… = =*

*H →CA I really don’t like this*

*CA →H We haven’t seen a Gruffalo yet have we Harry? H →CA No CA →H I think it’s all right. I think the Gruffalo is just the story in the book.*

*I don’t think there’s a real Gruffalo here. This is the deep, dark wood.*

*It is a little bit darker isn’t it? But there’s only trees and birds.*

*H →CA And and nothing else? CA →H And flowers H →CA And nothing else. CA →H And nothing else. There might be a badger – but they usually only come out at night.*

*Oh look – I can hear a bird singing. There’s nothing scary here Harry is there?*

*H →T There are no Gruffalos here*

*CA →H No Gruffalos here. The Gruffalo’s only the story.*

*H →SA The Gruffalo’s only a story.*

*………………*

*CA →H We’re not frightened are we Harry?*

*H →CA No CA →H We’re not scared. We’re brave. H →CA I not like the – I not like noises.*

*……………*

*H →CA …. There’s a snake here*

*CA →H Well – I don’t think so – no – just the birds H →CA And just the Gruffalo – in the cave. No Gruffalos here now.*

*I hold Harry’s hand.*

*CA →H There – you’re very brave Harry. H →CA I am, I’m quite scared. CA →H We haven’t seen anything scary have we? – Just the lovely trees – look at these flowers.*

*These flowers are called bluebells.*

*The group walks into a clearing full of bluebells. H →CA Is that a Gruffalo cave?*

*Harry points with his stick to a small dark area surrounded by tall trees.*

*CA →H Is that a what?*

*H →CA Gruffalo cave – Gruffalo cave – Gruffalo cave Harry’s word for Gruffalo still sounds like der ho – but now we understand what he means!*

*T →CA A Gruffalo cave*

*CA →H The Gruffalo cave?*

*H →CA Yes – there*

*Harry points with his stick.*

*CA →H Ah, you could pretend it was, couldn’t you Harry? It’s not real though so you*

*don’t need to worry – but you could pretend.*

*CA →All That – we think that might be the Gruffalo cave there. SA →All Yes – it does look like the Gruffalo cave.*

*T →CA Shall we go further on. CA →H But, Harry, we’re just pretending, aren’t we? We’re just pretending. SA →All That’s a pretending Gruffalo cave.*

*Harry is still holding his stick forward PA →All Ah – oh yes*

*H →T It’s just pretending CA →H It’s just pretending – yes that’s right. H →CA This is the Gruffalo cave*

*Harry points forward to where the path enters a dark tunnel*

*CA →H This is a cave d’you think?*

*H →CA Yes – A Gruffalo cave CA →H This one might be a Gruffalo cave? H →CA Yes. There might be a mouse. CA →H A mouse? There might be a mouse but real mice are very little… The path leading through the wood ascends along a slope.*

*The group walks on up the hill to a fork at the top where there is an old tree stump.*

*H →CA Yes… An owl – an owl in there*

*CA →H D’you think there’s an owl there?*

*H →CA Yes – in there*

*H points to the old tree trunk with his stick.*

*CA →H In the tree?*

*H →CA Yes*

*……..*

*H →CA Yes - Owl is there – an owl*

*H goes right up to the old tree trunk and points with his stick*

*CA →H An owl?*

*CA →All This might be the owl’s house we think. H →CA And the Gruffalo’s house. Gruffalo up here. The Gruffalo is up here.*

*……… . =*

*CA →H Shall we put some pretend ones (Gruffalos) in next week Harry – just pictures of them*

*that we can find – shall we do that?*

*H →CA Yea*

*A picture containing tree, outdoor, plant, garden

Description automatically generated*

**Analysis** (Section 2 – The Gruffalo)

Integrated pedagogy

* Harry imagines that there is a Gruffalo in the wood <(CI)
* He perseveres in communicating this to the adults, who are trying to understand. His pronunciation of words is very unclear. He says the word “derho” 20 times before Adult Harriet suddenly understands that it means Gruffalo <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<(CI).
* The adults persevere, listening attentively to Harry. They listen to Harry’s word 20 times before they understand it. They also make comments and ask questions to try to clarify what Harry is meaning (AD)>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>.
* Harry frightens himself with the thought of a Gruffalo in the woods even though this was his imaginative idea in the first place < (CI).
* I reassure Harry. I say: “We’re just pretending” (AD)>.
* Once Harry is not so scared, he expands his imaginative play, finding a Gruffalo cave and a home for owl in the tree <<(CI).
* After observing Harry’s imaginative thinking about the Gruffalo (and inspired by Adult Harriet), I suggest putting pictures of Gruffalos around the wood that the children can find next week (AD)>.
* Harry agrees <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*CL 3.10 Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening, anticipate what might happen next...*

*(Harry uses talk to connect his ideas about the Gruffalo in the wood.)*

*3.13 Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.*

*(Harry keeps going with intonation, rhythm and phrasing until his meaning is clear to others.)*

*3.14 Uses vocab focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them.*

*(The Gruffalo is very important to Harry).*

*3.15 Builds up vocab that reflects the breadth of their experiences.*

*(Harry has the Gruffalo story at home and it has been read to him many times, so he draws on this experience and uses it in the vocabulary of his imaginative play.)*

*3.16 Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play.*

*(Harry pretends that a dark tunnel through the trees is a Gruffalo cave and that a tree is owl’s house.)*

Narrative

Harry is imagining that there might be a big, bad Gruffalo in the deep dark wood. The communication about this is torturous but the perseverance on both sides provides a light-bulb moment in which the adults understand what Harry is saying and Harry’s language and meaning has been understood and valued. Harry also imagines that there is a mouse, an owl, and a snake in the wood. He pretends there is a Gruffalo cave and a tree where owl lives. He is building up a whole imaginative scenario that he is enjoying but also finding quite frightening. I reassure Harry and help him to feel safe. He is alternating between his imagination and the reality of what is in the wood. For the adult, it’s a delicate balance between nurturing Harry’s imagination by joining in with the imaginative game that there might be a Gruffalo in the wood and reassuring him that he is safe because it is only a pretend game. Harry’s imaginative game is so real to him that he needs my reassurance to be able to walk on through the wood without fear. Once reassured, Harry talks about the Gruffalo and other characters from the book for the rest of the walk, through the wood and back along the path to Woodharp. Harry is drawing on his funds of knowledge about the Gruffalo story and remembering different characters in the story and their houses.

It is the integration of Harry’s child-led thinking and imagination, expressed through language, and the adults’ abilities to listen, understand and see the importance of this topic to Harry, that enables plans for the Gruffalo topic to go ahead and to be put into action the following week, with all the accompanying potential for supporting children’s learning. Harry has also been learning so much on the walk about using his imagination, overcoming his fears, and communicating his ideas, thoughts, and feelings. None of the activities or conversations on the walk were pre-planned by an adult but they all unfolded over the afternoon. The walk was framed by me, an adult, but where the group went and the content of what happened on the walk was led by Harry.

**Section 3 – Planned Activity - Introducing the planned Gruffalo game** (The Gruffalo)

Adult Harriet introduces the structured activity that she has planned to carry out this week in the deep dark wood. It has been inspired by Harry’s imaginative thinking and imaginative play in the previous week, which other children also enjoyed. First, she reads the Gruffalo story. Then she invites interaction and responses from the children as she asks them questions about the story and explains what to look for in the Gruffalo game. The 3-year-olds, Harry (H) and Melody (M) are both present this afternoon.

*Transcript from 28th April 2017*

**=**

*All the children are gathered around Adult Harrietin the back garden – not far from the apple tree. Adult Harriet is holding the Gruffalo storybook.*

*HA  →All: This afternoon I want you to really use your clever heads and your listening ears = to see if you can remember parts of the story – because we’re going to go on an = exciting adventure… in the deep dark wood.*

*Adult Harriet opens the Gruffalo storybook.*

*HA →All … we’re going to go on a Gruffalo hunt. Shall we see what’s in the story and*

*remember what we need to look for when we’re in the deep dark wood?*

*………*

*Adult Harriet reads the Gruffalo story with the book facing the children so that they can see the pictures. Harry and others join in with repeated refrains and anticipate key events when Adult Harriet pauses.*

*HA →All So remind me children – who did we have – which animals did mouse find?... H →HA A fox HA →H A fox – well done Harry. HA →All Can anyone remember where the fox lived? He lived in an under …. H →HA An underground house. HA →H An underground house – so today we need to look for the underground house with the*

*fox. OK? Next – who did he meet next?*

*Many voices Owl HA →All Owl – and where did the owl live? Voices In a tree top house HA →All In a tree top house. So – when we go on our Gruffalo trail do we need to look downwards*

*to find the owl? =*

*Voices No, Up HA →All Upwards to the top of the tree to find the owl – and finally*

*Harry mimes a snake*

*Voices Snake HA →All Where did the snake live? Voices In a log pile house HA →All In a log pile house.*

*Harry is playing with his stick. He is not so involved when the adult is doing all the talking. HA →All So if you see a pile of logs when we’re in the deep dark wood – look carefully*

*because – Harry – you might find a snake in the log pile house. If you see some stones –*

*maybe in the tree trunk I think – you might find the rocks where the fox lives – and if you*

*look up high in the tree top house – you might see… Voices The Owl.*

*HA →All I’ve got pictures for you to find. If you find a picture, please don’t pick it up – because I*

*would like you to leave it there so that your friend behind you can find it too…*

**Analysis** (Section 3 – The Gruffalo)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adult Harriet plans an imaginative Gruffalo game round the deep dark wood, based on an assessment of Harry’s interest in the Gruffalo in the previous week. (AD)> <(CI)
* She plans the environment, the activities, and the adults’ roles. (AD)>>>
* She reads the Gruffalo story to the children and introduces them to the Gruffalo game. (AD)>>
* Harry, Melody, and others join in with repeated refrains and respond to Adult Harriet’s questions about the story (AD)>><<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*L 1.7 Listens to and joins in with stories and poems, one-to-one, and also in small groups.*

*(Harry listens to the story and joins in)*

*1.8 Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases rhymes and stories.*

*(Harry joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events in the story)*

*1.9 Beginning to be aware of the way stories are structured.*

*(Harry is aware of the structure of what is a very familiar story)*

*1.11 Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall.*

*(Harry listens to the story and recalls that mouse found a fox who lived in an underground house.)*

*1.12 Describes main story stetting, events, and principal characters.*

*(Harry can describe the story setting and the principal characters – see transcript in section 2)*

Narrative

Harry and Melody are listening and attentive while Adult Harriet is reading the Gruffalo story and during the first part of her questions. However, Harry loses concentration when the dialogue continues. He will need the support of adults to remember all that Adult Harriet has said about where to find the pictures of different animals.

**Section 4 – Planned Activity - The Gruffalo game** (The Gruffalo)

The children walk along the path towards the deep dark wood, imagining various scenarios about characters from the Gruffalo story. Once they reach the wood the structured Gruffalo game begins where children follow the Gruffalo pictures and find pictures of the animals in their different homes as they go along.

*Transcript from 28th April 2017*

*Melody, Harry, myself, and the rest of the group set off walking towards the deep dark wood*

*CA →H+M: We’re going to do a Gruffalo hunt in the deep dark wood.*

*H →W Only pretending ….*

*CA →H Are we pretending Harry? CA →M I don’t think it will be a real Gruffalo do you Melody? M →CA No CA →M D’you think it’ll be pictures? M →CA Yes CA →H+M Where are we going to find the fox again?*

*M →CA In the deep dark wood CA →M+H Underground house?*

*H →CA I’m going to find – I’m going to find the Gruffalo – I’m going to find all the animals CA →H You’re going to find all the animals Harry? H →CA I can. CA →H Wow – wow, wow*

*………………..*

*H →CA The Gruffalo went that way.*

*Harry points up the path.*

*………………*

*H →CA It’s going that way now*

*CA →H Right let’s tell everyone. CA →All Stop – Harry says the Gruffalo went that way.*

*Harry and I point up the path.*

*H →All The Gruffalo went that way.*

*Harry points again, up the path. Harry is smiling and enjoying this very much.*

*CA →H OK*

*H →CA The fox running from the Gruffalo that way.*

*Harry points again.*

*CA →H The Gruffalo - that way? H →CA The Gruffalo is attacking the fox that way. CA →H D’you think so? H →CA Yes*

*M →CA I think all the animals went this way. CA →M You think all the animals went this way Melody?*

*M →CA Yes*

*………………*

*H →CA Look – for the fox, for the fox.*

*Harry holds up a little bundle of dry grass that he has found at the side of the path.*

*CA →H Would that be good for the fox?*

*H →CA Yes CA →H In his underground house – would that make him a bed d’you think Harry? H →CA No – to eat it. CA →H Eat it? H →CA Yes CA →H That’d be nice H →CA The fox will eat this CA →H The fox will eat this? H →CA Yes – he likes this CA →H He likes this – that’s good*

*…………………*

*I lead the way along the path. Harry stops and points to a hole that has been made by an animal in the hedge.*

*H →All A fox hole*

*CA →H What’s that Harry? H →CA Fox hole CA →HWow H →CA Fox hole CA →AllA fox hole – Harry has found a fox hole.*

*HA →HOh clever!*

*Harry points to the hole and looks at Adult Harriet*

*H →HA  Fox hole HA →HWell done – you’re right – good boy.*

*……………….*

*Harry stops on the path again.*

*CA →H Wow – what have you found Harry?*

*Harry points to a tree.*

*H →CA Owl house*

*………………..*

*CA →H Owl house?*

*H →CA Here’s the owl house*

*CA →H The owl house. Right Harry – this way – let’s see if we can find a Gruffalo.*

*………………..*

*Harry has something in his hands. He opens his hands and shows me 2 handfuls of dried grass that he has collected from the side of the path.*

*CA →H What’s that Harry?*

*H →CA  Eh – for the for the Gruffalo to eat and the Gruffalo and for the fox to eat …*

*CA →H You’ve got some food for the Gruffalo and some food for the Gruffalo and some food for the fox?*

*H →CA The fox will eat it and the Gruffalo will not like this. CA →H OK.*

The group have now reached the edge of the wood. Children are pointing at a treehouse made in an old oak tree. I point to the pictures of the Gruffalo and the mouse and brings them to Harry’s attention. The children follow a trail of Gruffalo pictures round the wood.

*A picture containing tree, outdoor, person, mammal

Description automatically generated*

They do a mixture of following the trail of pictures and going in and out of their own imaginative play. For example:

*Transcript from 28th April 2017*

*Harry and Melody start to run on ahead, very keen to find more pictures.*

*M →CA There*

*H →CA Gruffalo*

*Harry and Melody point excitedly*

*M →CA+H This way*

*Melody points along the path*

*CA →M+H Where’s the next Gruffalo? M →CA  There*

*Melody points to the next Gruffalo picture*

*H → CA There – The fox – the fox lives there, the fox lives there, the fox lives there*

*Harry points to a pile of sticks and leaves and an old sack on the ground at the base of a tree.*

*CA →H The fox lives there?  H → CA  Yup – The Fox lives there.*

*……………….*

*Harry and Melody and I walk along the path beside the wood*

*CA →H+M: Where’s the owl’s house?*

*…………..*

*Melody runs forward and points out owl’s house*

*CA →M Well done Melody CA →H+M There’s the owl’s house – in the tree – the owls CA →All We’ve found the owls There are 3 pictures of owls in the tree. Harry points. H →All Owls – There – There (louder)*

*A picture containing tree, outdoor, ground, little

Description automatically generated*

When the group returns to Treetops, Adult Harriet sings the Gruffalo song, with actions, when everyone is sitting around the bonfire.

*Transcript from 28th April 2017*

*Adult Harriet sings and does actions to the song. Harry and Melody watch.*

*“He has terrible tusks and terrible claws and terrible teeth in his terrible jaws. He’s a Gruffalo, Gruffalo, Gruffalo = He’s the Gruffalo”*

*HA →All Shall we try that? He has terrible tusks – first*

*He has terrible claws – And he has terrible teeth in his terrible jaws.*

*……………*

*Harry listens intently – enjoying the song*

*H →HA And terrible fights. HA →H Good HA →All Let’s carry on The group sings: “He has terrible tusks =*

*And terrible claws =*

*And terrible teeth in his terrible jaws He’s a Gruffalo, Gruffalo, Gruffalo =*

*He’s the Gruffalo…….*

*The song continues. Harry and Melody join in with the actions*

**Analysis** (Section 4 – The Gruffalo)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adults plan the timing of the activity. They make pictures and put them around the wood ready for the children to find. (AD)>>>
* I lead the group along the path towards the deep dark wood. (AD)>
* Harry and Melody reassure each other that this is a pretend game involving pictures and not real animals before going back safely to their imaginative play. <<<(CI) I ask them a few leading questions. (AD)>>>
* Harry and Melody enter into imaginative play, within the structure of the activity, even before reaching the deep dark wood. They are completely involved in the topic. They have child-initiated ideas about which way the animals have gone, where they live and what they like to eat <<<(CI).
* Adult Harriet introduces the Gruffalo song when everyone is sitting around the bonfire (AD)> Harry and Melody listen and join in with the actions <<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*PSED 1.5 Can play in a group, extending and elaborating play ideas.*

*(Harry and Megan play the Gruffalo game with others and elaborate it with their ideas)*

*1.6 Initiates play, offering cues to peers to join them.*

*(Harry often initiates the imaginative play)*

*1.7 Keeps play going by responding to what others are saying or doing.*

*(Melody and Harry both keep the imaginative play going)*

*3.12 Can usually adapt behaviour to different events, social situations, and changes in time.*

*(Melody and Harry are good at adapting their behaviour to the rules of the game)*

*CL 1 .9 Is able to follow directions*

*(Melody and Harry follow Adult Harriet’s directions for the Gruffalo game)*

*3.16 Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play.*

*(Harry and Melody pretend that the tree is owl’s house)*

*PD 1.14 Runs skilfully and negotiates space successfully, adjusting speed or direction to avoid obstacles.*

*(Melody and Harry run through the wood negotiating space to follow the trail of Gruffalos)*

*EAD 2.10 Build stories around toys (and books)*

*(Harry and Melody build their own imaginative story around the Gruffalo story)*

Narrative

This can be described as structured play because the structure has been set up by an adult. However, within this framework there is plenty of room for child-initiated imaginative play. Harry, especially, keeps veering off the ‘script’ of Adult Harriet’s structured Gruffalo game, into his own imaginary play. For example, the Gruffalo pictures are part of the structured game but Harry’s idea of where the fox lives is all his own imagination, when he sees a pile of sticks and leaves. The fox picture was discovered some way back. Harry and Melody enjoy following Gruffalo pictures and, further on in the wood, they find pictures of a snake in a pile of logs and an owl in a tree. When the children have completed the game, Adult Harriet gives a summary of what has been found and says: “That was definitely the fastest we have ever walked round the woods wasn’t it? You were all running around to find the next Gruffalo – well done.” In fact, during the game, Harry forgot all about his fear of the deep dark wood. Before Melody and Harry get to the wood, Harry is making up his own imaginative story where he finds a fox hole and an owl house and collects dried grass for the fox to eat.

**Section 5 – Reflections on the Gruffalo topic** (The Gruffalo)

Harry and Melody reflect on the Gruffalo game

*Transcript from 28th April 2017*

Harry and Melody are sitting on the sofa=

*CA →H OK – Harry did you like the Gruffalo hunt? =*

*H →CA Yes CA →H So – which was your favourite bit?*

*H → CA When the – when I found the owl. CA →H When you found the owl? H → CA Yes   CA →H Where did you find the owl? H → CA In – tree CA →H In the tree. CA →M What was your favourite bit Melody? M →CA The Gruffalo CA →M The Gruffalo – What did you like about the Gruffalo? M →CA Um following the trails. CA →M The trail – finding them on the walk. M → CA Yes CA →H And do you like – Is the Gruffalo story one of your favourites Harry? H → CA Yes CA →H Because that was your idea wasn’t it. H → CA Yes CA →H To go. And did you have food for the fox? H → CA Yes CA →H And food for the Gruffalo? H → CA They eat them now. CA →H Are they eaten now – they’ve eaten the food – good – lovely.*

*…………………..*

Discussion between myself and Adult Harriet

*Transcript from 28th April 2017*

*CA →HA Um HA, what did you feel about today’s activity – which you very kindly set up – a lot of it.*

*HA → CA I thought it seemed very successful – I’ve got to say – like last week really, that Harry*

*was so animated and he was in a world of his own and he spotted lots that we hadn’t*

*placed, didn’t he? He found a fox’s hole. His imagination just seemed to be completely*

*fired.*

*CA →HA And his language HA →CA And his language – and also I think his confidence. CA →HA Yes HA → CA He doesn’t seem so scared to speak um because he has had a few difficulties with being*

*understood. I think – so I just think giving him that bit of time – he’s just really flourished –*

*just in these last 2 weeks. Um yeah it’s been good. I think it was an interesting –*

*interesting idea. I think all the kids loved it.*

*CA →HA And he was a bit scared of the deep dark wood last week.*

*HA →CA He was wasn’t he CA →HA But not really this week. HA →CA No – this week he nearly ran around I think - he was so excited. CA →HA Yes HA →CA And he came in this morning with his Mum and the first thing he said was “We’re doing*

*Gruffalo today” – so he’d remembered it from last week. He just got excited by it already.*

*…………………..*

*CA →HA And what did you think – um what do you think about who initiates an activity, whether*

*It’s the children or whether it’s the adult or how do you feel that has been working*

*together?*

*HA →CA Well, in truth I think – I think this whole process has challenged me quite a lot because I*

*must admit I wasn’t certain that some of the children would actually be able to come up*

*with their own ideas themselves and it’s completely surprised me that actually just*

*following their lead has been phenomenal and really benefited the whole group, I think.*

*Um – for example with Harry. Harry before was quite quiet – didn’t say very much –*

*wasn’t very clear to be understood either – so I think I doubted we’d get very much*

*feedback from him to be honest. And just the way in which he’s come alive these last*

*couple of weeks actually has really challenged my thinking. So, I think, saying really – a*

*mixture of both is really helpful. I think it’s quite good to mode to the children so that they*

*can see what is possible perhaps – as well, from our ideas but equally we’ve learnt so*

*much from their ideas and bouncing off what they’ve been interested in. And I think*

*having, sort of – trying to harness their excitement has really brought things so much*

*more alive to them – and I feel like they’ve learnt a lot more because of it being their ideas*

*and their interests – rather than us trying to push something on them. So very much a*

*mixture of the two I think works really well =*

*CA →HA Thank you very much Adult Harriet.*

Discussion with Harry’s mother (Harry is also present, sitting with his mother)

*Transcript from 16th June 2017*

*CA →(H’s mum) I just wanted to ask you particularly about the Gruffalo bit that we did because I felt*

*that it was quite a breakthrough for Harry*

*(H’s mum) →CA Yeah it was.*

*CA →(H’s mum) I don’t know what you felt?*

*(H’s mum) →CA Well, Harry was really excited and all the way to Woodharp he kept talking about it –*

*so much so that he annoyed his sister.*

*CA →(H’s mum) And that is brilliant isn’t it since he has been a bit reticent about using language and I*

*was aware that he suddenly started to use language non-stop on that day that we did*

*the Gruffalo.*

*(H’s mum) →CA Yeah*

*CA →(H’s mum) And when we were planning it.*

*(H’s mum) →CA So all the way to preschool he talked about the Gruffalo walk and how all his friends*

*were going to go on a Gruffalo walk but there wasn’t going to be a real Gruffalo and*

*then all the way home he was telling us the story of the Gruffalo and saying – just*

*repeating phrases from the book which was really nice.*

*CA →(H’s mum)+H Yes brilliant and we did read the story that time didn’t we Harry before we went*

*out.*

*CA →(H’s mum) But I just felt suddenly he was – he saw the point of using language a lot and got*

*really excited about it – and also it was a lovely activity for everyone – everyone just*

*really enjoyed that one.*

*CA →H Did you remember when we did the Gruffalo walk round the deep dark wood Harry?*

*(Harry nods)*

*CA →H Yes*

*(H’s mum) →CA Yes, he still talks about it now.*

*(H’s mum) →H Don’t you?*

*CA →(H’s mum) He still talks about it now – it was one of our best ones.*

*CA →H D’you think it was one of our best things we did Harry?*

*H → CA Yes*

*CA →H Yes I think so too.*

*CA →(H’s mum) Thank you very much.*

*(H’s mum) →CA Thank you*

**Analysis** (Section 5 – The Gruffalo)

Integrated pedagogy

* I am mainly leading the discussion with Melody and Harry, by asking the questions (AD)>>.
* Melody and Harry are both able to express their opinions and to recall what happened <<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*CL 3.9 Can retell a past simple event in correct order.*

*(Melody and Harry can both recall things that happened during the afternoon)*

*3.13 Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.*

*(Melody and Harry are both able to make themselves understood)*

*3.14 Uses vocab focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them.*

*(The Gruffalo story, the narrative and the characters are particularly important to Harry)*

*3.15 Builds up vocab that reflects the breadth of their experiences.*

*(Harry and Melody use vocab that reflect their experiences in the Gruffalo topic)*

*UW 1.6 Remember and talk about significant events in their own experience.*

*(Harry’s mum says that Harry still talks about the Gruffalo activity 6 weeks after the event)*

Narrative

Melody and especially Harry, have clearly enjoyed the Gruffalo activity and it has been a valuable learning experience. They respond positively in their discussion, and their enjoyment is also confirmed by Adult Harriet in her discussion with me.

Adult Harriet comments on how animated Harry became, how his imagination was fired up, how his confidence grew, how his language developed and how he “really flourished”. Harry’s mum also confirms how important this experience was for Harry, who talked about it in the car and subsequently at home, even weeks after the event. I express the opinion that Harry had a breakthrough in terms of language development during these two weeks spent developing and carrying out the Gruffalo activity.

Adult Harriet expresses her surprise that our young children would be able to come up with their own ideas and that the adults could follow their lead. She said that the way Harry came alive in these two weeks has “really challenged my thinking”. She also expresses her value in the adults’ input as well.

One of the most important aspects of the Gruffalo activity was that it all developed from Harry’s initiative and his imaginative play. It was child-led. Then when the adults gave Harry’s ideas significance and planned the activity around them, Harry felt interested, important, and valued. It was the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in the outdoor environment (along the path and in the deep dark wood) that led to a great deal of learning and development, especially for Harry but also for all involved.

This activity was especially relevant to the children because they all came with some funds of knowledge about the popular Gruffalo story and working theories about what the homes of the different characters might look like. The walk and the wood provided the perfect environment to bring the story alive in their imaginations.

**5.3.3 THE JUNGLE**

**Section 1 – Conversations and Observation and Planning - The walk** (The jungle)

The 2- year-olds, Arnold (A) and Greta (G), have the choice of where to go on the walk.

*Transcript from 23rd June 2017*

*Greta is crouched on the ground looking intently at a beetle, near the front gates. The group of children and adults are gathering, ready to go on a walk. Arnold is standing nearby.*

*CA →G What have you found down there Greta?*

*G →CA A beetle*

*CA →G OK – Greta, d’you want to go to see the river, or to the woods, or to the reeds or to run on*

*the grass – Greta?*

*A →CA  The reeds*

*G →CA Run on the grass*

*CA →G Run on the grass?*

*CA →A What do you want, Arnold?*

*A →CA The reeds, the reeds*

*CA →A The reeds?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A OK*

*CA →A+G We’ll run on the grass and go to the reeds then shall we?*

*CA →All Right – Off we go.*

*The group get ready to go through the gate.*

*………………….*

*Greta, Arnold, myself, and the rest of the group are walking along the path with playing fields on the left and bushes leading down to the river on the right.*

*CA →A+G On we go. We’re going all the way to the reedbed.*

*G →CA Yes – and the grass.*

*CA →G And the grass – yes, Greta.*

*G →CA And the jungle*

*CA →G The reedbed’s like the jungle isn’t it?*

*G →CA Yes*

*………………..*

*G →CA (Adult) Catherine?*

*CA →G Yes Greta.*

*G →CA Um – the jungleis so far away.*

*CA →G The jungle is so far away – but we can do it.*

*G →CA And the running is so far away.*

*CA →G And what’s so far away?*

*G →CA The running*

*CA →G The grass?*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →G Yes*

*G →CA It’s so far away. Let’s go to the jungle first.*

*CA →G Shall we go to the jungle first? Let’s stop for our drink first shall we Greta?*

*G →C Yes*

*CA →G OK. Greta – shall we pretend the reed bed is a jungle next week?*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →G Shall we put some animals in it to find?*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →G Would that be fun?*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →G OK*

*Adult Patrick with Arnold and Greta continue past the trees, past the rail and down the slope. Then they turn right towards the reed bed and left into the reedbed. Arnold and Greta are both holding separate leads to Molly dog. They go ahead of Adult Patrick into the reed bed.*

*CA →A+G OK stop here Greta, Arnold – Stop here. Here are the reeds. We’re in the reedbed. D’you think this is like the jungle Greta? Yes?*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →G Shall we hide some lions and tigers here next week – to find – OK*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →A+G It is like a jungle – OK*

*……………………*

*The group are walking back along the path – out of the reedbed. Greta is carrying a reed. She waves it around.*

*CA →G That’s very nice Greta. That’s one of the reeds from the reedbed isn’t it – from the jungle.*

**A picture containing outdoor, person

Description automatically generated**

**Analysis** (Section 1 – The jungle)

Integrated pedagogy

* Arnold chooses to walk to the reedbed when given the choice of going to the river, the woods, the reeds or running on the grass (AD)><(CI).
* Greta refers to the reedbed as ‘the jungle’ and this is the inspiration for the following imaginative play theme ‘The Jungle’ <(CI).
* Greta feels that the jungle is ‘so far away’ but wants to go there first <<(CI).
* I encourage Greta. I say, “We can do it.”, and I also suggest having a drink on the way (AD)>>.
* I have the idea of hiding animals in the jungle next week and Greta agrees. The plan is made together (AD)><(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*PSED 2.2 Expresses own preferences and interests.*

*(Arnold chooses the reedbed. Greta wants to go there first.)*

*3.2 Can express their own feelings such as sad, happy, cross, scared, worried.*

*(Greta is able to express her feelings when she says the jungle is ‘so far away’)*

*3.1 Seeks comfort from familiar adults when needed.*

*(Greta seeks encouragement from me.)*

*CL 3.1 Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings. experiences and thoughts.*

*(Greta and Arnold can both use language to share their thoughts, but Greta’s language is much more fluent.)*

Narrative

This is an unplanned session, framed by me. There is going to be a walk but the choices of destination and activities on the walk are child-led. Although Greta chooses to go to the jungle first, she is flagging. Without the drink and my encouragement, she might not have been able to complete the walk. Greta’s language is more fluent than Arnold’s, but this is understandable since English is his second language. He is using a more limited expressive vocabulary and doing more listening than speaking. I am tuning in to Greta’s imaginative thoughts about the reedbed being ‘like a jungle’ and using this as the starting point for the activity. Greta is expressing a working theory about what a jungle is like. The reeds in the reedbed tower over the 2-year-olds and make it feel ‘like a jungle’ to them.

**Section 2 – Planned Activity - Exploring in the jungle** (The jungle)

*Transcript from 30th June 2017*

*Arnold and Greta are swinging on the handrail next to the path. Then they turn to listen.*

*CA →A+G OK Greta and Arnold come here – wait. Right, Arnold, Greta we’re going to – we’re*

*pretending that we’re going into the jungle – Arnold – and we’re looking for animals in*

*the jungle – what animals might we find?*

*A →CA Elephants*

*G →CA Raa – lions*

*CA →G A lion?*

*A →CA An elephant*

*CA →A An elephant?*

*………………..*

*CA →A+G Let’s go and see*

*………………………….*

*The group go down the slope and turn right towards the reed bed. Then they stop. Adult Patrick gives instructions for exploring the jungle and finding the animals.*

*PA →All Right – we’re going to look for jungle animals on pieces of paper like this.*

*Adult Patrick holds up a piece of paper.*

*PA →All But you’re only allowed to pick up one.*

*CA →A+G One – so pick up one jungle animal.*

*Arnold and Greta and I, enter the reed bed.*

*CA →A+G Ohh – I can see some*

*A →CA I see one!*

*CA →A Can you see one A?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A Wow what’s yours?*

*A →CA Elephant*

*CA →A Elephant*

*CA →G Can you see one G?*

*G →CA Yes down there.*

*CA →G What’s yours? What’s yours Greta?*

*G →CA A monkey*

*CA →G A monkey*

*CA →A+G Now we’ll leave the others for someone else*

*CA →G Yes – there’s one. We can show them where they are. Greta, we’re going to leave – Greta*

*G →CA Giraffe*

*CA →G A giraffe – and we’ll put it back for someone else to find.*

*I put the picture of the giraffe back in the reeds.*

*CA →A+G Oh – we can look at the others but we have to put them back.*

*G →CA Another one – another one. There’s another one.*

*CA →G Wow – what’s that Greta?*

*G →CA It’s a lion*

*CA →G OK – and pop it back Greta because that’ll be someone else’s. Good girl.*

*………………*

*CA →A Put the giraffe back Arnold so someone else can have that one.*

*…………….*

*CA →G What have you found now Greta? What’s that one?*

*G →CA A snake*

*CA →G A snake*

*CA →All Is there anyone who hasn’t got one yet?*

*A →HA Look it’s an elephant.*

*HA →A An elephant!*

*- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -*

*SA →G Show me, Greta – what have you got?*

*G →SA That*

*SA →G What’s this?*

*G →SA Monkey and snake*

*SA →G Wow – did you find any more?*

*CA →G Wow – what’s that G?*

*G →CA Tiger*

*CA →G A tiger.*

*All these animals in the jungle.*

*……………………*

*CA →All OK – back we go out of the jungle.*

*……………………*

**Analysis** (Section 2 – The jungle)

Integrated pedagogy

* I take the children to the reedbed and talk to the children about what they might find (AD)>>
* Greta and Arnold enter into imaginative play and the reedbed becomes ‘the jungle’ for them <<(CI).
* Greta and Arnold think they might find elephants and lions. Greta makes a roaring sound <<(CI).
* Adult Patrick explains that there are animals hiding in the jungle and shows the children what to look for (AD)>>.
* Greta and Arnold look for animals amongst the reeds, supported and encouraged by the adults <<(CI)(AD)>>.
* I ask Greta and Arnold to put some of the animals back so that there will be enough for everyone to find some. Greta and Arnold do this willingly (AD)>><<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*PSED 3.3 Responds to the feelings and wishes of others.*

*(Greta and Arnold respond to my wish for them to put some animals back in the jungle)*

*3.6 Shows understanding and cooperates with some boundaries and routines.*

*(Greta and Arnold understand about leaving some animals for others to find)*

*3.7 Can inhibit own actions/behaviours.*

*(Greta and Arnold are able to stop themselves collecting all the animals for themselves, even though they would quite like to do this)*

*CL 2.2 Understands more complex sentences.*

*(Arnold and Greta understand all the sentences used by the adults in their communication)*

*3.3 Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating.*

*(Arnold is learning new words while exploring in the jungle)*

*EAD 2.2 Beginning to make believe by pretending.*

*(Arnold and Greta are pretending that the reed bed is a jungle full of animals)*

Narrative

This is a planned session inspired by Greta’s idea of the reed bed being like a jungle. Even though the animals are just pictures of animals prepared by the adults, Greta and Arnold are able to use them as props for their imaginative play quite happily. It is the combination of the child-led ideas and ability to enter into imaginative play with just a few props; and the adult framing of the activity and provision of resources, that facilitates and supports learning. In this case, the adults are supporting and extending the children’s knowledge of animals that might be found in a jungle.

**Section 3 – Reflecting on the animals found in the jungle**

(The jungle)

*Transcript from 30th June 2017*

*The group are sitting round the bonfire on logs*

*HA →All Hands up if you found an animal in the jungle? Brilliant*

*Arnold puts his hand up and joins in.*

*A →HA I found an elephant.*

*………………*

*Adult Harriet holds up pictures of different animals throughout this conversation.*

*HA →All …. put your hands up if you can tell me what animal this is.*

*G →HA A monkey*

*………………..*

*HA →All What do monkeys say?*

*Adult Harriet makes a monkey noise with arm actions. The children copy her. Greta and Arnold join in.*

*HA →All Well done. Hands up if you know what other animal I’ve found – are you ready? Don’t be scared. What animal is this one?*

*……………….*

*G →HA Lion - Raaaa*

*A →HA Lion*

*HA →All Well done. We found so many things – honestly it was quite a scary walk wasn’t it.*

*This is a very tall animal that munches leaves.*

*Adult Harriet puts one hand in the air.*

*……………………..*

*HA →All A giraffe – can you pretend to be a giraffe munching leaves?*

*All the children, including Greta and Arnold put their hands in the air and move their fingers in a munching movement.*

*HA →All Munch, munch, munch, munch. They’ve got lovely long necks. Well done.*

*See if I can find another animal. Oh – this is a stripey animal. This is a stripey animal.*

*……………………..*

*HA →All It could be a tiger. It could be a zebra. They’ve got stripes. It’s this animal.*

*What’s this one?*

*……………………..*

*G →HA A tiger*

*HA →All A tiger – Raaa What does a tiger say? Raaa Raaa*

*…………………..*

*HA →G Which one did you have Greta? What animal did you have?*

*G →HA Er - a monkey and a snake.*

*……………………*

*HA →All What about this animal? This is a large animal and it has a very long trunk.*

*………………….*

*A →HA Elephant*

*HA →A Did you have that one Arnold?*

*A →HA Yes*

*HA →A You had the elephant – good boy.*

*HA →All And I think the very last one – if I can find any – this animal doesn’t have any legs*

*and this animal goes s s s s s s.*

*………………..*

*HA →All I can’t actually find a snake in here but we did find some didn’t we?*

*Can you pretend to be a snake? s s s s s s And they slither on the floor don’t they?*

*HA →G Did you find a snake G? Did you find a snake?*

*Greta nods.*

*HA →G You did*

*- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -*

*HA →All Smile if you found the animals and enjoyed it. Brilliant – thank you.*

**Analysis** (Section 3 – The jungle)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adult Harriet leads the conversation round the bonfire, encouraging the children to remember what animals they found in the jungle. She does it very dynamically, inviting children to make animal noises and actions (AD)>>.
* Greta and Arnold join in readily <<(CI).
* Arnold uses a whole sentence “I found an elephant.” <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*CL 2.3 Understands 'who', what', ‘where' in simple questions.*

*(Greta and Arnold both understand and respond to the question “What animal is this one?”.)*

*3.6 Uses simple sentences.*

*(Arnold says “I found an elephant”)*

Narrative

Adult Harriet shows skill in engaging the children in conversation round the bonfire at the end of the day. Greta and Arnold respond because they can relate to what she is saying and are interested in identifying the animals they have been finding. Adult Harriet is using a multi-sensory approach with pictures, sounds and actions. She is also using simple language in quite a repetitive pattern that the children can understand. This exercise of recalling the animals that the children found ‘in the jungle’ reinforces the children’s ability to name the animals and helps them to develop their vocabulary as well as to focus on some of the characteristics of the animals such as a ‘long neck’ or ‘stripes’. The children are building on their funds of knowledge because they have already come to this activity with some funds of knowledge about animals, built up through pictures in books, television programmes and possibly trips to the zoo.

**5.3.4 Sociocultural theoretical framing in Theme (A)**

In Theme (A), ‘Imaginative Play’, the children are interested in pirates (4-year-olds), the Gruffalo (3- year-olds), and animals in the ‘jungle’ (2- year-olds).

The children bring ‘funds of knowledge’ to these topics evidenced by the vocabulary they use in initiating the ideas about these topics. Mary and Oliver show their knowledge about pirates in their contributions to the planning and development of the pirate subtheme. Harry talks expansively about the Gruffalo story once he has been understood by the adults. Arnold and Greta talk about animals in the jungle.

Funds of knowledge act as the theoretical and methodological framing of these expressed interests from the children and are subsequently used as a basis in planning activities and building a curriculum. This is an example of sociocultural theory informing sociocultural perspectives of learning.

Oliver and Mary show that they can identify with pirates and are familiar with ‘pirate’ play through the identity artifacts that they offer to bring into Woodharp for the treasure hunt.

Subero et al., (2018) discuss how funds of identity can materialise and be made explicit in the form of identity artefacts. They give an account of a project carried out in four schools in Bristol and Cardiff (UK) where children brought in objects from home in a shoebox. These objects were linked to the cultural practices of the students’ families and gave teachers insight into the children’s funds of identity (Subero et al., 2018).

The swords that Mary and Oliver say they have at home and will bring into Woodharp Nursery School for the planned pirate activity are examples of identity artefacts. The fact they have these swords at home gives the adults at Woodharp insight into the children’s funds of identity as people who are used to practising imaginative play and play fighting. As a result of this, the adults can have more confidence that the children will use the ‘swords’ responsibly in pretending to be pirates and will not actually hurt anybody.

Rogoff (2014) argues that involvement with family and the cultural context of the family fosters children’s participation with initiative and responsibility.

Hedges says:

Learning is not only a cognitive and social experience, but also an identity experience…

Funds of identity is about selecting and acting on personally meaningful interests and experiences from amongst the myriad of socioculturally-mediated human encounters (Hedges, 2020, p.9,p.11).

Oliver and Mary have working theories about what pirates like to eat, based on their knowledge that pirates live by the sea – or on the sea. Firstly, they think that pirates would eat fish and then, on reflection, they develop their thinking to include ‘sharks and fish’. They are expressing a developing understanding of what pirates might eat through their discussion with me about what we might eat round the bonfire when we are pursuing our ‘pirate’ topic.

This is an illustration of a working theory that builds ‘collaborative understandings’ (Hedges, 2014, p. 39). Hedges says:

…exploring the construct of working theories provides a rationale for considering the creative and dynamic ways that children create and connect knowledge through personal, social and life experiences to understand their world. (Hedges, 2014, p.40)

Harry demonstrates his fund of knowledge about the Gruffalo story during the walk on 21April. He brings this knowledge from his home environment since we hadn’t been reading it recently at Woodharp. This leads to the imaginative play activity round the wood on 28April.

Greta and Arnold can name animals when Adult Hannah holds up pictures of them as everyone is sitting round the bonfire. They are also expanding their funds of knowledge and learning new names of the animals they could not identify.

One way for an adult who is practising a participatory learning style to have deeper understanding of the sociocultural influences on a child is to communicate with parents. Hedges says:

Family homes and early childhood settings are rich sources for children to determine what “is significant and worth pursuing” and provide ample opportunities for young children to draw on funds of identity in socioculturally-mediated interactions (Hedges, 2020, p. 12).

The following extracts from transcripts of discussions between myself and parents of three of the children involved in this research study, provide examples of how the sociocultural environments of the families have affected their children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Both, in turn, affect the ways in which children make their choices, express their interests, and relate to adults, their peers, and the environment.

**Discussion with (4-year-old) Mary’s mother**

*Transcript from 10th March 2017*

CA → M’s mum *Did the fact that we do a lot of outdoor play at Woodharp, and outdoor activities,*

*influence your choice to send your children here?*

M’s mum →*CA Yea – yea definitely – um – because er we, we think being, you know, for the*

*kids to be outdoors is the, is really, well I kind of think it’s the best place to – for play*

*and, and um and just being. It can absorb so much of their energy, so we do spend*

*quite a lot of time outside with them anyway – um we’ve got a dog and we always*

*go on walks together and um yea – and so seeing all your spaces and gardens here*

*– just that’s – I just think that’s so unique and um it’s such a wonderful resource for*

*this age – to be able to get outside and play in – you know it’s not just outside it’s*

*actually grass and trees and things to get outside and play in.*

*………………………………………………………………………………………..*

*CA → M’s mum And what’s your feeling about – er the benefits of free play, um or adult-directed*

*activities… this question of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities –*

*what’s your feeling on that, about the freedom of the child to do whatever they*

*choose and the involvement of the adults?...*

M’s mum →*CA Yea – I mean, I think I do feel that um free play has so much value because – um,*

*it’s like, it’s proper, it’s true play isn’t it, when it’s free – it’s kind of, that’s the definition*

*of play, isn’t it – that it’s instigated by the child themselves, so it just feels, the quality*

*of the play, if it can be completely child-led and free, is um, and out, I think outside*

*can cater for that in a different way than inside free play can.*

*………………………………………………………………………………………..*

*CA → M’s mum And so what d’ you think’s the role of the adult in that situation of free play for*

*children?*

M’s mum →*CA I suppose there’s a big thing about safety isn’t there outside? – and just um some*

*direction in knowing the safe way or to have sticks and to – when you’re climbing a*

*tree or something because there’s, I suppose there’s different risks outdoors so um*

*… you can have situations where you – they get into disputes or disagreements and*

*they’re not um able to just easily solve those – so um having some support in*

*knowing how to um able to just easily solve those – so um having some support in*

*knowing how to kind of work through a disagreement, is important and an adult*

*perspective there, is kind of, very critical – yea.*

*CA → M’s mum What about um adults directing an activity? D’you think there’s value in that or is*

*there value in both or would – d’you think there’s more value in just free play or – so*

*what d’you feel about adults directing an activity – or setting off an activity – for*

*example we did that last week – we made some houses for insects and then went to*

*collect some insects to put in them.*

M’s mum →*CA Mm, well I um I think that’s got a lot of scope too doesn’t it because it – a child*

*Might not necessarily think of digging for worms or – or doing – building an insect*

*house - so, setting them going on that – but then it’s nice when kids just take it to*

*where they want to take it - which might be a different – quite a different ending than*

*what the adult had in mind.*

*…………………………………………………………………………………………….*

*CA → M’s mum And – and what’s your feeling about the walk – the value of the walk?*

M’s mum →*CA Oh I, well I just – because it’s going beyond the garden isn’t it and it’s going into a*

*space that’s a little wilder and where things are changing in different ways through*

*the seasons….and it’s a nice kind of thing to instil in kids – to go on a walk – beyond*

*the park – all the areas that are more kind of controlled and organised.*

*CA → M’s mum And what about the bonfire? Are you concerned at all about risks round the*

*bonfire?*

M’s mum →*CA No because I know you’ve got very clear guidelines about what – where the kids*

*are meant to be, and …how they should move about…that’s all clear and then they*

*are just kind of are there enjoying it aren’t they – so I think it’s brilliant – the bonfire.*

Mary’s mother is in favour of the outdoor environment at Woodharp and thinks it is a wonderful resource for children’s play. They also have a dog at home and frequently go on walks with their dog. This indicates that Mary is likely to feel comfortable playing outside, and being in the outdoor environment, as it is part of her experience at home and is highly valued. Part of Mary’s funds of identity are that she comes from a family who value outdoor play and the natural world. Mary’s mother thinks that ‘proper’ play and ‘real’ play should be instigated by children and is potentially freer outside. Thus, another aspect of Mary’s funds of identity is that she is likely to be used to making her own choices and instigating play. Mary’s mother is not risk averse and has confidence that the children at Woodharp will be kept safe by adults and the boundaries they have created on walks and around the bonfire. In fact, she thinks that the bonfire is ‘brilliant’. This attitude contributes to Mary’s confidence that the adults at Woodharp will keep her safe and so she can trust them and be adventurous in trying different activities. This is another part of Mary’s identity. She is not afraid to play pirates, go on a pirate adventure, handle a sword, follow clues, find treasure, and taste fish fingers. Knowing more about Mary’s funds of identity enables the adults at Woodharp to integrate child-led and adult-led activities more effectively.

**Discussion with (3-year-old) Harry’s mother** (Harry is also present)

*Transcript from 16th June 2017*

*CA → H’s mum I just wanted to ask you particularly about the Gruffalo bit that we did because I felt*

*that it was quite a breakthrough for Harry*

*H’s mum →CA Yeah it was.*

*CA → H’s mum I don’t know what you felt?*

*H’s mum →CA Well, Harry was really excited and all the way to Woodharp he kept talking about it –*

*so much so that he annoyed his sister.*

*CA →H’s mum And that is brilliant isn’t it since he has been a bit reticent about using language and I*

*was aware that he suddenly started to use language non-stop on that day that we did*

*the Gruffalo.*

*H’s mum →CA Yeah*

*CA → H’s mum And when we were planning it.*

*H’s mum →CA So all the way to preschool he talked about the Gruffalo walk and how all his friends*

*were going to go on a Gruffalo walk but there wasn’t going to be a real Gruffalo and*

*then all the way home he was telling us the story of the Gruffalo and saying - just*

*repeating phrases from the book which was really nice.*

*CA → H’s mum+H Yes brilliant and we did read the story that time didn’t we Harry before we went*

*out?*

*CA → H’s mum But I just felt suddenly he was - he saw the point of using language a lot and got*

*really excited about it – and also it was a lovely activity for everyone – everyone just*

*really enjoyed that one.*

*CA →H Did you remember when we did the Gruffalo walk round the deep dark wood Harry?*

*(Harry nods)*

*CA →H Yes*

*H’s mum →CA Yes, he still talks about it now.*

*H’s mum →H Don’t you?*

*CA → H’s mum He still talks about it now – it was one of our best ones.*

*CA →H D’you think it was one of our best things we did Harry?*

*H → CA Yes*

*CA →H Yes, I think so too.*

*CA →H’s mum Thank you very much.*

*H’s mum →CA Thank you*

This discussion with Harry’s mother confirms that he has considerable knowledge of the Gruffalo story. He can tell his mother and sister the story and quote phrases from the book on the way home in the car. The main source of this fund of knowledge of the Gruffalo story is Harry’s home. On the walk on 21April Harry uses this fund of knowledge to imagine that the Gruffalo might be found in his cave in the deep dark wood along with the owl, the mouse, and the snake. Inspired by Harry’s interest in the story, a Gruffalo game is planned for the following week. The whole Gruffalo activity has also confirmed Harry’s identity as a person who can have ideas that will be taken up and acted on by adults. It has made him feel excited and engaged. Suddenly Harry’s language becomes much more fluent. His mother supports and values his conversation (even if his sister does not!). He is developing an identity as someone who can communicate clearly with language.

**Discussion with (2-year-old) Greta’s mother**

*Transcript*

*CA →G’s mum …My PhD subject is about the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in the*

*outside environment. So – first of all, do you find the outdoor environment a good*

*environment for learning for Greta?*

*G’s mum →CA  Yes. Definitely.*

*CA →G’s mum Why is that?*

*G’s mum →CA Um, I think she is, because she’s just, she’s quite free-spirited and slightly wild but*

*in a lovely way and I think that’s what being outside is all about – so she feels less*

*inhibited and she’s just an explorer I suppose. So, I suppose it kind of meets all of*

*her traits.*

*CA →G’s mum What do you feel about children’s freedom to choose – child-led activities? Do you*

*this is a good thing and what do you think the role of the adult is in*

*that?*

*G’s mum →CA Um, I think child-led is really good because I think also where you’ve got a*

*very wilful child it’s like if you try to lead it and control it all the time you just don’t get*

*anywhere. You just have resistance and nobody is enjoying it. Whereas I think if*

*they pick what they enjoy then they’re going to thrive aren’t they? Um, and, I think,*

*yea, it’s about involvement – I suppose it’s just supporting what Greta wants to do,*

*so if she’s out and about playing I just try and keep up with her and help her discover*

*– as she is doing something – but she normally leads – she’s definitely – she likes to*

*lead rather than, um, Mum or Dad – I mean Dad, sometimes, because he’s a bit*

*crazy wild as well (laughter).*

*CA →G’s mum So, what do you think the role of the adult is then – the ideal role of the adult in*

*the outside environment?*

*G’s mum →CA I suppose just to let them get on and explore really. I think with her it is about just*

*keeping her safe and making sure that she is learning about safety and things as*

*well. Um, and that, just to be there as part of the fun and if she’s got any questions -*

*to help her. I think especially with Greta – her – she can become very focused when*

*she’s playing and when she is exploring.*

*CA →G’s mum When she can make her own choices?*

*G’s mum →CA Yes – so sometimes if you try and interact too much, she’s just not listening anyway,*

*because she’s just totally focused on what she’s doing. So it’s just about steering*

*her isn’t it – different things – different activities when she’s outside.*

*CA →G’s mum And we do a walk and a bonfire – do you think there is value in those things?*

*G’s mum →CA Yes - definitely – I love bonfires because I think it’s teaching them to have that kind*

*of sharing and, um, experience and also the discipline of that. You do sit down and*

*actually have a bit of quiet time when you are outside rather than just tearing*

*around at 1000 miles an hour the whole time. Yes – it’s important to learn to relax*

*as well and actually have a bit of focus – yea – I think both things are important to*

*just be kind of wild and free but then also to have a bit of structure and, um, a bit of*

*focus to your activities.*

Greta’s mother identifies Greta as ‘free-spirited and slightly wild – but in a lovely way!’ She supports Greta being able to make her own choices and play freely in the outside environment. She says, ‘She’s just an explorer’. These insights reveal a lot about Greta’s ‘funds of identity’ and her experiences at home. Understanding Greta’s funds of identity helps adults in the setting to support Greta’s inquisitiveness, energy, and freedom to choose what she wants to do in the outdoor environment. Her free-spirited character can be celebrated and valued. This gives her the confidence to initiate the imaginative ‘animals in the jungle’ topic and to fulfil and develop her identity as ‘an explorer’.

The parents in these discussions were broadly supportive of activities in the outdoor environment and believed in the value of child-led free play for supporting children’s learning. They saw the role of the adult as: letting children explore, keeping them safe, managing risks and providing a stimulating environment. They also valued adults developing activities based on children’s interests as are all the activities in Theme (A). The contexts of these family homes have been instrumental in stimulating, recognising, and mediating these young children’s early life experiences, interests, and identity development (Hedges, 2020).

**5.4 Theme (B): The Natural World**

The natural world theme has the subthemes ‘Minibeasts’, ‘Flora’ and ‘Sticks’.

**5.4.1 MINIBEASTS**

**Section 1 - Free Play and Observation** (Minibeasts)

The 4-year-olds, Oliver (O) and Mary (M) join a group of children who are looking intently at a snail in a tyre.

*Transcript from 24th February*

*A group of children are looking in a tyre which is lying on the ground, near the summerhouse.*

*D → All I’ve found a snail CA  → D Have you?*

*CA  → All Oh, Dorothy’s found a snail. M → All Oh – let me see, let me see O → All Where – where is the snail? M → All And there’s another one there. O → All Where?*

*………………..*

*O → All Let’s get some flowers for the snail. M → O Yeah. CA  → All Where’s the snail? Where is the snail? M → CA  There. O → All It might be killed so that’s a leaf so it doesn’t get killed.*

*Oliver places a leaf on the snail. -*

*O → All It won’t get killed now.*

*D → All Because it’s got grass in there.*

*O → D- Right – it might like some grass. CA  → M What are you doing over here M?*

*Mary shows me the daisies she has collected. CA  → M - Collecting more daisies – lovely*

*………………………*

*O → C A We’re giving him food and stuff. C A  → M Oh – what a beautiful pink flower Mary.*

*………………………*

*O → All They’re all for the snail.*

*S → All I moved him a teeny, tiny bit.*

*O → All Right – let’s get lots of grass for the snail.*

*……………………*

*O → M Mary – you can collect some flowers to give to the snail.*

*C A  → O Here’s one.*

*I give a flower to Oliver.*

*O → C A Good – it’s just what we need.*

*S → O Can I have that one?*

*O → S No – it’s the snail’s. There you go.*

*Oliver puts the flower in the tyre.*

*Adult Patrickwalks down to the group.*

*D → PA  We’ve found a snail. O → PA  We’re giving it lots of food.*

*D → PA And it’s not eating it. S → All It must be dead. H → All It must be dead. O → All It can’t be. S → All It must be having a sleep. It must be having a sleep. O → All It’s nice for when he wakes up then.*

*…………………… O → All Right – If the flowers are upside down then the snail can see them.*

*PA  → All What are you doing? Are you making something for snails to eat?*

*O → PA Yes – they’re all in the water. CA  →PA There’s a snail in there. O → PA Yeah. CA  →PA In the water. CA  → All Do we think it’s alive? O → CA Yeah.*

*………………….. CA  →M Oh lovely, Mary, thank you.*

*Mary and Harry come over with more flowers.*

*O → All We need lots of flowers and stuff*

*H → CA Here’s some for you. CA  →H Thank you. O → All Right – we’ll give these to the snail. CA  → OOK. O → All The snail will love them.*

*…………………..*

*CA  →O Oh – those are lovely flowers. This one is a bud isn’t it? It’s a bud of a flower – so we’re*

*not going to pick those. O →CA We won’t. PA →All That one was on the floor.*

*CA →All That one was on the ground – so that’s all right. We won’t pick them because if we pick*

*them they won’t come out to be beautiful flowers – and if we leave them on the tree or on*

*the bush, they’ll come out.*

*O →CA Yes CA  →O+M ... and grow into beautiful flowers O →CA  Yes D →CA But not if you pick them. M →CA  ... or leaves*

*CA →D Not if you pick them – that’s right CA →M Yes – or leaves. But these have already got leaves so you can tell – that one’s going*

*to be the flower - lovely flowers. Thank you, Mary.*

*Mary gives the flowers to me.*

*………………………………………..*

*The group surround the tyre and look in it.*

*CA  → AllThat looks like a lovely garden in there.*

*H → CA Where is that snail?*

*CA  → AllWhere is that snail?*

*S → CA He must have gone away.*

*O → All He’s under – he’s under all this stuff we’ve been giving to him.*

*M → All Yep*

*…………………*

*O → CA Don’t you think the water’s looking nice and pretty for the snails now?*

*CA  → OIt’s looking very pretty for the snails.*

***A picture containing grass, outdoor, person

Description automatically generated***

**A picture containing grass, outdoor

Description automatically generated**

**Analysis** (Section 1 – Minibeasts)

Integrated pedagogy

* Oliver and Mary join in with an unplanned, child-led activity of looking at a snail in a tyre, with a small group of children. <<<(CI)
* Oliver initiates the idea of collecting flowers for the snail. <(CI)
* Mary enjoys picking the flowers. She is embracing Oliver’s plan <<(CI)
* I talk about the snail and admires the flowers, thus giving attention to Oliver and Mary’s and the other children’s initiative. (AD)>>
* There is a child-led discussion about whether the snail is dead or alive, or just sleeping. <<<(CI)
* I initiate a discussion about buds and why they should not be picked off the bushes. (AD)>
* The children have created a new environment in the tyre by collecting lots of grass, leaves and flowers for the snail. <<<<(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The following EYFS goals can be applied to the activities that the children choose:

*PSED 1.9 Initiates conversations. attends to and takes account of what others say.*

*(Oliver initiates a conversation about picking flowers for the snail. Mary initiates a conversation about leaf buds)*

*3.15 Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression.*

*(Oliver negotiates with others over the question of whether the snail is dead or alive and a compromise is reached: “It must be having a sleep”)*

*CL 2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.*

*(Mary listens to Oliver and readily responds to his idea of collecting flowers for the snail.)*

*3.19 Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention.*

*(Oliver sticks to the theme of looking after the snail in the tyre)*

*3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence, and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings, and events.*

*(Oliver uses talk to organise how to look after the snail.)*

*3.21 Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.*

*(Oliver and Mary are part of a group that introduce a narrative about providing an environment for a snail that will keep the snail safe and well fed as well as ‘happy’ as it looks at the flowers that have been collected for it.)*

*EAD 2.16 Introduce a storyline or narrative into their play.*

*(See CL above)*

*2.17 Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme.*

*(See CL above)*

*2.18 Plays cooperatively as part of a group to develop and act out a narrative.*

*(Oliver and Mary are both part of the group that is ‘providing’ for the snail both practically and creatively and developing a narrative around what they are doing.)*

Narrative

The activity starts with a group of children, including Oliver and Mary, looking into a tyre lying on the ground and observing what they can see in it. The tyre has some water in it and one or more snails. The children reflect on the needs of the snail. Oliver thinks it would like flowers and he also considers that the snail might be vulnerable and needs protection. He says, “It might be killed, so that’s a leaf so it doesn’t get killed”. There is a discussion about whether the snail is dead, alive, or sleeping, that is initiated by the children. Oliver directs the flower and grass gathering activities. As the activity progresses the children use their imaginations to attribute feelings to the snail such as: “The snail will love them” (the flowers). The flowers appear to be a source of food as when Oliver says: “We’re giving him food and stuff”, but also for decoration when Oliver says: “Right – if the flowers are upside down then the snail can see them”. Mary enjoys collecting flowers. I intervene when I see a bud that might have been picked. I intervene in order to protect the environment and help the flowers to thrive on the bushes. I am also teaching the children about how flowers grow. Mary is interested in this conversation and points out that the buds might be leaf buds. This transcript illustrates the interaction of child-led and adult-led conversations arising from child-led activities that are supporting children’s learning. It is predominantly a child-led, adult-supported activity and it veers between an observation of nature, an imaginative scenario where the snail assumes a character and the creation of a new environment in the tyre which has been filled with leaves, grass, and flowers.

The children are going with a working theory that the snail might be alive, enjoys being fed and has feelings about its environment.

**Section 2 - Reflection and Planning** (Minibeasts)

I open up a conversation about planning a ‘minibeast’ activity for the following week. Oliver and Mary and I are sitting on sofas in the kitchen, recalling the day’s activities and planning for next week.

Transcript from 24th February

*CA  →O+M And what did you find – after that?*

*O →CA  Uh well, we found after that … M →CA+O Flowers O →CA+M Flowers and a snail ………*

*………………………………………….*

*CA →O+M And – what would you like to do in the back garden – when you’re playing in the*

*back garden. Would you like us to plan something for you? O+M →CA Yea Yea CA →O+M What sort of thing would you like? M → CA Um maybe um um um I can’t remember O →CA I would like (pause) …. CA →O+M You were making a garden for the snail weren’t you?*

*O+M →CA Yea Yea M → CA Can we do the rest of that? CA →M Can you do the rest of that? D’you want to make little houses for creatures? O+M Yea Yea CA →O+M And gardens? O+M Yea Yea*

*……………………………….. CA  →O+MWe can get some things ready to do that – to make little houses for creatures. M →CA And some grass O →CA+M Yep*

**Analysis** (Section 2 – Minibeasts)

Integrated pedagogy

* I encourage Oliver and Mary to reflect on what they did earlier in the session. (AD)>
* Mary remembers finding the flowers. <(CI)
* Oliver remembers the flowers and the snail. <<(CI)
* I invite Oliver and Catherine to have ideas about plans for next week, but they are both unsure what to say. (AD)>
* I reflect on the ‘garden’ they were making for the snail earlier in the session. (AD)>
* Mary likes the idea of continuing an activity with flowers. She says: “Can we do the rest of that?”. <(CI)
* I then initiate an idea for making houses, as well as gardens, for creatures next week. Oliver and Mary actively and enthusiastically agree to this plan. (AD)>><< (CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The following EYFS goals can be applied to Oliver’s and Mary’s reflection and planning:

*CL 2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.*

*(Oliver and Mary listen and respond in the discussion about what to plan for the next week.)*

Narrative

The planning activity is directed by me, after I encourage the children to reflect on what they did in the back garden earlier. When the children struggle with thinking about what to plan for next week I intervene. Even though I am suggesting plans based on the children’s interests I am also slightly reinterpreting the activity in this session as one in which a ‘garden’ was created for the snail when the children hadn’t actually used that word. The children were initially thinking more about feeding the snail with flowers than about creating a garden, nevertheless the children are enthusiastic about the thought of creating houses and gardens for creatures next week and agree to the plan. My adult direction predominates in this reflection and planning, but the children are also engaged and involved. Without my adult input the plans would have lacked direction. Without input from the children and their enthusiasm, the plans would have lacked inspiration. It is the integration of input from children and adults together that produces the optimum learning potential.

**Section 3 – Planned Activity - Making houses for minibeasts and finding and collecting minibeasts to go in them.** (Minibeasts)

Adult Patrick demonstrates how to make a house for minibeasts and encourages children to collect the materials and have a go. I show Oliver and Mary where the best place is for collecting minibeasts.

*Transcript from 3rd March*

*CA →O+M …Today we’re going to make little houses for insects. D’you remember?... O+M →CA  Yes Yes CA → PA …So what do we need Patrick? -*

*PA →CA We need lots of little twigs and leaves.*

*………………………*

*CA  →All …Anyone who wants to make a house for an insect. O+M →CA  Me me. CA →O+M Let’s collect – O+M →CA  Me me CA →O+M OK - we’ll collect leaves and twigs and shall we put them here on the ground?*

*O+M jump up and down with excitement. =*

*O+M →CA Yep yep CA →All Right, (Adult) Patrick’s going to show us where to put them.*

*Everyone moves over to area near the wall that Adult Patrickpoints out. = =*

*CA →All OK – We’re going to put them here – so – collect lots of leaves and twigs and put them*

*here and then we’ll make the houses.*

*…………………… =*

*Oliver and Mary are engaged with collecting leaves and twigs.*

*CA →M Well done M M →CA Yep I’ve found loads. CA →M Good put them down there.*

*Mary puts her leaves on the pile.*

*PA →All Here’s a big leaf = CA →O Oliver, here are some leaves – and twigs. O →CA Okay – there are lots of leaves. S →CA I’ve got a leaf. I’ve got a leaf. CA →S Lovely put them there. We’re making a big pile.*

*………………………………………….*

*Oliver is picking up sticks*

*………………………………………….*

*PA →O+M Right – we’ll make a little tent with our = leaves.*

*Adult Patrick shows Oliver and Mary what to do.*

*…………………………………………. PA →O+M You just need to make it round in a circle like that – so if you stick one in ….*

*Mary pushes some sticks into the ground following Adult Patrick’s directions.*

*……………………………………………*

*PA →O Oliver – would you like to stick one in? There like that – all around this bit*

*here – d’you see round this tent.*

*Oliver pushes sticks into the ground following Adult Patrick’s directions.*

*Oliver uses one particularly long stick that he has collected.*

*O →PA That’s a long one. CA →O+M Very good – it’s looking like a tent – PA →O+M Now we need to wrap some leaves around the outside. O →PA That one, that one can be the chimney.*

*Oliver points to his long stick.*

*PA →O Yes – right – good idea. PA →O+M So have you got some big leaves – a bit like these – you see? = And then we can put them against it like that. You make it like a tent*

*Oliver and Mary add more leaves round the sticks to make the ‘tent’.*

*O+M →All Leaves, leaves.*

*…………………………………………..*

*O →All It’s snowing, it’s snowing, it’s really growing Oliver makes up a little poem as he works on making the tent.*

*The ‘tent’ (house) for the insects is taking shape.*

*CA →O+M It looks lovely.*

*O →All It’s growing. CA →O+M Now we can get our containers and look for some insects to go in the insect house.*

*Oliver and Mary run off down garden to fetch the containers from the table. =*

*CA →O+M OK, Oliver and Mary, come with me. I think I know where we can find some insects. Where do you think we’d find them?*

*O →CA In the soil.*

*M →CA In the grass*

*Oliver and Mary set off with me, holding their containers, to look for insects.*

*………………………………………………………….*

*O →CA There might be some down here.*

*I lead Oliver and Mary down the steps, through the door, past the patio.*

*CA →O+M I think there’s a special place down here. And I’m thinking under the logs. O+M Yes, yes CA →O+M We can’t look under the logs when we have a bonfire. Why not? O →CA Because it’s too dangerous. M →CA And because you might get burned. CA →O+M But we can look there, now there isn’t a fire. Oliver, Mary and I go through the gate into the bonfire area where there is a circle of logs.*

*………………………………………………………………..*

*Oliver pushes a log over to look underneath it. CA →O+M We’ll have to put them back again. That’s right. Push them hard.*

*Oliver and Mary both overturn logs in the bonfire area and look underneath them.*

*O →CA+M Oh look at all these. M →CA+O Um – I see worms*

*Oliver and Mary eagerly investigate what is under the logs. O →CA+M Ha – a woodlouse*

*Oliver puts his container upside down, to confine the woodlouse. He collects it in the container. CA →M That one – let’s put this …. = O →CA  A woodlouse – look!*

*Oliver and Mary crouch down to see the creatures better. They are engrossed in looking at the creatures under the upturned log. O →CA +M I’ll put the lid on this. CA →M That’s right Mary. Put it ….*

*Mary puts a woodlouse into her container. Ihelp her with the last bit. =*

*O →M Ohh – what’s that – worm M →O+CA  Um O →CA+M I’m just getting a little worm. CA →O I think that one is a centipede – that one there O →CA Ah yes M →CA Ah yes CA →O+M I’m not sure – it’s quite small. Do you think it’s a baby centipede?*

*O →CA  Yes M →CA Yes*

*O →CA Let’s find some other creatures*

*Oliver picks up his container.*

*………………………………………………………..*

*Oliver and Mary continue to push over logs and find minibeasts underneath them. They find slugs as well as more worms, woodlice and centipedes. They are fascinated by what they see and engrossed in looking at the minibeasts. Putting these creatures into the containers is quite tricky so they end up with mostly worms in their containers.*

*A picture containing grass, outdoor

Description automatically generated*

*…………………………………………………………*

*Oliver gets a worm out of the soil on the rotten wood on the bottom of the log. He puts it in his container.*

*O →Worm Look, I pulled you out of the soil.*

*O →CA+M There are lots of worms in there.*

*CA →O+M Right – shall we go and put them in the house now?*

*O →CA+M I’ll glue the lid on. I mean I’ll screw the lid on. They might not survive without soil.*

*CA →O No, so we’ll put them back in the soil in the ‘house’.*

*Oliver and Mary and I walk back towards the gate to the back garden.*

*Oliver and Mary stop at the gate to look at the worms in Oliver’s container.*

*O →M Nice and slithery*

*……………………………………………….*

*Oliver, Mary and I return to the top garden where some other children have been continuing to make a variety of insect ‘houses’ with Adult Patrick.*

*O →A We found some creatures with Caryll. The trick is – underneath the logs in the*

*bonfire area.*

*CA →O+M Right – let’s go and look at those houses. Oliver and Mary run round to where the insect ‘houses’ have been made by children, with Adult Patrick’s help. There is now a wooden one and a slate one as well as the original leaf house.*

*………………………………………………………………….. =*

*CA →O+M So – where are you going to put them? O →CA  In the leaf one*

*Oliver holds up a worm that he has taken out of his container and puts it in one of the houses.*

*……………………………………………………………………*

*Oliver and Mary continue to look carefully at the ‘houses’. They are careful not to knock them down. O →CA All I had is worms.*

*M →CA All I had is a wood …… is a worm, 2 worms and look - look 2 worms and one of those. Mary points into her container.*

*CA →O+M Well done.*

*CA →M Shall I put that one in for you M? Which one d’you want them to go in? M →CA Um CA →M Just tip it up Mary. That way you can do it*

*Mary picks up her worm – out of the container and puts it in the leaf house.*

*…………………………………………………………*

*CA →M Are you going to do that last big one?... There they are Mary.*

*Mary empties the rest of the contents of her container into a ‘house’ = Oliver and Mary put the lids back on their containers. - O →CA (sadly) I had nothing but worms. M →O I had one of those. (Mary points to a creature.) CA →O I thought you had a woodlouse Oliver. O →CA (Oliver nods his head.) It escaped before I could put the – um – lid on. CA →O Oh.*

*…………………………………………………..*

*After this Oliver and Mary show other children how to look under logs in other parts of the garden to find minibeasts.*

*…………………………………………………..*

*O →M (brightly) Let’s look for more creatures M →O Yea CA →O+M Where’s the best place to find them? O →CA Where the logs are. Wait – I know.*

*Oliver and Mary run up the (back) garden followed by other children.*

*This time they find snails, worms, lots of woodlice and a spider under logs in the garden.*

*………………………………………………………..*

*O →CA+M Look at all these creatures.*

*O →CA+M (cont) … There are lots of white creatures.*

*M →CA+O And a worm. CA  →O+M Actually the white ones are shoots of plants growing.*

*Oliver and Mary crouch down to look closely at what is happening in the mini world, under the log. M →CA+O Yes – and that’s a big woodlouse*

*CA →O+MThat’s a big woodlouse*

*……………………………………………*

*M →CA There, there’s a spider*

*CA →O+M Oh, there’s a spider O →M Can I have one? M →O Yep CA →O+M A spider’s legs are delicate so maybe we’ll just watch it, because if we pick it up we might hurt it. =*

*M →CA+O Look – here’s another woodlouse.*

*Mary puts her hand out to pick up the woodlouse. =*

*CA →M+O The woodlice are quite strong aren’t they?*

*M →CA  Yes O →M Please will you pass me one?*

*Oliver and Mary take as many creatures back to the insect ‘houses’ as they can.*

*They are absorbed in emptying their containers into the insect ‘houses’.*

*O →M Can you get them out?*

*CA →O+M Why did you choose the wood house?*

*O →CA Because woodlice like wood. CA →O Yes M →CA And this one keeps on crawling – um – ugh. O →Woodlouse There you go – look M →Woodlouse Come on go under this house.*

*Oliver runs back to the log where he and Mary found the woodlice. He crouches down to look.*

*O →M Let’s go and get some more woodlice. =*

**Analysis**(Section 3 – Minibeasts)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adult Patrick initiates the idea of needing leaves and twigs to make insect houses (AD)>. The children enthusiastically join in.
* Oliver takes initiative in collecting a long stick which he includes in the construction. He says that this is the chimney <<(CI).
* Adult Patrick shows the children how to put leaves round the circle of sticks to make the walls of the insect house (AD)>. Oliver and Mary follow his directions.
* I take the children to a good place for seeing lots of minibeasts (AD)>.
* Oliver and Mary take initiative in turning over logs in the bonfire area so they can see the minibeasts underneath them <<(CI).
* Oliver and Mary are fascinated by the minibeasts and spend time just watching them and talking about them <<(CI).
* Once Oliver gets the idea that minibeasts are to be found under logs, he leads a group up the garden to look for more creatures. This child-led exploration is entirely successful and many more minibeasts are discovered <<(CI).
* I point out that the white ‘creatures’ they can see are shoots of growing plants not minibeasts. She also rescues a spider from the eager collectors and points out how delicate its legs are (AD)>>.
* I help Oliver and Mary to put the creatures they have managed to collect, in the insect houses (AD)>>.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The EYFS goals that apply to ‘Making houses for minibeasts and finding and collecting minibeasts to go in them’ are:

*UW 2.8 Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns, and change.*

*(Mary and Oliver are looking closely at the similarities and differences of different minibeasts.)*

*CL 2.9 Responds to instructions involving a two-part sequence.*

*(CA says: OK - we’ll collect leaves and twigs and shall we put them here on the ground?)*

*2.10 Understands humour. e.g., nonsense rhymes, jokes.*

*(Oliver makes up a rhyme while building the leaf house: “It’s snowing, it’s snowing, it’s really growing”)*

*3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence, and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings, and events.*

*(CA →O+M Why did you choose the wood house? O →CA Because woodlice like wood.)*

*EAD 1.24 Construct with a purpose in mind, using a variety of resources.*

*(Mary and Oliver help to construct the leaf insect house using sticks and leaves.)*

*2.17 Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme.*

*(Oliver and Mary are engaged with collecting minibeasts to put in the ‘houses’ alongside others.)*

The ‘Understanding the world’ goal is short and generalised and is devoid of any conceptual content. In order to help children develop their learning about the world around them, adults have to be clear about the concepts that need to be introduced, explained, clarified, and extended according to each child’s understanding. In addition to ‘looking closely at similarities, differences, pattern and change’, Mary and Oliver are learning:

1. That minibeasts can be found in abundance under logs.
2. How to distinguish between growing shoots and minibeasts.
3. That worms like soil and are slithery.
4. That centipedes have many legs and move fast.
5. That spiders are delicate.
6. That woodlice like wood, are strong and hard and can be picked up.

In this case, the EYFS goal gives a limited version of the learning that is taking place. It would be more appropriate to use it as a generalised starting point rather than a learning objective.

Narrative

Although the planned activity is about making houses and gardens for insects and then collecting insects to go in them, the children actually spend more time just observing the minibeasts that they find under the logs in various parts of the garden. The collecting part is quite difficult for the children to do themselves because the insects keep moving. They do get better at it and manage to collect some woodlice as well as worms. The insect house building is more adult directed. The finding and watching minibeasts becomes enthusiastically child-led as the activity progresses. They observe a wide variety of minibeasts that move around quite differently and look very different too. The idea about making ‘gardens’ for the minibeasts is abandoned, as making the houses, and collecting the creatures becomes the main focus of the activity. No-one mentions the fact that the minibeasts are not likely to stay in their ‘houses’ for very long, but that new creatures might use them. It is still partly an imaginative, creative game, as much as an opportunity for learning about minibeast habitats. Finding the minibeasts in their habitats and observing them is probably the most informative part of the activity, along with the construction methods used in building the houses. In this activity the adults are supporting the children’s building skills, and also encouraging them in their observations of creatures under the logs.

**Section 4 - Discussions about the minibeast activity – assessing, reflecting, and evaluating** (Minibeasts)

Discussion between myself and Adult Patrick

*Transcript from 6th March*

*Adult Patrick and I are having a conversation sitting on benches in the back garden.*

*CA →PA Right Patrick – Are you happy to talk about Friday? PA →CA Yes I am.  CA →PA …The activities we did ... So – what did you do with the children in the garden at the first bit of the outdoor playtime?*

*PA →CA Um well we talked about the possibility of having um bug houses and bug dwellings.*

*CA →PA Yes*

*PA →CA And we thought of the different ways in which we could make them. We could make them*

*out of leaves and sticks or we could make them out of um slate or maybe wood and we*

*tried making different types of houses and the children helped.*

*CA →PA Yes – And were they excited about making these houses?*

*PA →CA They really were very excited, and what they enjoyed was getting worms and bugs to put*

*into the houses – that was what really excited them.*

*CA →Pa Yes – so they all went off collecting insects to put in the houses.*

*PA →CA Yes – and they loved that. They got their jars and things to go and find insects and bugs*

*and worms to put in their bug houses.*

*CA →PA OK and.. and so – this was a more planned activity wasn’t it? PA →CA Yes CA →PA Which do you prefer, the planned or the freer or both for different things? PA →CA I think it’s nice to have a variety of both, but it’s important, always, that the children’s*

*choices come into it otherwise they’re – they’re not interacting – with their own imagination*

*and ideas.*

*CA →PA Did you feel they were involved in the Friday afternoon activity? PA →CA Yes because um they looked at the different types of houses they can build – but also the*

*different bugs they could have in the houses.*

*CA →PA And did you help to identify what the different creatures were? PA →CA Yes CA →PA And – I saw centipedes and worms and …. PA →CA worms*

*CA →PA snails and PA →CA and snails and slugs CA →PA  slugs and I could see woodlice PA →CA Woodlice – they got some woodlice – that’s right. CA →PA Ok. Thank you very much*

**Analysis** (Section 4 – Minibeasts)

Narrative

Adult Patrick used his skills as a former architect, to help the children to build houses for minibeasts. He helped with the technical side and directed the building activity. He was especially engaged because of his expertise. This enabled the children to build a variety of superior houses. Oliver and Mary helped with the leaf house. The building activity was therefore strongly but productively adult directed. Adult Patrick acknowledged in the discussion that it was the collecting minibeasts to put in the houses that engaged and excited the children the most, although he also thought they enjoyed building them. He felt that it was important to engage with children’s choices when planning activities and to value their imagination and ideas.

**5.4.2 FLORA**

**Section 1 – Free Play and Observation** (Flora)

Melody and her friends are digging in a muddy area of the garden. Harry joins them with a toy digger. During their digging, they discover roots in the soil. This happens in the first part of the session on 28th April, during a time of free play in the back garden before a planned Gruffalo hunt begins.

**A group of children in a garden

Description automatically generated with low confidence**

*Transcript from 28th April*

*CA →Mel Oh – What are you doing there?*

*Melody is digging in the mud with a small spade, with a group of friends in the back garden.*

*Mel →CA We’re digging for worms*

*CA →All You’re digging for worms are you?*

*CA →Mel Have you found any Melody? Mel →CA No Carrie →CA Look what I’ve found CA →Carrie What did you find Carrie? Carrie →CA This*

*Carrie points at the ground*

*CA →Carrie I think what you are finding are roots. CA →All They’re roots from – from that bush – I think they must be roots from that bush there.*

*I point to a nearby bush.*

*…………………………………………………….*

*CA →Mel Mel, would you like to do some planting next week? Mel →CA Yes CA →Mel OK Others in the group agree that they would like to do some planting too.*

*…………………………………………………….*

*Harry joins the group. He brings a digger and uses this for digging in the mud.*

*CA →All Good digging here – good digging.*

*CA →Mel What else have you found Melody?*

*Melody shows meher spade full of earth.*

*…………………………………………………….*

*H →CA  I found this. CA →H Oh yes*

*Harry picks up a small piece of root that looks very like a worm.*

…………………………………………

*The digging and exploration continue. The children talk about what they are finding.*

*Eve →CA  Look what I’ve found – I’ve found this mud.*

*Eve shows me a handful of mud. =*

*CA →Eve It’s – it’s mud isn’t it? It’s earth.*

*CA →All When we plant seeds, they need the earth to grow in. We might plant some seeds next*

*time.*

*………………………………………………….*

*H →CA My digger’s digging.*

*Harry pushes the digger bucket into some loose earth.*

…………………………………………

*CA →H Oh look Harry. There are some more roots in the ground. Harry pulls up a root and looks at it briefly.*

*………………………………………………… =*

*CA →Mel Melody can you see the little roots in the soil here? Melody can you see? There’s a root.*

*Mel →CA There.*

*Melody touches the root. She pulls it, but it doesn’t come out. Melody resumes digging with the blue spade. She tries to pull out the root again – but it is firmly attached to the root system underneath the soil.*

*Eve →CA This is made of roots everywhere.*

*CA →All Because there have been things growing in here.*

*Digging continues.*

*Mel →CA A root*

*Melody successfully pulls out a small plant with roots attached and holds it up for me to see, with a triumphant look.*

*CA →Mel A root – yes. If we – Melody, if we plant some seeds next week, they’ll put roots down*

*and little shoots up – and grow into something.*

*Eve →CA They’ll grow into strawberries. Em →CA We’ve got some strawberries growing in our garden……*

A picture containing person, outdoor, grass

Description automatically generated

**Analysis** (Section 1 – Flora)

Integrated pedagogy

* Melody and some of her friends are choosing to dig in a muddy area of the garden. <<<(CI)
* They don’t find worms, but they do find something else. <<(CI)
* I tell them that they have found ‘roots’ – probably roots from the nearby bush. (AD)>>
* Melody and Eve are both keen to show me the earth they have dug up. <<(CI)
* Harry, digging with his digger, finds some more roots. <(CI)
* I point out some more roots to Melody. (AD)>
* Melody manages to dig up a small plant, roots and all, and shows it triumphantly to me. <<(CI)
* I suggest planting some seeds next week. (AD)>

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*CL 2.5 Understands use of objects.*

*(Melody understands that spades are for digging.)*

*2.8 Beginning to understand ‘why’ and ‘how' questions.*

*(Harry and Melody are understanding more about how plants grow)*

*UW 2.4 Can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects.*

*(Melody talks about digging for worms and then about finding a root)*

*2.6 Developing an understanding of growth, decay and changes over time.*

*(Melody and Harry are both developing an understanding of growth through their discoveries of roots in the earth where they are digging.)*

Narrative

The children’s freely chosen exploration of the earth, with spades and a toy digger, leads to the discovery of roots in the soil which in turn leads on to Melody’s discovery of a whole plant with roots and leaves. This interest in how plants grow in the earth leads me to an idea about planting seeds in the next session. The children are interested in the mud for its own sake, but it is the integration of children’s initiatives and adult direction which takes this further into potentially learning about one of the principal functions of earth, that is, to grow living plants. Without the direction of the adult, this activity may have remained as a digging activity and not developed into an extended learning activity about plants and how plants grow.

**Section 2 – Reflection and Planning** (Flora)

I talk to Melody about what she did earlier in the session and what she might like to do next week. Melody and I are sitting on sofas in the kitchen.

*Transcript from 28th April*

*CA →Mel OK – and Melody – you were – in the garden – you were doing a lot of digging*

*weren’t you*

*Mel → CA Yes*

*…………………………………………………………….*

*CA →Mel Melody, would you like to plant something next week? Mel →CA Yes CA →M In the soil ? Mel →CA Yes CA →Mel Shall we plant some things that would grow? Where do the roots go do you think? Mel →CA Um down CA →Mel Down to the soil – And where do the shoots go d’you think?*

*Mel →CA Down too. CA →Mel The shoots go up. After we’ve planted some things in the soil then we can water them*

*and* *then over the next few weeks we can watch them grow – can’t we? Mel →CA Yes CA →Mel So would you like to do that next week? Mel →CA Yes CA →Mel And shall we look for flowers on the walk? Mel →CA Yes*

*…………………………………………………… CA →Mel OK Melody, one last thing – Do you like doing things that are – that you choose or do you*

*like doing things that the adults choose, or do you like doing a bit of both?*

*M →CA  Bit of both. CA →Mel A bit of both. OK Thank you – off you go*

After the discussion with Melody, Adult Harriet and I reflect on Melody’s interests and what she did in the garden today.

*Transcript from 28th April*

*CA →HA And what about Melody? How d’you think – er what d’you think?*

*HA →CA I think Melody’s quite different to Harry, which would be an interesting sort of comparison*

*to make. I think – um – she is very – she’s very much interested in nature – always been*

*very interested in minibeasts and the ground and the earth and plants and just nature in*

*general I think, so…*

*CA →HA  And more sociable d’you think? HA →CA Very much so – she definitely seems to want – and that’s something that’s – developed –*

*so she seems to want to be with her friends a lot more – she’s less sort of solitary now.*

*And that was noticeable in the garden – that she called her friends over and they were all*

*digging, together, weren’t they? =*

*CA →HA  Yes*

After these discussions, Adult Patrick prepares seeds to be planted in the ground next week, so that over the next few weeks Melody can see for herself that shoots grow up and roots grow down into the earth. Adult Harriet prepares cards for identifying different plants on the walk next week and bags for collecting things.

**Analysis** (Section 2 – Flora)

Integrated pedagogy

* The planning of activities for the next week is weighted on the side of adult direction as Melody mainly just agrees with the adult. (AD)>
* The planning is based on Melody’s interest in the soil and nature as observed in the garden and confirmed in the discussion with Adult Harriet. <(CI)
* Melody says that she likes both herself and the adult to be choosing activities. (AD)><(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*CL 1.5 Listens to others one to one or in small groups when conversation interests them.*

*(Melody listens to what I am saying and responds.)*

Narrative

Although Melody does not say a lot in the discussion with me, the adults have been able to identify her interest in soil and plants through observations of her choices and actions in the garden. Melody does not necessarily have to give a verbal response to express her interests. Her actions have spoken for themselves with non-verbal clues. This is an example of an adult paying attention to a child’s actions and expressions rather than verbal language.

**Section 3 – Planned Activity - Planting seeds in the garden** (Flora)

*Transcript from 5th May*

*Adult Patrick is showing Melody and Harry how to plant seeds in the planter.*

*PA →Mel+H What we’re going to do – what we’re going to do is make some lettuce by doing 2*

*lines here – for the soil to go in here – and put lettuce in there.*

*……………………………………………………*

*Adult Patrick opens the packet of seeds and pours some of the seeds into his hand.*

*PA →H+Mel … I’ve got some seeds – they’re very small. Can you see how small they are?*

*Melody has a close look.*

*Mel →PA Yes PA →Mel Now I’d like you to take a little pinch like this and just – put it in like that. D’you see? Can*

*you do that?*

*Adult Patrick demonstrates how to put the seeds into the soil. = Melody takes a little pinch of seeds from Adult Patrick’s hand.*

*PA →Mel Just in that slot there – lovely – and just put a bit more in that slot – in that bit there.*

*That’s right.*

*Adult Patrickdirects Melody where exactly to put the seeds.*

*Harry has been watching Melody. Now it is his turn.*

*PA →H And Harry d’you want to come here and you do the same on this side?*

*Take a pinch like this and drop it in like that.*

*Adult Patrick shows Harry how to plant the seeds. Harry drops his seeds into the soil.*

*………………………………………. CA →PA  What will it grow into? PA →CA,Mel+H It will it grow into lettuce. And here’s a picture of the lettuce.*

*Adult Patrick shows the children a picture of lettuce on the seed packet.*

………………………………..

*PA → Mel+H And then we have to put the soil on top of it so it all keeps nice and warm and moist.*

*Adult Patrick shows Melody and Harry how to put soil on top of the seeds. They do it.*

*……………………………………..*

*PA →Mel+H Right – Melody and Harry, can you put some soil from in the bucket here into the pot?*

*Melody and Harry put soil into a different pot*

*…………………………………………….*

*CA →PA What’s special about this soil (Adult) Patrick?*

*PA →CA It – it’s special soil that’s for growing seeds in. Melody continues putting soil into the pot.*

*………………………………………………*

*After this Melody and Harry plant tarragon seeds.*

*Melody is keen to do it by herself. She makes holes in the soil, ready for the seeds.*

*Mel →PA Could you pour some in my hand?=*

*Adult Patrick pours some of them into Melody’s hand.*

*Melody tips up her hand and the seeds fall down into the soil.*

*……………………………………………*

*PA →Mel And we cover it over. Can you cover it over like that?*

*Melody puts some soil onto the seeds.*

*…………………………………………..*

*Harry also plants some more seeds.*

*…………………………………………*

*PA →H+Mel Now we’ll need to put some water on it.*

*Melody and then Harry follow Adult Patrick down the slope towards the tap where a hose is attached.*

*……………………………………….*

*Mel →PA Can I do it?*

*Adult Patrick gives the hose to Melody and water spurts out. Adult Patrick adjusts the water flow. Melody takes main control of the hose, but Adult Patrick still holds it a bit further back. Melody waters the seeds. Then Harry has a go too.*

*……………………………………..*

*CA →PA Why do we need the water (Adult) Patrick? = PA →CA To help it grow – it needs water, sunlight and soil. CA →H+Mel So, it needs water, sunlight and soil. CA →Mel What does it need Melody? M → CA Sunlight and soil*

*CA →Mel And – what did we just put on it? M →CA  Water CA →Mel Yes CA →H So Harry – it needs? H →CA Soil, water. CA →H Soil, water and sunlight H →CA Sunlight CA →H+Mel Even though we can’t see the =*

*the sun, the sun is behind the clouds.*

*Harry looks up at the sky.*

*H →CA All the clouds?*

*CA →H+Mel Look - we planted some seeds and then we can watch them – they won’t – they take a bit of time to grow don’t they…?*

**Analysis** (Section 3 - Flora)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adult Patrick shows Melody and Harry how to plant the seeds, cover them with soil and water them. (AD)>>>
* Melody and Harry follow instructions and plant seeds, cover them with soil and water them. <<<<(CI)
* I question Adult Patrick about conditions for growth. Then I discuss this with the children. (AD)>>
* Harry wonders if the sun is behind all the clouds. <(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*PSED 2.5 Enjoys responsibility of carrying out small tasks.*

*(Melody and Harry enjoy planting, covering, and watering the seeds.)*

*2.8 Shows conﬁdence in asking adults for help.*

*(Melody asks Adult Patrick to pour some seeds into her hand.)*

*3.10 Begin to accept the needs of others and can take turns and share resources, sometimes with support from others.*

*(Melody and Harry share resources and take turns planting and watering the seeds.)*

*CL 1.8 Focusing attention — still listen or do but can shift own attention.*

*(Melody and Harry listen to Adult Patrick but then shift their attention to doing the planting.)*

*1 .9 Is able to follow directions.*

*(Melody and Harry follow directions to plant and water the seeds.)*

*2.7 Responds to simple instruction.*

*(Melody and Harry are very good at responding to instructions in this activity.)*

*PD 2.9 Understands that equipment and tools have to be used safely.*

*(Melody and Harry understand that the hose has to be used safely.)*

*UW 2.6 Developing an understanding of growth, decay, and changes over time.*

*(Adult Catherine points out that these seeds will take a bit of time to grow.)*

Narrative

The planting seeds activity is mainly adult-led but the children are learning new concepts by carrying out all the stages of the process in a physical, hands-on way, rather than simply being told about how plants grow in a more distant, abstract way. In a few weeks they will be able to see the shoots coming up and the plants visibly growing. This engagement of adults and children working together is providing a rich learning experience for the children. Initially, it has all been based on Melody’s interest in the soil and the discovery of roots in the soil. The adults in this case are helping children to build new skills and knowledge.

**Section 4 – Planned Activity – Collecting flowers on the walk** (Flora)

*Transcript from 5th May*

*CA →All … Now – the first thing you’re going to do… is find a bag with your name on… and then,*

*today, on the walk we’re going to find lots of different leaves and flowers – and you can*

*make a collection of some of them.*

*……………………………………………………….*

*While still sitting down Melody picks a daisy in the grass.*

*The children stand up and go towards the bush where the bags are hanging.*

*Melody finds her bag straight away.*

*……………………………………………………..*

*Mel →CA I’ve put a daisy in mine.*

*Melody shows me the daisy in her bag.*

*…………………………………………………….*

*The group set off on the walk. The adults are holding cards with pictures and names of flowers on them. The children are carrying their named bags for collecting things.*

……………………………………………………

*CA →Mel …Oh – Melody – look what I can see here. That’s just growing up. D’you know what*

*this one’s called? = I point out a dandelion with many flowers that is growing out of the wall.*

*Mel →CA No CA →Mel It’s a dandelion Mel →CA I want it*  *Melody puts her dandelion into her bag*

*……………………………………………………*

*H →CA I’ve found a dandelion*

*Harry finds a dandelion all by himself, growing in another part of the wall.*

*CA →H Well done Harry.*

*Harry shows me the dandelion that he has put in his bag.*

*…………………………………………………… We go through the gate where the path passes a patch of grass.*

*CA →All I can see. I can see some more dandelions. Mel →CA I’ve got this dandelion*

*Melody comes towards me with a broad smile on her face – holding out the dandelion that she has just picked in the grass. Then she puts it in her bag.*

*CA →Mel Well done Melody.*

*………………………………………………….*

*Children are looking at stinging nettles with Adult Harriet.*

*CA →All Well we won’t, we won’t pick the stinging nettles.*

*HA →All We’re just looking at them with our eyes aren’t we? CA →Mel Melody – these are stinging nettles.*

*Melody points at the stinging nettles. =*

*CA →Mel Yes – there’s a stinging nettle – we won’t collect them in our bags. Oh look – there is a*

*dandelion that’s gone to seed. Yes it’s got the seeds, d’you see those – d’you see that one*

*there Melody?*

*Mel →CA Yes*

*Melody looks closely at the ‘dandelion clock’ in the grass.*

*CA →Mel It’s got the seeds in it. That’s a dandelion clock - that one – and that’s a yellow one*

*that’s still – that’s still got its yellow petals.*

*Adult Harrietshows the children a patch of stinging nettles.*

*HA →All But actually children – here’s another thing – if you ever do get – brush – brush past a*

*stinging nettle and hurt yourself, these big leaves, somehow, always manage to grow next to*

*stinging nettles and they say that if you rub it on the sting, it makes it feel a lot better. These*

*are called dock leaves.*

*Adult Harriet picks a dock leaf and passes it around.*

*The group walks on down the path.*

*……………………………………….*

*I show Melody some cow parsley. Melody looks interested.*

*CA →All There – there’s some cow parsley. CA →Mel Yes – that’s cow parsley – you can take a bit of that and put it in your bag, if you want to.*

*That’s called cow parsley.*

*Melody picks a bit of cow parsley and puts it in her bag. CA →Mel = But we’re not going to pick the nettles are we Melody? Child →CA No they’ll sting you. SA →Mel Melody – let’s see*

*Adult Susannah shows Melody a picture of cow parsley – and it matches. =*

*CA →Child That’s right – they could sting you. SA →Mel Can you see it’s the same? D’you think that’s the same Melody?*

*Adult Susannah takes the piece of cow parsley and puts it next to the picture of cow parsley.*

*Mel →SA Yes  CA →MelYes*

*SA →Mel Yes it’s the same.*

*……………………………………………….*

*Adult Susannah points out a flower growing next to the path and also shows Melody the picture.*

*SA →Mel Here – this is greater stitchwort*

*CA →Mel Melody, d’you see this one?*

*Mel →CA Yes.*

*CA →Mel You can take a bit of that if you want.*

*Melody reaches out her hand to pick the flower.*

*SA →Mel Melody – is it the same as that picture?*

*Mel →SA It’s the same. CA →Mel Does it look the same Melody? Mel → CA Yes CA →Mel Yes*

*Adult Susannahpoints to the picture of greater stitchwort on the card.*

*SA →Mel What about the middle bit? The middle bit is yellow. Does it have a yellow middle = because that one’s got a yellow middle?*

*Melody looks closely at her flower and at the card. = SA →Mel And can you see those um petals – they’re kind of together aren’t they – see if yours are like – a kind of a 2*

*Adult Susannah points to Melody’s flower. =*

*SA →Mel Can you see that? They are – see –1, 2; 1,2. And that’s our number this week.*

*Adult Susannahpoints out the paired arrangement of petals.*

*CA →Mel Oh – that is our number this week.*

*………………………………………………………..*

*Harry shows an interest in the greater stitchwort flowers =*

*CA →H Right – Oh – wow – Harry – that’s called greater stitchwort.*

*CA →Mel What’s that called Melody? Mel → CA Greater stitchwort. CA →Mel Yes quite right – Greater stitchwort.*

*………………………………………………………*

*CA →Mel OK – what have you found M? Mel →CA A buttercup CA →Mel A buttercup – it’s very bright yellow. D’you think it’s like that one?*

*I point to the card with a picture of a buttercup on it. -*

*Mel →CA  Yes*

*Melody puts her flower next to the picture to compare it. =*

*CA →Mel It is – and that says ‘buttercup’.*

*I point to the word on the card. -*

*CA →Mel Look, look in that field –*

*Ipoint out the field of buttercups. -*

*CA →Mel That’s right – you can put it in your bag. Melody puts her buttercup into her bag.*

*CA →All Right – how many buttercups d’you think are in the field? Mel →CA Lots CA →Mel Lots*

……………………………………………

*Adult Harriet is holding up a birch leaf and the card with the picture on it.*

*CA →Mel Melody – this one is a birch – look at this.*

*I point to the birch tree.*

*HA →Mel Melody – would you like it in your bag?*

*CA →Mel Look at all the lines on that.*

*HA →Mel Look at the colour as well. It’s an amazing colour isn’t it?*

*Melody holds out her bag and Adult Harriet puts a birch leaf in it for her.*

*……………………………………………*

*HA →All I tell you what we might find up here – before we walk on – come and see what my leaf is*

*and then see if you can find the tree. This is my leaf – an oak leaf – and it’s all curly wurly*

*– no straight lines. See if you can find an oak tree.*

*Adult Harriet holds out a picture of an oak leaf for everyone to see.*

*CA →Mel Right Melody – let’s look for an oak tree.*

*Several children find the tree nearby and call out.*

*Lots of voices An oak tree, an oak tree….*

*HA →Mel D’you want to check Melody?*

*Melody picks on oak leaf from the tree. =*

*HA →Mel Do they look the same?*

*Adult Hannahinvites Melody to compare the leaf with the picture. =*

*Mel →HA Yes HA →Mel It does, good girl.*

*Melody puts the oak leaf in her bag.*

*CA →Mel What’s that one Melody? Mel →HA An oak leaf*

*Others also pick oak leaves and put them in their bags.*

*CA →Mel Oak leaf – good girl HA →Mel Well done – brilliant*

*Others also pick oak leaves and put them in their bags.*

*HA →All Well done everyone.*

*= -*

**Analysis** (Section 4 – Flora)

Integrated pedagogy

* I explain the planned activity. (AD)>
* Melody picks a daisy and finds a bag with her name on it. <<(CI)
* The adults point out different flowers and leaves. (AD)>>>>
* Melody picks various flowers and an oak leaf. <<<<(CI)
* Adult Harriet points out the nettles, advises against picking them and shows the children a dock leaf growing nearby. (AD)>>>
* Adult Susannah draws Melody’s attention to the finer details of the greater stitchwort flower and together they compare the flower Melody is holding, with the picture on the card. (AD)>><(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*L 1.14 Recognises familiar words and signs such as own name and advertising logos.*

*(Melody recognises her name on the bag she is going to use for collecting things.)*

*PSED 1.8 Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adults.*

*(Melody is working closely with familiar adults throughout this activity.)*

*UW 2.4 Can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects.*

*(Melody says the names of flowers and leaves that she collects. She names daisy, dandelion, greater stitchwort, buttercup and oak leaf.)*

*CL 3.14 Uses vocab focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them.*

*(Flowers are important to Melody and she is learning to say their names.)*

*3.15 Builds up vocab that reflects the breadth of their experiences.*

*(Melody is having new experiences of flora and building up her vocabulary.)*

Narrative

Although Harry is present, he is much less interested in the flowers than Melody. Every time an adult points out a flower or leaf, Melody wants one in her bag. Without the adult input the children would probably still enjoy collecting flowers and leaves and putting them in their bags. However, when the adults add names to the flowers, look closely at details and draw attention to the trees that the leaves come from they are extending children’s learning. In this case it may be argued that the level of adult direction is curtailing Melody’s freedom to roam freely and choose flowers for herself. However, Melody is a child who thrives on attention from adults, and she is eager to stay near the adults and learn more about the flora. Harry on the other hand makes the choice not to take too much direction from adults during this activity. He roams freely, collecting things at random. Both styles of engagement are freely chosen, and both are valid options.

**Section 5 – Discussions about the flora activity** (Flora)

Adult Harriet and Melody sit at the table and sort through all the things that Melody has collected in her bag. Adult Harriet has the cards with pictures of flowersor leaveson them.Together they put flowers and leaves on top of the pictures and talk about them. There is a short extract of this conversation below.

*Transcript from 5th May*

*HA →Mel …Could you find me a leaf like this one – the oak leaf? = f ff*

*Adult Harrietpoints to a card with a leaf on it. =*

*HA →Mel Have a little look at the shape.*

*Melody touches the holly leaf and then picks up the oak leaf.*

*…………………………………………………… =*

*HA →Mel What’s special about the oak leaf?... How d’you know it’s an oak leaf?*

*Adult Harrietpoints to the curves on the oak leaf.*

*Mel →HA It has curly things. HA →Mel Good girl, it’s got curly edges. Well done – brilliant. D’you want to put it by the oak leaf picture? =*

*Melody puts her oak leaf by the oak leaf picture. =*

*HA →Mel Well done …*

After this, Adult Harriet and I reflect on the flora activity of the afternoon.

*Transcript from 5th May*

*CA →HA Thank you very much for making these cards – they’re great and they’ve got so many of*

*the flowers we’ve got along our walk. Did you feel they were well used this afternoon?*

*HA →CA I thought it was great actually and I think um it works – in the fact that we don’t do it every*

*week. So it was something exciting for the children because it was new – but equally I*

*was surprised at how many of them remembered the names of the flowers and the leaves*

*– so although they were only 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds – they actually retained that*

*information and were able to spot other trees with the same types of leaves and so on*

*as we walked.*

*CA →HA And they got really interested in it didn’t they? HA →CA They really did. They just love collecting things though, I think, I think that’s the beauty of*

*It, as well to keep them interested. It becomes their own bag…*

*………………………………………………………………………..*

*HA →CA  to think we used that whole time just walking to the bench which is half our normal walk*

*– um –and yet we used all the time because they were just so involved. They were really*

*looking closely at what there was around – and I think children were also delighted in*

*finding things that weren’t on our pictures. (e.g., The daisy was not on a card)*

*CA →HA Yes HA →CA …. providing a challenge…*

*CA →HA Yes HA →CA  Yes I thought it was a really, really helpful afternoon. CA →HA Thank you.*

**Analysis** (Section 5 – Flora)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adult Harriet leads Melody in an activity that helps her to identify again all the flowers and leaves that she has collected. (AD)>>
* Melody enjoys naming her flowers and leaves and matching them with the cards. <<(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*UW 2.4 Can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects.*

*(Melody repeats the names of flowers and leaves that she has collected).*

*PSED 1.8 Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adults.*

*(Melody is working closely with Adult Harriet as they revisit the afternoon’s activity.)*

Narrative

Melody is shy and uses language quite sparingly so Adult Harriet uses a hands-on activity to help her reflect on the flora that she has collected and put in her bag. This reinforces the learning she has been experiencing during the afternoon. For example, on the walk, Melody has seen a real oak tree growing next to the path and collected a leaf from it. Then in conversation with Adult Harriet she matches her leaf with the picture of the oak leaf and identifies the curly edges of the leaf. The integration of child-led and adult-directed activities in the ‘flora’ activity has led to a deep level of learning for a three-year old. Adult Harriet, in the discussion with me, expresses surprise at the level of many of the children’s interest and learning throughout this activity. The children come to this activity with funds of knowledge about plants and they are extending their knowledge in this activity.

**5.4.3 STICKS**

**Section 1 – Free play and observation - Playing with sticks in the garden** (Sticks)

The 2-year-olds Arnold and Greta, play with sticks in the garden.

A picture containing tree, outdoor, person, plant

Description automatically generated

*Transcript from 23rd June*

*Arnold and Greta are playing in the back garden. Arnold has some sticks in his hand.*

*CA →A What are you doing Arnold?*

*A →CA I’m playing with these sticks.*

*………………………………………..*

*CA →A What d’you want to do with them now?*

*A →CA Bonfire*

*CA →A Bonfire – you want to put them on the fire?*

*A →CA Yes*

*………………………………………..*

*CA →A OK – off we go.*

*CA →G D’you want to come Greta?*

*G →CA Yes*

*………………………………………*

*Greta starts picking up some sticks.*

*I lead a small group of children through the gate into the bonfire area.*

*Arnold and Greta run down the path towards the bonfire.*

*CA →A+G Now you can go in the middle to put the sticks on because it’s not lit at the moment.*

*Arnold throws his bunch of sticks onto the unlit fire.*

*CA →A That’s right Arnold – good – d’you want to collect some more Arnold?*

*Greta puts her sticks on the (unlit) fire.*

*…………………………………………………………….*

*Returning to the back garden, Arnold and Greta continue to play with sticks.*

*They both carry sticks around in the garden, drop them, pick them up again and hit logs, bushes, trees and the ground with them. They do not talk about the sticks. They just run around with them and play with them.*

*A picture containing ground, outdoor, little, young

Description automatically generated*

**Analysis** (Section 1 – Sticks)

Integrated pedagogy

* Arnold and Greta choose to play with sticks in the back garden. <<(CI)
* Arnold wants to put his sticks on the unlit bonfire. Greta wants to do this too. <<(CI)
* I help them by opening the gates to the bonfire area and reassuring them that it’s OK to put the sticks on the unlit bonfire. (AD)>

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*PSED 2.2 Expresses own preferences and interests.*

*(Arnold and Greta both express their interest in sticks through the choices they make.)*

*3.6 Shows understanding and cooperates with some boundaries and routines.*

*(Arnold and Greta do not at any point hurt other people with their sticks, thus cooperating with the ‘no hurting’ boundary of the setting.)*

*CL 3.1 Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences*

*and thoughts.*

*(Arnold uses a whole sentence to describe what he is doing at the start of the outdoor activity.)*

*PD 1.1 Runs safely on whole foot.*

*(Arnold and Greta run around the garden with their sticks.)*

Narrative

Playing with sticks in the garden is a basic, popular activity and it is important that children have the freedom to do this. Sticks have texture, can be of varied length, can be broken or snapped easily, have an earthy smell, have come from a bush or tree, can be waved around, or used to build a bonfire, and lie around in plentiful supply in the garden, to name but a few of their attributes. One of the tasks of the adult is to guard this freedom for children to play freely with sticks. These 2-year-olds do not touch another child with their sticks and play safely with them. This is an illustration of the trust that has built up between children and adults and of ‘mutual structuring’ where children and adults together ‘determine the activities the young learners may experience and the activities in which they can participate directly’ (Stephen, 2010, p.16)

**Section 2 – Planned Activity - Collecting and decorating sticks** (Sticks)

Adult Harriet plans a ‘decorating sticks’ activity. This is based on Arnold’s and Greta’s interest in sticks in the previous week.

*Transcript from 30th June*

*Adult Harrietis calling the children over. They are in the back garden.*

*HA →All This afternoon we are going to be doing something extra special – very very special*

*Indeed – because we’re going to be using – in a moment I’m going to ask you to all run*

*round the garden and find one stick each – ideally – that means the best thing would be to*

*have a thick stick like this one. But if you can only find a thin one that will be OK – but if*

*you can I want you to look for a fat stick … It doesn’t matter whose stick is whose. We’re*

*going to make a Woodharp pile of sticks – enough for everybody to have a stick –*

*and then comes the exciting bit … I’m going to take each of the sticks and put this*

*special tape around it – and can you see it looks white here – When I pull the paper off it’s*

*double sided sticky – so it sticks the stick and it is sticky to touch – and we’re going to turn*

*these from boring, dull, big ugly sticks into magic wands. What could we stick on our magic*

*wands from the garden do you think – to make them look more exciting?*

*Child →HA Leaves.*

*HA →All Leaves, good idea*

*HA →G Greta, what could we stick on here to make a magic wand? What could we find in our*

*garden?*

*G →HA Er - some leaves*

*Child →HA And flowers*

*HA →All Where, where do we get the flowers from when we find flowers?*

*Children →HA The grass, the grass*

*A →HA Bushes (said quietly with a smile)*

*HA →All We can get them off the floor – we’re not going to pick them straight from the bushes –*

*So, we’re going to look for flowers. We’re going to look for leaves – and we’re going to*

*stick them on our magic wand…We’re going to make a pile of Treetop sticks which we’re*

*going to turn into magic wands. Are you ready? ....so I’d like you to all run off quick as you*

*can – find a stick – off you go.*

*All the children run off to collect sticks. Greta is the first person to come back with a stick.*

*HA →G Perfect – that is a brilliant stick Greta.*

*…………………………………………………….*

*Arnold heads towards the climbing tree and looks around.*

*A →CA I'm trying to find a big stick.*

*CA →A There's a big stick Arnold.*

*A →CA Yes*

*Arnold picks up a long thin stick.*

*CA →A That's a very thin one. Here’s a thick one.*

*A →CA Yes*

*Arnold runs back to Adult Harriet with his stick and holds it up for her to see.*

*A →HA Look look*

*HA →A Perfect that's great – that's a really fat stick isn't it?*

*Greta brings another stick.*

*HA →All Line them in a row along here so that I can cover them with the magic tape.*

*And then we’re going to have a big fun activity. Pop them on here please –*

*that’s perfect.*

*Children are bringing sticks and putting them on the bench. Arnold arranges the sticks on the bench.*

*He picks one of the sticks up and bangs it on the table. Then he puts it down.*

*Arnold and Greta run off to collect more sticks. They run to the climbing tree. Arnold tries unsuccessfully to break off a piece of an existing branch. Greta picks up a stick from the ground.*

*Greta takes her stick back to Adult Harriet. Arnold gets diverted and begins to play on the rope ladder.*

*Then Arnold climbs over some branches and finds some good potential sticks. Arnold picks out a good stick. He runs back to Adult Harriet with his stick. He waves it in the air triumphantly.*

*HA →A Where did you find it. Where did you find your stick?*

*A →HA Find over there*

*Arnold points towards the climbing tree.*

*HA →A Did you find it over there? Well done…*

*…………………………………………………….*

*Adult Harriet shows Arnold and Greta two sticks that have been prepared with double sided sellotape.*

*HA →A+G Right – Greta and Arnold, I’ve got your magic wands here. But they look a bit boring at*

*the moment don’t they. So if you can see my magic wand…*

*G →HA I want, I want that one.*

*Greta points to Adult Harriet’s already decorated stick.*

*HA →A You can make yours look like that. You collect flowers off the floor (ground) or leaves.*

*Adult Harriet gives sticks to the children. Arnold and Greta collect flowers and stick them onto their sticks with a bit of help from me.*

*……………………………………………………..*

*G →CA Where is a daisy?*

*I pick a daisy for Greta and give it to her.*

*CA →G There*

*G →CA Oh*

*CA →G Right – now put it on your stick.*

*G →CA Does that daisy talk?*

*CA →G No that daisy doesn’t talk.*

*G →CA  What does it do then?*

*CA →G It just looks pretty in the grass.*

*Greta attempts to put the daisy on her stick.*

*……………………………………………………..*

*Arnold and Greta continue to decorate their sticks with some help from me and Adult Patrick. Arnold adds a feather to his stick. Greta sticks a small apple, that she finds on the ground, on the end of her stick.*

*………………………………………………………*

*Arnold and Greta are carrying their sticks around with pride. All the children are running around with their sticks saying: “Look at mine”.*

*A picture containing person, outdoor, grass, little

Description automatically generated*

*CA →A Wow look at yours Arnold!*

*CA →G You’ve got an apple, a little apple, on the end of yours Greta.*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →A+G Oh – Adult Harriet‘s doing some names on them – shall we write your names on and*

*then you can take them home.*

*G →CA Yea and show them to our Mums.*

*CA →G And show them to your Mum – yes Greta, exactly.*

*Arnold and Greta bring their sticks to Adult Harriet to be named.*

*HA →A I love it Arnold – well done.*

*G →HA+ CA Look at mine.*

*CA →G Wow look at yours Greta. If you take it there, Adult Harriet will write it for you.*

*A picture containing outdoor, tree, person

Description automatically generated*

**Analysis** (Section 2 – Sticks)

Integrated pedagogy

* Initially, Adult Harriet explains her plans about collecting sticks and then decorating them, to the children. (PA) (AD)>>
* Adult Harriet sets out some boundaries for picking flowers, to protect the garden and encourage respect for the garden. (AD)>>
* Arnold and Greta look for sticks in the garden. <<(CI)
* I help Arnold to find a thick stick (AD)>
* Arnold and Greta continue to find more sticks. <<(CI)
* Adult Harriet shows Arnold and Greta a decorated stick. (AD)>
* Arnold and Greta decorate their sticks with some help from me and Adult Patrick. <<(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*PSED 3.7 Can inhibit own actions/behaviours. e.g., stop themselves from doing something they*

*shouldn't do.*

*(Greta and Arnold don’t pick flowers from the bushes.)*

*M 2.2 Beginning to categorise objects according to properties such as shape or size.*

*(Arnold understands the distinction between thick and thin sticks.)*

Narrative

Arnold and Greta get excited about collecting sticks and carry on going backwards and forwards to Adult Harriet with new sticks, enjoying the activity. They forget about the instruction to collect only one stick. They need some help with sticking things onto their sticks. They are happy with the end result and are excited about taking them home. The adult shows flexibility with the plan to collect one stick because she is responding to the ideas that the children are having, as demonstrated by their actions. There is ‘in the moment’ integrated pedagogy happening in this co-construction of ideas.

**Section 3 – Discussions about stick activity**

Adult Harriet discusses the stick activity with Arnold and Greta.

*Transcript from 30th June*

*Adult Harrietis talking to Arnold and Greta in the red room.*

*HA →A+G Right children, what was – did you have a good afternoon?*

*G →HA Yes*

*HA →A+G What did you enjoy doing this week? Can you remember everything we did?*

*HA →G When we started in the garden at the back – Greta what did we do with the sticks?*

*G →HA Collect them.*

*HA →G+A We collected them didn’t we and we got lots of sticks.*

*HA →A Arnold, I put some special tape around the sticks and what did you put on your sticks?*

*What did you stick on the sticks?*

*A →HA Um flowers*

*HA →A Flowers*

*HA →G And what did you put on yours Greta?*

*G →HA Um tape, flowers and flowers.*

*HA →G Flowers – and we had a few leaves on there. And one of you had something very*

*special from a bird.*

*HA →A Did you have something special from a bird on your one Arnold?*

*A →HA Um, um*

*HA →A Did you have a f . . . a feather – you did, didn’t you – that was clever.*

*HA →A+G So we collected lots of natural things for our stick wands.*

Adult Harriet discusses the stick activity with me.

*Transcript from 30th June*

*CA →HA And um (Adult )Harrietdid you think – what did you think about that mix of child-led and*

*adult-led today?*

*HA →CA I thought it worked beautifully actually – for all the children concerned – but particularly*

*these younger two. I loved the fact that the ideas that they had come out with – that they*

*wanted to use sticks for play – to then use that with the wand and other natural things round*

*the garden worked beautifully. And it was definitely at a level they could engage with. There*

*was nothing too difficult for them – but equally just thinking of our Woodharp as a whole – the older ones could then take it further too. So I saw one child did a repeating pattern – so just from their 2-year-old idea we actually could extend it across the group.*

*……………………………………………………………….*

*CA →HA And did you feel that there’s some point – um value – to adult um intervention then?*

*HA →CA From ourselves do you mean?*

*CA →HA As opposed to completely child-led.*

*HA →CA Yes I do think so. I think um the fact that we took the idea of the sticks but then gave*

*them an idea to use the sticks that was at their level – I think that’s where it worked well –*

*because I’m not sure the children have enough experience perhaps to come up with those*

*ideas themselves. They knew they liked sticks – but they didn’t really know what they could*

*do with sticks – so I think that’s where the adult intervention can help – it just supported their*

*idea and actually gave them the stimulus and the ideas to take it further really. I thought that*

*the mix of the two worked beautifully.*

*CA →HA Thank you very much (Adult) Harriet.*

**Analysis**  (Section 3 – Sticks)

Integrated pedagogy

* Adult Harriet asks Greta and Arnold about what they did this afternoon. (AD)>>
* Greta and Arnold answer the questions. <<(CI)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*CL 2.3 Understands 'who', what', ‘where' in simple questions.*

*(Greta and Arnold understand Adult Harriet’s questions)*

*3.2 Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic.*

*(Greta and Arnold remember different things about the stick activities when talking to Adult Harriet.)*

Narrative

Greta and Arnold are much more excited about actually doing the stick activity than they are about talking about it afterwards. At the end of the session, they are tired. Nevertheless, they do respond to the questions. In the discussion with me, Adult Harriet confirms that the children’s learning was extended through the planned activity and that the children really engaged with the activity.

**5.4.4 Sociocultural theoretical framing in Theme (B)**

In Theme (B) – ‘The Natural World’, the children are interested in minibeasts (4-year-olds), flora (3-year-olds), and sticks (2-year-olds).

Mary and Oliver show considerable knowledge about minibeasts in this theme. They also gain new knowledge about them. They have working theories about what the snail in the tyre would like to eat. They are manifesting agency and imagination in their play. Hedges argues that “agency and imagination are fundamental to identity development and ought to be explicit concepts in funds of identity theory” (Hedges, 2020, pp.1,2).

Melody and Harry have identity artefacts, in the form of bags with their names on, for collecting flora on the walk. They then take these bags and their collections home. Melody express funds of knowledge as she names different flowers, and she also learns to identify flowers and plants that are new to her with help from adults. Hedges and Cooper highlight the importance of the “meanings and identities that are constructed in the course of participation in experiences” (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 318). They also acknowledge that in early years settings “funds of knowledge may therefore be an important way in which children’s interests can be recognized, engaged with, and extended” (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 318).

Greta and Arnold collect sticks to decorate on 30 June and then take these home. The children are building up funds of identity and funds of knowledge between Woodharp and home in the direction of Woodharp to home. There is a flow of sociocultural influences between the setting and the children’s homes and a development of the children’s identities. The adults in the setting are applying what they have learned about the children’s interests to motivate their learning.

Once the adults have paid attention to the children’s interests and then deepened their understanding of the sociocultural influences that have informed these choices, the adults, together with the children, can develop and extend activities and learning opportunities. This process is enhanced when adults take account of children’s working theories.

Oliver and Mary have working theories about where to find creatures in the garden. Melody and Harry have working theories about how plants grow, and Greta and Arnold have working theories about what they can do with sticks.

Hedges refers to Lindfors (1999) in explaining the development of working theories:

Furthermore, Lindfors demonstrated how, as emergent inquirers, children argue, challenge, negotiate, compare, evaluate, hypothesise, predict, and reflect to deepen their investigation and understandings. As children absorb information through intent participation and inquire further into aspects of their lives that appear related in some way, working theories likely evolve during inquiry acts as attempts at explanatory connections between experiences, information, and understandings (Hedges, 2014, p. 39).

Part of role of the adult in integrated pedagogy is to create opportunities for intent participation and nurture children’s emergent inquiries towards further learning.

**5.5 Theme (C): Physical Activities**

The physical activities theme has the subthemes ‘Swinging’, ‘Climbing and balancing’ and ‘Running and rolling’.

**5.5.1 SWINGING**

The 4-year-olds, Oliver (O) and Mary (M) choose to play on the swings.

*Transcript from 12th May*

*Oliver and Mary run towards the swings.*

*O →CA+MI’m going to go on the swing.*

*CA →O On the swing. O →CA Mary’s having 10 goes and then it’s my go.*

*CA →O How many go’s? O →CA 10 CA →O 10 go’s. O →CA And then it’s my go. CA →O+M OK - Mary, are you going to count them?*

*Mary sits in the tyre swing and swings backwards and forwards*

*O+M+CA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10*

*The counting is very precise. There is nothing random about it.*

*O →M My go. M →O You have 10 go’s as well Oliver. O →M OK CA →O+M So Oliver’s having 10 go’s as well.*

*M →CA And then it’s my go. CA →M Are you going to stand here and count them Mary?*

*Oliver swings.*

*CA+M+O 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.*

*Oliver gets off the swing.*

*M →O My go, my go.*

*The conversation is carried on with Oliver and Mary leaning against a tree near the tyre swing. CA →M Right, Mary – Mary, if you’ve done 10 swings and Oliver’s done 10 swings how many*

*altogether – how many swings altogether?*

*O →CA 13 CA →O+M 10 and 10 more. O →CA 6 M →CA  6 CA →O+M But 10 is more than 6 – so it’s got to be more than 10. 10 and another 10.*

*M →CA 10 then Mary thinks a bit and repeats 10.*

*CA  →O+M Right, let’s put our fingers up and see.*

*Oliver and Mary put their hands up, with their fingers spread out. =*

*CA →M You’ve got 10 fingers and Oliver’s got 10 fingers – right – I’ll count them all – I’ll count them all and you - I mean I’ll touch them, and you count.*

*O →CA It’s 15, I think.*

*I touch each finger in turn.*

*M →CA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. 9. 10, What comes after 10?*

*O →CA 11 O+M 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 CA →O+M 20, 20 fingers altogether. CA →M Your turn, add on Oliver’s turn – 20.*

*………………………………………..*

*CA →M There you are Mary. How many this time Mary?*

*Mary gets onto the swing again.*

*M →CA Um – 10 CA →O+M OK -10 again CA+O+M 1, 2, 3, 4*

*Mary swings, Oliver, Mary and I count.*

*Oliver notices a leaf and gets a bit distracted.*

*I think an insect might have been eating it.*

*Mary brings their attention back to the swinging and counting.*

*…………………………………*

*M →CA+O 4 O →CA  Caterpillar CA →O It might be a caterpillar M+CA+O 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 O →CA+M My go, my go, my go. CA →O D’you want to start your counting from 1 – or d’you want to go on from 10 and start at*

*11?*

*M →CA 11 O →CA I want to – um now it’s changed up to 13, OK?*

*Oliver gets onto the swing. = = M →CA I can count to, um, I can count to 100. CA →M Great, Mary.*

*Oliver starts swinging.*

*O →CA (To me) Catherine – now I want it to be 13. CA →O So where do you want to start your counting from - 1?*

*O →CA Yes CA →O OK. O →CA And I want it to go up to13. CA →O Now it’s 2 then -*

*CA,O+M 2, 3, 4, 5.*

*CA : This is 6 CA+O+M count: 6*

*The counting is quite slow because Oliver swings all the way forwards and back on each count, putting his feet down at the end of the back swing.*

*O →CA+M I’m going all the way up to 13.*

*M →CA+O 7*

*CA →O OK CA+M+O 7, 8, 9 O →CA+M I just felt a raindrop CA →O Oh CA+M+O 10, 11, 12, 13*

*CA →O+M Now M →CA My go*

*Oliver gets off the swing.*

*CA →M Mary – you did 10 swings and Oliver did 13 swings. Did he do more than you?*

*M →CA Yes CA →O+M How many more? O →CA Um 3 more. CA →O Yes 3 more – well done Oliver.*

*A picture containing tree, outdoor, plant

Description automatically generated*

**Analysis** (Swinging)

Integrated pedagogy

* Oliver and Mary both run towards the swings in the back garden. This is a freely chosen unplanned activity. <<(CI)
* Oliver introduces the ideas of taking turns, counting, and considering the interests of others when he lets Mary take the first turn. <<<(CI)
* After exactly 10 swings Oliver and Mary both agree that it is Oliver’s turn, and he also does 10 swings. <<(CI)
* I introduce the idea of adding Oliver’s 10 swings to Mary’s 10 swings to see how many swings they have done altogether. I help the children to work it out. (AD)>>
* Mary has a second turn and does 10 swings again. <(CI)
* Oliver takes ownership of the activity when he has his next turn, saying that this time he will do 13 swings. At this point Mary, not to be outdone, says that she can count to 100. <<(CI)
* I encourage Mary and Oliver to think about whether 13 is more than 10 and precisely how many more. <<(AD)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

The following EYFS goals can be applied to the swinging activity:

*PD 1.22 Experiments with different ways of moving.*

*(Oliver and Mary both swing backwards and forwards on the swing.)*

*PSED 3.15 Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression.*

*(Oliver and Mary negotiate taking turns very effectively, with no aggression.)*

*M 1.29 Using the language of 'more' and 'fewer' to compare two sets of objects (turns on the swing).*

*(Mary and Oliver compare two sets of turns on the swing – 10 and 13)*

*1.33 In practical activities and discussion, beginning to use the vocabulary involved in adding and*

*subtraction.*

*(Mary and Oliver work out 10 add 10 with my help and support.)*

*1.35 Begins to identify own mathematical problems based on own interests and fascinations.*

*(Mary and Oliver use numbers to make the turn-taking on the swing fair.)*

Narrative

Although this activity starts out, and continues, as a physical swinging activity, other elements are initiated by the children right from the start. The challenge, in addition to the physical swinging, comes from the need to take turns fairly, for which the children use counting. Their idea is to have an equal number of swings each. I see an opportunity to present some number problems to the children, since they have already introduced numbers into their play in a highly structured way. The number work is spontaneous and is introduced by the adult though a child-led activity. In this case both child-led and adult-directed activities and conversations take place, woven in and out of each other. The children are already using numbers to enhance their physical play and make it fair. The adult takes an opportunity to extend their learning. There is no demarcation of ‘observing, planning and reflecting’ in this activity. The adult follows the children’s thinking and then provides a ‘scaffold’ to support the development of their thought processes.

**5.5.2 CLIMBING AND BALANCING**

**Section 1 – Free Play and Observation** (Climbing and balancing)

The 3-year-olds, Melody (M) and Harry (H) choose physical activities in the back garden. Melody chooses a variety of climbing and balancing. Harry spins round on the tyre swing.

A child holding a bow and arrow

Description automatically generated with low confidence

*Transcript from 9th June*

*Melody climbs up onto a long plank of wood that is resting on 2 logs and walks along it.*

*Harry is on the tyre swing with Shona, enjoying spinning round. Melody continues stepping carefully from log to log after coming to the end of the plank. There are 6 logs continuing from the plank. When Melody jumps off the last log, she goes back to the plank, climbs on it and starts again.*

*Mel →PA This is a bit wobbly.*

*Adult Patrick adjusts a log under the plank.*

*PA →Mel D’you want to try again now?*

*Melody jumps up and down on the plank which is now stable and steady. PA →Mel Is that better? Mel →PA Yes*

*Melody jumps up and down some more – testing the plank. PA →Mel It makes it bouncy.*

*Melody jumps on the plank again.*

*Mel →All It’s bouncy now – boing, boing, boing*

*Then Melody steps onto the log – repeating the sequence of stepping from log to log, balancing carefully.*

*………………………………………………….*

*Mel →CA  Caryll,watch this. CA →Mel Yes I’m watching.*

*Melody goes back along the logs. She holds a small branch of the tree to steady herself.*

*Mel →CA The tree’s next to me so I’m holding it.*

*CA →Mel Yes yes Mel →CA This is fun.*

*Melody gets to the end of the logs and does a big jump off the last one. She is getting more confident.*

*Melody goes round and round many times, climbing onto the plank, walking along it, balancing carefully, stepping or jumping onto the logs, jumping off and then starting again. Some other children join her from time to time and then go off to do other things. Melody is careful not to bump into them. Harry continues to be interested in spinning on the tyre, with other children.*

*………………………………………………………………………………………………….*

*(Later on) Melody is climbing in the climbing tree. She puts her foot on the branch and pulls herself up by holding the rope. Melody ducks under the rope and walks sideways along the branch – also holding onto another branch to help keep her balance. She climbs around a bit holding both the branch and the rope. Emily is climbing with her, nearby. Melody twirls the leaves of the fir tree.*

*A picture containing outdoor, tree, child

Description automatically generated*

*A picture containing tree, outdoor

Description automatically generated*

**Section 2 – Planning conversations** (Climbing and balancing)

Based on Melody’s enthusiasm for climbing and balancing on the planks and logs and climbing the tree, together with Harry’s enjoyment of spinning round and round on the tyre, I suggest going to a nearby playground next week where there will be scope to extend their physical skills.

*Transcript from 9th June*

*Conversation while continuing to walk down path.*

*CA →H Would you like to go to a playground = next week Harry?*

*H →CA Yes*

*CA →Mel Would you like to Melody? Mel → CA  Yes CA →H+Mel With lots of swings and climbing things. H → CA I want to go a playground that I saw.*

*Conversation sitting on sofas in the kitchen at the end of the day.*

*CA →H+Mel Would you like to go to the playground next week?*

*H →CA Yes*

*Mel → CA  Yes*

*CA →H+Mel Where you can swing and climb.*

*…………………………………………………..*

*H →CA  I want to go on the swings…*

*CA →H Yes we can do that.*

*Mel → CA I want to go on the slide…*

*CA →Mel We could do that, because I know a nice place nearby where we could go on the swings*

*and slide….*

*CA →H+Mel Yes – so that sounds like a good plan for next week. OK lovely, thank you.*

**Section 3 – Planned Activity - Visiting the playground**

(Climbing and balancing)

The group of children and adults visit a nearby playground, about a ten-minute walk from the setting, with a wide variety of equipment in it.

*Transcript from 16th June*

*The children all run down towards the playground, accompanied by the adults. The children start climbing, swinging, sliding, and balancing on the equipment.*

*Harry chooses a swing. I encourage him to climb into it. It is a swing with back and side bars.*

*CA →H Harry – see if you can get in. Hold these with your hands. That’s right. And put your foot*

*there. That’s right Harry. Just try – put your foot there. That’s right. And now . . .*

*I’ll stop it moving so much. Right, hold your hands there. Put your foot there. Other foot up –*

*good boy – now put your foot over the top. Good boy. Well done! Well done Harry!*

*H →CA I can’t push myself.*

*CA →H No*

*I push Harry on the swing.*

*…………………………………………………*

*Melody has chosen to walk along a narrow balance bar, some way from the ground. She lets go of the corner post and walks gingerly along the bar, in a sideways movement.*

*CA →Mel Well done Melody. Well done – You can do it. Well done Melody.*

*Melody holdsmy hand to complete the last section, after wobbling a bit.*

*Melody jumps (by herself) onto a square platform at the end.*

*Next, Melody climbs sideways along a pole while holding onto another pole with her hands. She negotiates passing another child who is going in the opposite direction. Then she lands again on another platform at the end.*

*CA →Mel Very good!*

*………………………………………………..*

*Melody runs towards a sort of web of thick elasticated ropes held up by a tall pole in the middle. She starts climbing. Melody climbs fearlessly right to the top. Then she climbs down again.*

*CA →Mel Good climbing Melody.*

*………………………………………………..*

*Harry is still swinging, with help from Adult Patrick, who is pushing him on the swing.*

*Melody climbs along the pole again – using her hands to help. This time she is going in the opposite direction. There is a boy climbing on the poles, in the opposite direction.*

*CA →Mel That’s right Melody. You get down and go round him – good girl.*

*Melody gets off to let him go past.*

*CA →Mel Well done. You have to get past other people quite carefully don’t you?*

*Mel → CA Yes*

*Melody continues climbing on the balancing equipment. She waits on the platform as other children climb towards her.*

*CA →Mel Good waiting Melody.*

*Melody negotiates the bar again with no hands on this bit – and also no help this time.*

*………………………………………………..*

*Harry and Melody continue to climb on and around the equipment in the playground and to run across the grass to access different types of equipment.*

*………………………………………………..*

*Harry hesitates at the balance bar. I offer him a hand to hold onto – to support him. He walks sideways along the bar, holding my hand until he reaches the platform. Then he gets down from the platform and runs across the grass, towards the rope web. Harry climbs onto the rope web with help from Adult Susannah. He climbs slowly and tentatively. At first he climbs around the lower region of the web, then he goes a little higher.*

*………………………………………………..*

*Harry runs across the grass towards the see-saw. He hesitates, to let the other children get off – then he climbs on by himself, with no-one on the other end.*

*CA →H Harry, you need someone on the other end.*

*CA →O Oliver, can you go to the other end for Harry? Thank you.*

*Oliver comes across and joins Harry on the see-saw. He climbs onto the other end.*

*CA →O Thank you Oliver.*

*CA →H …You need someone on the other end, to make it go up and down.*

*Harry and Oliver enjoy riding on the see saw together – Harry is mainly the one who pushes off with his feet, because his legs are longer. Oliver pushes some of the time. It works well. They go up and down together on the see saw.*

*Melody and Philippa are swinging high on the swings.*

*CA →Mel Wow – you’re going high Melody.*

*……………………………………………………*

*The swings that Philippa and Melody are on are the ones with just a seat – no protective bars.*

*Ph → CA  You can easily fall off these ones.*

*CA →Ph I know. You have to be a big girl to go on these ones, don’t you?*

*Mel → CA I am.*

*CA →Mel You are, Melody, you are.*

*CA →HA (Adult) Harriet – these girls completely got the skill of making it go by themselves!*

*HA →Mel+Ph Well done.*

**Analysis** (Sections 1,2 and 3 – Climbing and balancing)

Integrated pedagogy

* Melody chooses to climb and balance on a plank and logs in the back garden. She goes round and round the circuit, climbing on, walking, or jumping along, balancing, and jumping off before starting again. She is practising 4 different physical skills each time. She also avoids bumping into others, practising personal sensitivity. <<<<<(CI)
* Harry chooses to spin round and round on the horizontal tyre swing with Shona. <(CI)
* Melody tells Adult Patrick that the plank is wobbly. Adult Patrick fixes it for her. <(CI)(AD)>
* I initiate 2 conversations with Melody and Harry about going to a playground next week. (AD)>>
* In the first conversation Melody and Harry agree that it is a good idea. <<(CI)
* In the second conversation Melody and Harry both express opinions about what they would like to do in the playground. <<(CI)
* The adults take initiative in choosing the playground to visit and helping the children to get there safely. (AD)>>
* Harry suggests another playground when he says, “I want to go to a playground that I saw”, but adults have to discount this option as it turns out not to be a practical choice for the group. <(CI)(AD)>
* Once they are at the playground the children choose what to do and the adults give help and support when needed. For example:

Harry chooses the swing <(CI). I help him climb onto it (AD)>. Melody chooses to walk along a balance bar <(CI). I hold her hand on one part of it (AD)>. Harry chooses to go on a see saw <(CI). I find a partner for him, to go on the other side, so it can go up and down (AD)>.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*PD 1.11 Moves freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways, such as rolling, crawling,*

*walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping.*

*(Melody and Harry are moving freely in a variety of ways throughout this activity.)*

*1.12 Mounts stairs, steps or climbing equipment using alternate feet.*

*(Melody and Harry climb the rope web using alternate feet.)*

*1.14 Runs skilfully and negotiates space successfully, adjusting speed or direction to avoid*

*obstacles.*

*(Melody and Harry run around the playground negotiating space to avoid different obstacles.)*

*PSED 1.7 Keeps play going by responding to what others are saying or doing.*

*(Melody and Harry both share equipment with others and are responsive to them.)*

*2.8 Shows conﬁdence in asking adults for help.*

*(Melody and Harry are both confident in asking adults for help.)*

*3.10 Begin to accept the needs of others and can take turns and share resources, sometimes*

*with support from others.*

*(Melody and Harry take turns and share resources at the playground.)*

Narrative

The climbing and balancing activity starts with some simple, repetitive physical play. Melody completes circuits of the plank and logs equipment. Harry spins round and round on the tyre with Shona. However, with adult assistance, this interest in physical play is extended into a trip to a local playground where both Melody and Harry try different things and extend their skills. Melody needs help on the balance bar then later she manages it on her own. She climbs fearlessly to the top of the climbing web and, later, manages to propel the single seat swing up and down by herself. She grows in confidence.

Harry is not as agile or as physically confident as Melody. Nevertheless, he tries lots of different things and manages them all with varying degrees of help from adults. It is the integration of child-initiated and adult-directed ingredients that helps the children to extend their learning, confidence, and skills.

**5.5.3 RUNNING AND ROLLING**

**Section 1 – Free Play and Observation** (Running and rolling)

The 2-year-olds, Arnold and Greta, express themselves more in physical actions than in language. This is especially true of Arnold whose first language is Polish. In the next section, all the parts of the transcript from 17th March that mention Arnold ‘running’ have been selected to illustrate this simple, typical, 2-year-old activity.

Observation of free, child-led play, in the back garden:

*Transcript from 17th March 2017*

*Then he (Arnold) gets up and runs to the sandpit.*

*…………………………………………….*

*Then Arnold runs across the grass towards the wheelbarrow.*

*……………………………………………*

*Then Arnold runs across the grass towards the swings hanging from the apple tree.*

*…………………………………………….*

*He runs off again towards Adult Susannah and then he runs back to the other tyre swing.*

*……………………………………………*

*Then Arnold runs down and goes through the gate (towards the art room).*

*……………………………………………*

*Then he runs back into the hallway.*

*………………………………………….*

*Arnold runs out of the art room and hallway, through the water area, through the gate and towards the outside sandpit.*

*…………………………………………*

*He runs back to the water area with the blue bucket...He goes back to the sandpit…*

*…………………………………………*

*Arnold runs back to the water area.*

Observation of free, child-led activities, on the walk:

*Transcript from 17th March 2017*

*He runs fast, ahead of the group. He stops, waiting for Adult Harriet and the others to catch up.*

*…………………………………….*

*The group stops at the end of the fence that runs alongside one edge of the playing field. There is a small gap here, leading into the playing field.*

*CA →A Which way shall we go?*

*Arnold points into the playing field – and smiles. This is his choice – not playing on the bars or going to the deep dark wood (as previously suggested by Adult Harriet).*

*CA →A This way?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A OK – go on then*

*Arnold goes through the gap in the fence. He runs across the playing field, followed by the rest of the group. He stops at the first white post and swings around it.*

*CA →A D’you like running Arnold?*

*A →CA Yes.*

*Then he runs on…He stops and watches other children who are congregating around the posts.*

*CA →A Arnold, what d’you want to do here? D’you want to run around?*

*CA →All OK, run around. Run around. Everybody – you can have a little run around. Run around.*

*CA →A Arnold – you can run around.*

*Arnold and some other children start running around, in the space of the field. They run in quite a small area where everyone is gathering.*

*Arnold continues to run around everyone with obvious enjoyment. He bumps into someone else but then continues happily running about with a broad smile on his face.*

*CA →All Run around. Run around!*

*He (Arnold) bumps into Walter again (not hard). Then he continues running again. He stops. He runs again and then stops to watch other children running.*

*CA →HA  It’s what he wanted to do. He’s running around more than anyone else!*

*Arnold runs around again. Arnold is clearly enjoying this running.*

*CA →A Are you running Arnold? Are you still running? Wow, wow, wow!*

*Arnold stops for a minute. Then he takes off again running very fast around Adult Patrick.*

*HA  →CA It’s clearly an activity that he loves.*

*Arnold falls over – then he picks himself up and continues. He collides (happily) with another child and then runs off again. He stops and holds Adult Harriet’s hand, watching other children again.*

Observation of free, child-led activity, round the bonfire :

*Transcript from 17th March 2017*

*The group is sitting on logs round the bonfire.*

*…………………………………………………..*

*Arnold drinks his hot chocolate and watches Adult Patrick who is cooking the popcorn in a pan on the fire. Arnold finishes his hot chocolate, gets off his log and runs around the outside of the circle, taking his cup back to the table (all by himself and initiated by him).*

*CA →All Look at Arnold going round the outside (of the log circle). Well done Arnold – good boy.*

**Section 2 – Planning** (Running and rolling)

Adult Harriet and I have a conversation about what to plan for next week. In part of the conversation, we reflect on Arnold’s clear interest and enjoyment in running and include this in plans for next week’s activities.

*Transcript from 17th March 2017*

*CA →HA And, um, when we were on the walk?*

*HA  →CA On the walk, again he (Arnold) um he seems to always feel safest when he can see the*

*adults.*

*CA →HA Yes*

*HA  →CA Which is interesting – but given the option to run free, he jumped at it didn’t he?*

*CA →HA Yes – on the grass.*

*HA  →CA He really enjoyed it on the grass.*

*……………………………………………………………….*

*CA →HA …so next week … on the walk - d’you think it would be good to do the ‘moving down the*

*hill’ - either walking, running or rolling?*

*HA  →CA Some sort of activity and space – yes – yea, I think that would be good.*

*CA →HA Have you seen that one actually – where we go down the hill?*

*HA  →CA I’ve seen the children doing rolling before now...I guess children are quite good at*

*knowing their limits aren’t they, and if they’re given the option of rolling or running, they*

*can choose, can’t they?*

*CA →HA Yes – or walking.*

**Section 3 – Planned Activity - Going down the hill**

(Running and rolling)

The group crossed the road outside the setting, walked along the off-road path between the playing field and the river and stopped at the bottom of a grassy hill:

*Transcript from 24th March 2017*

*CA →All Ok listen, now, you can go up the hill and down the hill.*

*CA →PA Adult Patrick, can you go right to the top so they’ll come right up to the top? Thank you.*

*Children start to run up the hill – including Arnold and Greta. They slow to a walk on the steep part of the hill.*

*………………………………………………………………..*

*CA →All Now you can run down or roll down or walk down. OK - down you go.*

*Greta starts to roll down the hill. Arnold also starts to roll.*

*Arnold is rolling while also holding onto a stick.*

*HA →A Shall I take that stick off you Arnold? OK - off you go.*

*Adult Harriet takes the stick away to make the rolling easier for him! Arnold continues to roll down the hill.*

*CA → HA It’s quite an experience to roll down a hill.*

*Greta has rolled all the way to the bottom. Children are rolling and laughing. They are clearly enjoying themselves! Some children are running. Some are walking. Arnold walks past Adult Edith and then rolls again. Arnold runs back up the hill and then walks up the steeper part.*

*CA →A D’you want to do it again Arnold?*

*A →CA Yes*

*Arnold starts to roll down again, from the top. Greta is also rolling again. Arnold rolls half-way down this time. Then he returns to the top and runs down. He runs right to the bottom of the hill.*

*…………………………………………………………………………….*

*Children are still rolling/walking/running up and down the hill.*

*…………………………………………………………………………..*

*Arnold is standing next to Adult Patrick at the top of the hill. Then he runs down the hill again from top to bottom. Then he runs and walks back up again. He falls over but gets straight back up and continues upwards.*

*Children playing in the grass

Description automatically generated with medium confidence*

**Section 4 – Reflections** (Running and rolling)

Two adults have an informal chat round the bonfire.

*Transcript from 24th March 2017*

*The children are sitting round the bonfire. The adults are giving out fried bread in cone cups.*

*Arnold eats his fried bread with relish. Greta is less sure.*

*EA →CA  Everyone is hungry after the walk*

*CA →EA Mm – they are*

*EA →CA And all the rolling and running.*

*CA →EA And this food always tastes really delicious.*

*EA →CA Mm – so much better.*

*CA →EA All these different ways of moving are so good!*

*EA →CA Mm*

*CA →EA We’ve been walking and running and rolling and climbing.*

*EA →CA You should all sleep well tonight.*

*Adult Susannah hands out more fried bread. Arnold has seconds.*

Adult Harriet and I sit round a table with Arnold and Greta at the end of the day and talk about the activities they have been doing.

*Transcript from 24th March 2017*

*CA →A Arnold, did you have a nice time this afternoon?*

*A →CA Yes*

*……………………………………………..*

*CA →A Did you like rolling down the hill?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A Did you like running down the hill?*

*A →CA Yes*

*Although Arnold’s answers are only 1 word, he is looking relaxed and smiling broadly.*

*HA →A What would you like to do again, if you could choose?*

*At this point Arnold falls off his chair – he is tired and has had enough!*

*CA →G Greta – what did you like doing best?*

*G →CA Chocolate cake*

*CA →G Chocolate cake?*

*G →CA It’s my birthday soon.*

*Greta is also tired at the end of the day and doesn’t quite understand the question.*

**Analysis** ( Sections 1,2,3 and 4 – Running and rolling)

Integrated pedagogy

* Arnold chooses to run from one activity to another during free play in the back garden (17th March) <<<<<<<<<<(CI).
* I lead the group on the walk outside the setting and then give Arnold the choice of where to go, once they reach the gap in the fence (AD)>>.
* Arnold chooses to go into the playing field, where there is maximum opportunity for running <(CI).
* Arnold runs to the white post, then to another white post, then he runs around with others, while waiting for other children to catch up <<<(CI). This is encouraged (but not initiated) by me (AD)>. Arnold is following the route normally taken by the group going through the playing field on Friday afternoon <(CI)(AD)>.
* Once the group have returned to the setting and had a drink round the bonfire, Arnold runs round the outside of the log circle to take his cup back to the table <(CI).
* The adults discuss planning for next week and, based on Arnold’s love of running, plan to take the group to a hill where they can go up and down in different ways with the added challenge of a relatively steep slope (AD)>>.
* The next week (24th March) Arnold and Greta navigate the steep slope in different ways including walking, rolling and running <<<(CI). The adults have guided them to the hill (AD)>. The children take initiative in choosing how they will go up and down it when they get there, and how many times they do it <<(CI).
* When reflecting on the activity later, one of the adults feels that it has given the children a good appetite for food round the bonfire and that it will help them sleep well that night. The activity has enhanced the children’s health and well-being (AD)>>. Arnold says he has enjoyed the activity and that he liked rolling and running down the hill <<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development

(24-36 months)

*PSED 2.2 Expresses own preferences and interests.*

*(Arnold expresses his interest in running by constantly running around in different spaces.)*

*3.6 Shows understanding and cooperates with some boundaries and routines.*

*(Arnold and Greta cooperate with following the routine route across the playing field.)*

*PD 1.1 Runs safely on whole foot.*

*(Arnold and Greta can both run safely on whole foot)*

(30-50 months)

*PD 1.11 Moves freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways, such as rolling,*

*crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping.*

*(Arnold and Greta move freely and with pleasure in a range of ways up and down the slope.)*

Narrative

Arnold initiates a lot of running throughout the afternoon of 17th March. The adults notice that this is something he loves to do and set up an activity that will challenge and extend his movement skills thus extending his learning and development. Although ‘running’ is a simple 2-year-old activity, it is also profoundly important to the physical development of a 2-year-old and contributes to his or her emotional and mental well-being. There is a sense of mastery and freedom of expression in running around, especially when this is a freely chosen, child-initiated activity. However simple the activity, what is important is that it is of genuine interest to the child and not contrived by an adult. The adult-directed extension then comes out of an authentic child-led interest. In this case, the introduction of a steep slope to move up and down on, in the following week, and the suggestion to run, walk or roll was all that was needed to provide new ways for Arnold and Greta and others to practise more control and coordination in their physical development and to experience a lot of fun and enjoyment. Running down the slope, over rough terrain, required more control than running on flat ground. This is another example of the integration of adult-directed and child-initiated activities resulting in extended learning opportunities for children.

**5.5.4 Sociocultural theoretical framing in Theme (C)**

In Theme (C) – ‘Physical Activities’, the children are interested in swinging, (4-year-olds), climbing and balancing (3-year-olds), and running and rolling (2-year-olds).

The adults take note of the children’s interests and seek to extend their skills through developing an interests-based curricula for each age group. It is an instant extension of an activity in the case of the 4-year-olds and extension through planned activities for the 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds.

Hedges and Cooper say:

Interests-based curricula can enhance motivation, involvement, and other positive outcomes through development of dispositions for learning and positive identities as lifelong learners. When children’s interests are placed at the centre of curricular decision-making, children’s identities as learners, inquirers, thinkers, and citizens are set in motion and can lead to positive outcomes (Hedges & Cooper, 2016 p. 319).

Mary and Oliver enjoy swinging on the swing. They use their funds of knowledge to use counting to take turns fairly. Part of their funds of identity are that they are friends and so they want to look after each other. I help them to work out their counting and support them so that the activity progresses happily and fairly. I help them to extend and develop their number skills, as well as their social skills.

Melody enjoys climbing and balancing on the planks and logs. She goes round and round practising her physical skills and adding to her funds of knowledge about how to climb, balance and jump. We then help her to extend and develop her funds of knowledge and her skills by taking her to a local playground where there is more choice of climbing and balancing challenges.

Arnold loves running. He runs everywhere, whenever possible. Running is one of Arnold’s funds of identity. He likes running at home. He likes running at Woodharp. He is a child who loves to run. By taking account of this, the adults can plan an activity that fosters and develops Arnold’s interest. We make plans to take the group to a steep hill where Arnold will have the added challenge of running and rolling up and down a hill with a steep gradient and so develop his running skills. Adults talk to him about different ways of negotiating the slope and give him encouragement.

In each of these examples the adults are not just providing extra resources based on children’s interests to extend their learning. The adults are also actively engaged with the children, reflecting sociocultural theoretical lenses to enable more meaningful interpretations of interests (Hedges & Cooper, 2016).

**5.6 Theme (D): Sensory experiences**

The sensory experiences theme has the subthemes ‘Mud’, ‘Fire’ and ‘Water’.

**5.6.1 MUD**

**Section 1 – Free Play and Observation and Planning**

The 4-year-olds, Oliver (O) and Mary (M) show an interest in mud.

*Transcript from 12th May*

*Oliver, Mary and I, walk down the garden*

*CA →O+M OK – What are you interested in? O →CA Um*

*M → CA Um= = O →CA That – I’m interested in the digging.*

*CA →O You’re interested in the digging? O →CA Yes*

*……………………………………………….*

*Oliver and Mary run back down the garden. Oliver and Mary start playing with the diggers in the mud.*

*CA →O Are you interested in the mud Oliver – do you think? O →CA Yes, I am – and the diggers. I’m interested in both. CA →M Are you interested in the mud Mary?*

*M →CA Yes – And the tractors. O →M Mary, Come on – let’s try and dig some of that.*

*Oliver and Mary are playing with diggers in the mud.*

*C → O+M Shall we try adding some water to this next week?*

*O+M Yea, yea CA →O+M Would you like to do a mud kitchen? O+M Yea, yea CA →O+M Because you like playing with the mud? O+M Yea, yea*

*Oliver and Mary run their fingers through the mud and put some in the digger’s bucket. CA →O+M D’you think it will change when it gets water with it? O+M Yea, yea CA →O What will happen Oliver? O →CA It will go all runny – don’t you think so (Adult) Catherine? CA →O Perhaps – it depends how much water we mix with it as to how it goes. O →CA Yes*

*Oliver and Mary continue to feel the mud with their hands – letting it run through their fingers. Oliver puts mud in the digger bucket. Mary helps too.*

*…………………………………………………………….*

*Oliver and Mary go down into the courtyard area. There are 3 empty water trays and a ball run there.*

*…………………………………………………………….*

*Oliver points to the cover of the water tray.*

*……………………………………………………………*

*O →M What’s in here – er nothing – a pity.*

*Oliver lifts the lid of the water tray to look inside.*

*…………………………………………………………..*

*Oliver lifts the lid of the other water tray. O →CA Let’s see what’s in here – Oh nothing. Oliver and Mary go over to the third water tray.=*

*O →CA Let’s see what’s in here – nothing.*

*M →O Nothing CA →O+M But – what could we put in next week?*

*O+M Water CA → O+M Yes – we could put water – and we could move it.*

*O →CA A tap – Look there’s a tap. CA  →O Oliver – we could move it up there where the mud is couldn’t we – and put water in it. We*

*could use it. =*

*M →CA Yes put water in it and turn the tap and then we could turn it on.*

*CA →O+M And then we could mix up the mud and the water.*

*Oliver inspects the tap.*

*O →CA Oh look the tap’s full of sand*

*CA →O Well never mind. O →CA The water will make its way through. CA →O+M We could arrange it for next week couldn’t we? Shall I – I’ll ask (Adult) Patrick to help us?*

*M →CA Um and – water mixed up with sand makes wet sand.*

*CA →M Wet sand – yes that’s right Mary. O →CA+M And wet sand will easily be pushed by the water.*

*M →O+CA Yes – ‘cause, ‘cause, water’s so strong.*

*CA →O+M But I think – I think mud absorbs the water more and it gets more gooey.*

*O →CA Yea CA → O+M And so it’s not so much like wet mud as it’s – well it is like wet mud but it’s a bit*

*different than sand. =*

*M →CA Oliver’s got wet mud in his house. CA →O Have you Oliver? O →CA No M →O Oliver – you have – you’ve got …. CA →O+M Some sort of wet mud is called clay.*

*O →CA Yes – some CA →O+M Because you can find clay in the soil. M →CA Yes – my Mummy has got a clay wheel so – and she’s got dried up clay to make um*

*pottery things.*

*CA →M Has she Mary? M →CA Yes O →CA+M And my Mummy has got a um clay pot.*

*CA →O Has she? O →CA Yes M →CA+O Yes and …. CA →O+M Well – some – there is clay in the soil – some sorts of soil have got quite a lot of clay in*

*them – and that’s where you get the clay from – the ground. O →CA Wow*

*CA →O+M But our mud outside hasn’t got much clay in (it), I don’t think.*

*M →CA But what if you put so much water in – it might turn into clay.*

*CA →M It might – we could experiment next week couldn’t we?*

*M →CA Yes CA →O+M You two have good ideas O →CA Yea we do. (laughter)*

**Section 2 – Planned Activity – Playing with mud** (Mud)

*Transcript from 19th May*

*Oliver and Mary are dressed in fleeces and dungarees. They are in the mud area where there is a table and a water tray with equipment for a mud kitchen in a box.*

*CA →All So now – this is our mud kitchen…. (Adult) Patrick is going to bring water into the area –*

*then we can mix up the mud and water and see what happens.*

*O →CA Yes M →CA Yes CA →O+M And we’re got some tools up here – look here Oliver, Mary.*

*I show Oliver, Mary and Tim the box of tools for use in the mud kitchen.*

*They start getting the tools out.*

*O →CA Yes – useful tools. CA →O+M+T You can use any of these. You can make a – like – you can make a mud = pudding here – even.*

*I show the children a bowl in which they could make a mud pudding.*

*T →CA I want to make a mud batch, I want to make this.*

*CA →M And this is where – Mary……You can mix it round Mary – see what happens – and you’ll*

*be able to mix it with water in a minute when (Adult) Patrick brings the water.*

*O →CA Er – now it’s raining.*

*I indicate where the bowl is – on the ground. Oliver and Mary dig up mud with spoons and put it in the bowl.*

*CA →All This is our mud kitchen here*

*O →CA  Now it’s raining (Adult) Catherine. CA →O It is. O →CA That will be good won’t it.*

*CA →O+M I’ll just go and get my coat.*

*Oliver and Mary continue spooning mud into the bowl.*

*CA →All Oh look,(Adult) Patrick’s putting water in.*

*Adult Patrick is putting water into the water tray, with a hose.*

*…………………………………………………………………..*

*A picture containing outdoor, tree, person, ground

Description automatically generated*

After this, the transcript records Oliver, Mary, and others playing freely with mud and water for about 45 minutes (in the rain). They mix it together with varying amounts of water, stir it round, comment on the colour, compare it to chocolate, make muddy puddles, make a mud cake, and mud soup, filling all available plates and bowls. There is an interesting section on how to make their ‘soup’ thicker or thinner.

*Transcript from 19th May*

*CA →M How would you make it thicker d’you think – if you wanted to make it thicker Mary? M →CA Um – stir it. CA →M OK – yes M →CA  Or put more water in it. CA →M Put more water – would that make it thicker or thinner? M →CA Er thinner CA →M Thinner, yes. CA →O+M What would happen if you put more mud in it? O →CA Thicker M →CA It would get thicker CA →O+M Yes thicker. CA →M Oh well done Mary.*

*O →CA+M We’re running out. We’ll have to get a bucket.*

*Oliver and Mary have filled all the available plates and bowls. =*

*O →M We’re running out so get a bucket to pour it in. Emergency – we’re running out – we need a bucket.*

*Oliver fetches a bucket and continues pouring muddy water (soup) into it from the muddy water tray – with an orange scoop.*

*…………………………………………………………*

*CA →M Well done Mary. Ooh now is it getting thicker?*

*Mary continues to collect mud and to add it to her small bowl of muddy water so that it becomes thicker.*

*M →CA Yup*

*CA →M Yes it is.*

*CA →O Mary’s got a thicker one here.*

*O →CA Good*

After this they fill up the whole water tray with mud and water and Tim offers mud baths. Oliver and Mary both say: “Not me”.

*=*

**Analysis** (Sections 1 and 2 – Mud)

Integrated pedagogy

Section 1 – Free play and planning

* Oliver and Mary both express an interest in digging and mud. They begin playing with mud in the digging area <<(CI).
* I suggest adding water to the mud next week and having a mud kitchen (AD)>>.
* Oliver and Mary choose to go down to the courtyard where they show interest in 3 empty water trays <<<(CI).
* I ask: “What could we put in it next week?” (AD)>. Oliver and Mary say: “Water” <<(CI).
* I suggest moving the water trays up to the mud area next week and asking Adult Patrick for help, thereby providing the elements needed for the mud kitchen (AD)>>.
* Mary initiates a conversation about mixing water and sand <(CI). Oliver thinks this will clear the tap (in the water tray) of sand <(CI).
* I direct the conversation towards mixing mud and water and how mud absorbs water (AD)>>.
* Mary introduces the topic of clay by saying: “Oscar’s got wet mud in his house” <(CI). This sparks off a conversation about clay and pottery in which both the children and the adult take part (AD)><><(CI)

Section 2 – Playing with mud

* The adults set up water trays, bowls, spoons, and other resources for playing with mud and water (AD)>>
* The children become completely absorbed in playing with mud and water, mixing it, and pouring it and making it into ‘cake’, ‘soup’ and other things. They initiate the ideas once the activity is set up <<<<(CI).
* I help Oliver and Mary to think about how to make the mud thicker (AD)>>.
* Mary carries out an experiment by adding more and more mud to her bowl of muddy water. It gets much thicker <<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+ months)

*PSED 2.9 Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions.*

*(Oliver and Mary both express an interest in mud.)*

*CL 3.19 Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention.*

*(Mary and Oliver talk about wet mud and clay.)*

*2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.*

*(Oliver and Mary respond to the idea of setting up a mud kitchen next week as expressed by me.)*

*3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.*

*(Mary and Oliver use talk to clarify their thinking about mud, water and clay.)*

*PD 1.27 Uses simple tools to effect changes to materials.*

*(Oliver and Mary use tools to dig up mud and mix it with water.)*

*1.28 Handles tools, objects, construction, and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.*

*(Mary and Oliver handle tools in the mud kitchen.)*

*UW 2.8 Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns, and change.*

*(Oliver and Mary observe changes in the mud as they add water to it.)*

Narrative

The planning for the mud kitchen emerges from the interest shown by the children in both mud and water and the conversation about mixing mud and sand, and mud and water, and about clay. The children are excited when they start to relate clay in the soil to the clay, clay wheel, and pottery they both have at home. The children are expressing a wealth of ‘funds of knowledge’ as they connect what happens at home to their present explorations. They are keen to explore the mixing of mud and water next week. They want to test out their working theories about clay.

The adults facilitate the playing with mud and water by setting it all up. The children take initiative with how they play. Oliver and Mary are completely absorbed in this experience and continue for 45 minutes in the rain. There are enough bowls, plates, and spoons to make all the pouring and mixing exciting. The adults have missed an opportunity here to introduce clay which was also of interest to Oliver and Mary. It could have been introduced on a table alongside the mud and water to provide a deeper learning experience for children who are clearly ready for more in-depth learning. The fact that the adults are following child-led interests should expand not limit learning opportunities.

**5.6.2 FIRE**

The 3-year-olds, Harry (H) and Melody (M) are sitting around the bonfire with the rest of the group, towards the end of the session.

*Transcript from 5th May*

*Sitting on logs around the bonfire.*

*CA →Mel Thank you for saving a seat for me Melody.*

*Melody is drinking her hot chocolate.*

*CA →All Look – we’ve got sausages.*

*Adult Patricklights the fire =*

*CA →All I can see the fire.*

*I start to sing: “London’s Burning, London’s Burning”*

*Melody points towards the fire.*

*Mel → CA I can see orange a bit. CA →Mel It is orange a bit Melody. Mel →CA Yes All sing*

*“Fetch the engine, fetch the engine = Fire fire, fire fire. = Pour on water, pour on water”.*

*Melody sings out the last line really confidently.*

*……………………………………………………..*

*Then everyone sings a song about sausages, while Adult Patrick cooks them on the fire.*

*……………………………………………………*

*CA →Mel What can you see in the fire Melody? Mel → CA Orange and white. CA →Mel Orange and white - = Orange flames and white … Mel →CA Smoke CA →Mel Smoke do you think? Mel → CA Yes CA →Mel I think the wood (also) goes white when it’s burnt and it’s the white ash. Mel →CA  I can see already CA →Mel I think it’s white ash. The wood when it’s burnt goes white.*

*Mel → CA Yes CA →Mel Smoke was a good idea because smoke is white isn’t it. Mel →CA Yes – and, and water and sand make fires go out.*

*CA →C+Mel Water does make fires go out so if we wanted to put that fire out what would we do to*

*it?*

*Mel →CA  Put some water on it. CA →Mel Yes – we’d put some water on it – that’s right Melody – and it would go sizzle sizzle and*

*it would go out.*

*Mel →CA Yes CA →Mel Oh the wind’s blowing it now Mel → CA And the smoke is blowing all around. CA →Mel The smoke is blowing all around Adult Susannah hands Melody and myselfcone cups full of pieces of sausage.*

*CA →SA Thank you (Adult) Susannah.*

*CA →Mel Oh – these are our lovely sausages Melody.*

*=*

*A picture containing outdoor

Description automatically generated*

**Analysis**

Integrated pedagogy

* Melody is interested in the fire. She comments on the colour of the flames <(CI).
* I introduce the song ‘London’s Burning’ (AD)> and Melody joins in <(CI).
* I draw Melody’s attention back to the fire (AD)>.
* Melody says she can see orange flames and white smoke <<(CI).
* I point out that the ash is also white (AD)>.
* Another child suggests that water and sand make fires go out.
* I ask Melody how to put the fire out (AD)>.
* Melody says: “Put some water on it” <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

*PSED 3.12 Can usually adapt behaviour to different events, social situations, and changes in time.*

*(Melody and Harry are sitting on logs around the bonfire and adapting their behaviour to not stepping forward or going near the fire.)*

*CL 1.5 Listens to others one to one or in small groups when conversation interests them.*

*(Melody is interested in listening to what another child and I say about the fire and about how to put it out.)*

*1.7 Join in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and*

*stories.*

*(Melody joins in with the song ‘London’s Burning’.)*

* 1. *Beginning to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions.*

*(Melody understands that the wood turns into ash when it is burned on the fire.)*

*3.13 Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.*

*(Melody makes her meaning clear to others as she talks about the fire.)*

*3.15 Builds up vocab that reflects the breadth of their experiences.*

*(Melody is building up vocabulary that reflects her experience of the fire.)*

*L 1.8 Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and*

*stories.*

*(Melody joins in with the song ‘London’s Burning’.)*

*UW 2.3 Comments and asks questions about aspects of their familiar world such as the place*

*where they live or the natural world.*

*(Melody comments on different aspects of the fire.)*

*2.4 Can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and*

*found objects.*

*(Melody talks about what she has observed in relation to the fire.)*

*EAD 1.6 Sings a few familiar songs.*

*(Melody sings ‘London’s Burning’.)*

Narrative

In this relatively short section around the bonfire, Melody is learning different things about fire. She initiates the conversation about the colour of the flames. She introduces the song ‘London’s Burning’ which includes the phrase ‘Pour on water’. By physically experiencing the fire, watching the flames, hearing it crackle, smelling the burning wood and seeing the billowing smoke, the song has much more meaning. When Melody looks at the fire again, she talks about the smoke, I point out the ash and Melody knows that water would put the fire out. Rather than simply experiencing the bonfire, the conversation between Melody, another child and myself, together with the experience of real fire and the song, have extended Melody’s learning. It is the integration of these elements that produces optimal learning opportunities. At the end of this extract, they also taste the sausages that have been cooked on the fire. There are many different sensory experiences in this activity. The children bring some prior ‘funds of knowledge’ of fire to this activity and then build new knowledge through the engagement with fire, and the conversation about fire.

**5.6.3 WATER**

**Section 1 – Free Play and Observation and Planning** (Water)

Arnold (2) shows an interest in playing with water and, the following week, Greta (2) joins in.

*Transcript from 17th March*

*Arnold is standing on the bench seat attached to the table, waving a spade about.*

*Then he stands up and plays with a boat and a truck on the table.*

*PA →A What have you got there? … Arnold, which one is the boat?*

*Arnold points to the boat and smiles at Adult Patrick.*

*………………………………………………………….*

*Arnold continues to play with the boat and truck on the table – running them along and coupling and uncoupling them.*

*………………………………………………………….*

*CA →A Arnold, shall we get some water next week?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A And put boats in it?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A And you could find the blue boats. (Arnold’s favourite colour is blue)*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A OK – and if we got the, um guttering we could put water in it and send the blue boats down*

*– would that be nice?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A OK*

*A →CA This bucket, this bucket.*

*Arnold gets out of the sandpit, finds a blue bucket, and waves it in the air. He is excited.*

*…………………………………………………………..*

*A →CA This bucket – water bucket.*

*CA →A Oh yes – we could put water in those buckets couldn’t we Arnold?*

*A →CA Yes yes water.*

*CA →A Arnold – maybe we need new buckets because look – it’s broken.*

*A →CA  This one.*

*Arnold shows me a few more buckets that are broken.*

*…………………………………………………………*

*Arnold goes through the gate to the water area.*

*CA →A Would you like some water now Arnold?*

*A →CA  Yes*

*CA →A OK*

*A →CA Water*

*………………………………………………………..*

*Arnold holds the hose, but Adult Harriet takes it back and starts to fill the water tray.*

*A →CA I play water?*

*CA →A Yes – yes you can put it in the bucket if you want to Arnold – yes.*

*Adult Harriet holds the hose so that it squirts into Arnold’s bucket. Others join in, wanting water squirted into their buckets too.*

*Arnold takes his bucket of water through the gate and up the path, showing it to Adult Patrick on the way. He carries it to the sandpit.*

*After this Arnold runs backwards and forwards between the water area and the sandpit carrying water in a blue or red bucket and emptying it into the sand. He is loving this game.*

*Arnold empties the water into the sand – grinning broadly.*

**Section 2 – Reflection and Planning – Conversation between me and Adult Harriet at the end of the session** (Water)

*Transcript from 17th March*

*CA →HA So, Adult Harriet, How did, how did, what did you feel that um what did you feel Arnold’s*

*interests were?*

*HA →CA Today it seemed clear that he really enjoyed playing with water didn’t he and he got*

*really excited. He changed from being a little, quiet, shy child to suddenly being really*

*animated, so that was quite fun to see, and the more he got involved, other children got*

*involved too, which helped so it actually showed him kind of interacting a bit with the*

*others which was nice.*

*CA →HA Yes, yes – so d’you think we could develop that a bit more next week?*

*HA →CA I think so yes. I think um to have a few more options with that would be quite fun for him*

*to try out. Maybe a few more of the bowls of water out.*

*CA →HA Shall we take some of them right out onto the top?*

*HA →CA I think that would be a good idea – to have a bit more space.*

*CA →HA More space – yes.*

*HA →CA Because they felt a little bit, sort of . . . restricted.*

*CA →HA We can always store them down there and take them up when we want to use them*

*more.*

*HA →CA Yes, I think so.*

*CA →HA Because the hose will reach up there.*

*HA →CA And then it doesn’t matter if it splashes or goes on the grass.*

*CA →HA Yes, yes*

*HA →CA Yes, I think it looks good. It’s great.*

**Section 3 – Planned Activity – Playing with water** (Water)

Adult Patrick has set up water trays and some guttering in the top garden, along with some buckets and boats.

*Transcript from 24th March*

*Arnold scoops up some water from the water tray and pours it into some guttering which is placed at an angle with a blue boat on it. The boat moves down the gutter. Arnold is thrilled.*

*It sticks halfway down.*

*PA →A Shall we do it again?*

*A →PA Yes*

*PA →A We need some more water. We need some more water.*

*Arnold collects some more water in his bucket, pours it into the guttering and this time the boat shoots all the way down to the bottom. Arnold picks up the boat and puts it back at the top of the guttering.*

*Greta runs over, holding a funnel. She splashes it in the water and laughs. She continues splashing.*

*Arnold continues the cycle of collecting water and sending the boat down the guttering.*

*………………………………………………………………..*

*Greta walks across with her bucket. She collects some water with help from Adult Patrick. She pours water down the guttering and the boat shoots down it. Adult Patrick is holding the guttering steady. Then Adult Patrick sets it up again inside the water tray, where it is a bit more stable, and Greta sends the boat down again by herself.*

*Adult Patrick turns the hose on. It pours more water into one of the water trays. Arnold fills his bucket with water – Greta pours hers out. Arnold pours water into a piece of piping … He watches it come out of the other end. Arnold, Greta, and Adult Patrick all laugh. Arnold repeats the activity several times.*

*A child playing with a toy

Description automatically generated with low confidence*

After this, Greta goes off to do some climbing. Arnold continues playing with the water, scooping it up from the water tray and pouring it down various bits of piping with or without the boat. He continues playing with the water for about 45 minutes. Adult Patrick continues to provide some running water from the hose. After a while, Greta returns to the water.

Transcript from 24th March (cont.)

*Greta comes over, to see what is happening with the water play.*

*G →PA Can I do it (Adult) Patrick. Can I do it? Can I do it? Can I do it? Can I do it?*

*PA →G What do you want to do?*

*G →PA That one.*

*Greta points to the hosepipe.*

*…………………………………………….*

*PA →G Go on then.*

*Greta holds onto the hosepipe, near the nozzle, while Adult Patrick still holds it, a bit further down. Then she lets go. Greta’s persistence pays off and Adult Patrick gives her the hose, so that she now has total control of it! Greta directs water from the hose down the guttering. Arnold puts his blue boat back on the guttering. Greta sends it down with water from the hose.*

**Analysis** (Sections 1,2 and 3 – Water)

Integrated pedagogy

* Arnold is interested in a boat and plays with it on the table <(CI).
* I suggest getting water next week to put boats in and guttering to run them down (AD)>>.
* Arnold finds a bucket and says: “This bucket – water bucket” <<(CI).
* I suggest filling it with water (AD)>.
* Arnold runs backwards and forwards between the water area and the sandpit, carrying water and emptying it into the sandpit. This is completely his idea <<<<(CI).
* Adult Harriet and I pay attention to Arnold’s enjoyment in water play and plan an enhanced water play environment for next week (AD)>>.
* In the next week, the elements of the boat, the water, the buckets, some lengths of guttering, some piping and the hosepipe are all brought together in a water play activity. This was inspired by Arnold <(CI), planned by me and Adult Harriet (AD)>> and prepared by Adult Patrick (AD)>>.
* Greta and Arnold play with all the water equipment, interacting with Adult Patrick and each other and they enjoy the activity very much, especially Arnold (AD)><><><><><(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

*PSED 1.1 Interested in others’ play and starting to join in.*

*(Greta is interested in Arnold’s water play and wants to join in.)*

*2.2 Expresses own preferences and interests.*

*(Arnold expresses an interest in water play when he says: “This bucket – water bucket” and “I play water?”)*

*3.6 Shows understanding and cooperates with some boundaries and routines.*

*(Greta cooperates with boundaries when she directs water from the hose down the guttering and nowhere else.)*

*3.7 Can inhibit own actions/behaviours. E.g. stop themselves from doing something they shouldn’t do.*

*(Arnold takes his turn collecting water in his bucket and inhibits demanding behaviour.)*

*CL 3.1 Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings. Experiences and thoughts.*

*(Greta and Arnold both use some verbal language to communicate what they want to do with the buckets, the water, and the hose.)*

*PD 1.6 Shows control in holding and using jugs to pour, hammers, books, and mark-making tools.*

*(Arnold and Greta both use buckets to pour water with good control.)*

Narrative

Arnold is interested in water play and gets excited about tipping water into the sandpit. However, the extension of water play that happens the following week could not happen without adult involvement. It is not just the provision of equipment that facilitates the extension, but it is also Adult Patrick’s involvement in the activity, alongside and engaging with Arnold and Greta. Arnold is learning how to engage with an adult, building trust, and practising understanding Adult Patrick’s language (English) while doing an activity that he enjoys. He is also learning about sharing and taking turns with Greta. They are both learning about friction and how the water enables the boat to travel down the guttering. Greta learns about how to control the water that is coming out of the hosepipe and a responsible use of the hosepipe! They are learning some preliminary concepts about volume and capacity as they play with the buckets and the water. They both enjoy the sensory experience of pouring water and playing with water.

**5.6.4 Sociocultural theoretical framing in Theme (D)**

In Theme (D) – ‘Sensory Experiences’, the children are interested in mud, (4-year-olds), fire (3-year-olds), and water (2-year-olds).

In this ‘Sensory experiences’ theme there is an account of Mary and Oliver choosing to investigate mud in the garden and then water in the courtyard area. Following up on these interests, I suggest moving the water up to the mud area next week to create a mud kitchen. Mary and Oliver agree that this is a good plan. There is then a discussion about wet mud. Mary makes the connection between ‘wet mud’ and the clay that Oliver’s Mummy has at home. It turns out that they both have clay at home and that Mary’s Mummy has a clay wheel and makes pottery. Mary and Oliver have funds of knowledge that they can apply to the ‘playing with mud’ activity and to the discussion with me. Using and applying their knowledge is relevant to their developing understanding of the world. I connect the clay back to the soil by pointing out that you can find clay in the soil. In an integration of child-led and adult-led planning Mary, Oliver and I decide to experiment with mixing mud and water together next week. Mary has a working theory to test out arising from her funds of knowledge about clay (from home), play with mud in the garden (at Woodharp), and the discussion with Oliver and me.

When Mary tests out her working theory about mixing water and mud to make clay, she reaches a state of disequilibrium in her thinking where the mixture turns into thicker or thinner mud that is quite different from the clay she has at home. She doesn’t come to any conclusion about this but just keeps playing with it. I could have intervened at this point and investigated clay soils on the internet and brought some clay into the setting. It is useful if adults can tune into children’s working theories and use them as a starting point for further investigation, but the opportunity was missed in this case.

Melody has a working theory that water would put the fire out. Although we don’t actually do it, I confirm her theory which builds her confidence.

Arnold tests out a working theory about water sending a boat down the guttering. When the boat sticks on the guttering there is a state of disequilibrium in Arnold’s theory. Adult Patrick says that more water is needed. When Arnold fetches more water and pours it down the guttering the boat shoots down. His working theory has been adjusted, with help from Adult Patrick, and he now understands that if the boat sticks it needs more water – or that if he gives it more water in the first place it won’t stick. He tests this out again and again, playing with the water for a considerable time, showing that equilibrium in Arnold’s thinking is restored.

These examples show how adults can support children’s learning through taking account of the sociocultural influences that affect children’s choices and actions. I help Mary to test out her theory about mixing mud and water to make clay by providing the resources for the activity and interacting with her as she plays with it. The disequilibrium of Mary not achieving her aim to make clay is part of the learning experience. Adult Patrick helps Arnold to test out how his working theory of sending a boat down the guttering can be made to work better by adding water. Each of the above examples of adults supporting children’s learning are also examples of the close working relationships.

Lovatt and Hedges explain how a state of disequilibrium can enhance learning. They say:

Piaget’s constructivist notions of equilibrium and disequilibrium can therefore continue to contribute to contemporary understandings of the formation, disruption and re-formation of children’s working theories. Teachers can actively challenge working theories through invoking disequilibrium in thinking, leading children to a place of tension as new information conflicts with existing understandings (Lovatt & Hedges, 2015 p. 922).

**5.7 Theme (E): Communication Interactions**

Transcripts of conversations have been recorded throughout the analysis. However, there are some noteworthy conversations that have not been included or analysed in the previous themes. Some communication interactions for each age group will be analysed in this section. All these communication interactions show evidence of ‘sustained shared thinking’ between adults and children. In fact, these extracts have been chosen precisely because of the wealth of sustained shared thinking within them, for all age-groups.

**5.7.1 Communication Interactions – 4-year-olds, Mary and Oliver**

The 4-year-olds’ communication interactions have the subthemes ‘gender’, ‘shadows’ and ‘the weather’.

**Gender**

*Transcript from 24th February*

*CA  → O + M What do you want to do now? O → CA Um um – join in the pirate game*

*CA  → O Oh that’s a good idea – join in the pirate game.*

*Mary and Oliver walk to the ‘pirate ship’, which is the tree.*

*O → Het Perhaps we can join in. Het → O Only boys are allowed O → Het I’m a boy Het Walk the plank (in chanting voice)*

*Mary and Oliver start to climb the tree. They stop while talking.*

*CA  → All I don’t think we can say “Only boys are allowed” do you?*

*- Philippa’s a girl and Mary’s a girl and they’re playing here as well.*

*What do you think Oliver? O → CA I think it’s not fair for boys to say that. CA  → O+M So do I – What do you think Mary? M → CA I think it’s not fair either. CA  → O + M We all agree*

*Mary and Oliver continue to climb around on the ‘pirate ship’.*

**Analysis** (Gender)

Integrated pedagogy

* Oliver says that he would like to join in the pirate game being played in the nearby tree <(CI).
* Mary shows her agreement by walking, with Oliver, over to the tree that is now the ‘pirate ship’ <(CI).
* One of the boys already playing there says “Only boys allowed” <(CI).
* I intervene to help the children think through this gender discrimination (AD)>.
* Oliver and Mary both agree that it is not fair to say, “Only boys allowed”. The pirate play continues with both boys and girls joining in <<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

PSED 3.13 Understands that own actions affect other people.

(Oliver understands that if he agrees with the gender discrimination, he will be hurting Mary’s feelings by excluding her from the game.)

3.15 Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression.

(Oliver and Mary solve the problem of gender discrimination by saying it is not fair and starting to play on the ‘pirate ship’ together, without aggression towards the others already playing there.)

Narrative

It is important to tackle gender discrimination, when it happens, so that children learn to accept others who are different from themselves. Children can learn this more readily in a practical situation than just being told theoretically or abstractly. The adult invites the children to give their opinions so that they are actively thinking the issue through for themselves. Without adult intervention, the gender discrimination might have persisted and spread to other areas of play. There are issues of ‘funds of identity’ present in this conversation.

**Shadows**

*Transcript from 24th February*

*Oliver, Mary, and I, are having a conversation while walking along the pavement, on the way back to treetops.*

*O →M Look at my hair blowing. It blows really far back. M →O Me too. CA →O+M In fact you can see it on the shadow. O →CA Yes – like that far back. CA →O Yes M →CA Or even further to your face. O →CA+M It wasn’t blowing away from my face. That’s how far it was blowing.*

*O →CA  Can you see your face bit of a shadow?*

*M →CA+O It looks like when we’re in the shadow – it looks like we’re attached to each other.*

1. *→M+CA  Yeah – Did you know ….*

*CA →O+M We could make shadow puppets one day couldn’t we?*

*M →CA  Yeah O →CA Yeah we could – d’you know what? CA →O What? M →CA+O Only when it’s a sunny sunny sunny day like this.*

*CA →M Yes. What happens to our shadows when it’s not a sunny day?*

*M →CA Um – They go away. CA →M+O Yes. O →CA+M Yes because you need all the light – a bit of light behind – isn’t that right?*

*CA →O+M Yes, it is right. M →CA+O And only when the sun shines you get shadows.*

**Analysis** (Shadows)

Integrated pedagogy

* Oliver and Mary comment on how their hair is blowing back in the wind <<(CI).
* I draw attention to their shadows in front of them, where they can see their hair being blown around (AD)>.
* Oliver and Mary start thinking about what can and cannot be seen in a shadow, and how their shadows are attached <<(CI).
* I talk about making shadow puppets, one day (AD)>.
* Mary suggests that you can only make shadow puppets on a sunny day <(CI).
* I question what happens when it is not sunny (AD)>.
* Mary says the shadows go away when it’s not sunny <(CI).
* Oliver extends his thinking into a theory about shadows when he says: “You need all the light – a bit of light behind” <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

*CL 2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.*

*(Oliver and Mary both respond to the ideas expressed by others in the discussion about shadows.)*

*3.19 Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention.*

*(Mary and Oliver stick to the subject of shadows during the course of the conversation.)*

*3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.*

*(Mary and Oliver use talk to organise, sequence and clarify their thinking about shadows.)*

Narrative

The discussion about shadows, coming out of the experience of looking at their shadows on the ground in front of them, leads Oliver and Mary into some interesting, deep thinking about some of the effects of light from the sun on them and on their world. In this case, the adult intervention is important at the beginning of the discussion, in drawing the children’s attention to the shadows, but then is fairly minimal except for the suggestion about shadow puppets and the question “What happens to our shadows when it’s not a sunny day?”. The children are thinking things through for themselves to make sense of different natural phenomena in their world. They are developing a working theory about shadows.

**The weather**

*Transcript from 12th May*

*Oliver, Mary and I are talking about the weather in the back garden.*

*CA →O OK Oliver, tell me again about the weather forecast. =*

*O →CA The weather forecast said it was going to rain really, really heavily in the evening.*

*CA →O Er what about the afternoon? O →CA Yeah the afternoon as well. CA →O OK were you watching with Mummy? O →CA Er – no we were just listening to it on the radio.*

*CA →O OK – now if you look up at the clouds what can you see?*

*O →CA Rain CA →O Rain – in the clouds – because they’re quite dark.*

*O →CA Yes so the um weather forecast might be right. CA →M Right – what do you think Mary – d’you think it’s going to rain? M →CA Yes*

*C →M Look up at the clouds – what can you see?*

*Mary looks up.*

*M →CA Dark clouds CA →M Dark clouds O →CA Me too CA →M And what d’you think’s in them? O+M →CA Rain rain rain. CA →O+M I think so too. O →CA Me too CA →O+M So I’ll just pop in the house – then I’ll come back out with some more coats. Would that*

*be sensible? =*

*O →CA Yes M →CA In the clouds it has rain in.*

*Mary jumps up and down.*

*CA →O+M You two are all right – you’ve got coats on already haven’t you.*

*M →CA Um um um. In the clouds it has rain in, so that’s why it always rains – sometimes.*

*CA →M Yes yes O →CA And when rain – rain is in the clouds – and there are little raindrops that float and that*

*makes a cloud and then when they start moving about – joining together – they get*

*heavier and they fall out of the sky as rain.*

*CA →O Yes O →CA+M So probably that’s happening up there.*

*Oliver points to the sky.*

*CA →O+M Probably it is, and it might get to down here mightn’t it?*

*M →CA+O Yes because some clouds can move around the sky.*

*CA →M They do move. They do move around the sky. M →CA And and and um when it’s um when it’s a cloudy day I think it means it’s raining.*

*CA →M Or it might rain – doesn’t it (mean that). CA →O+M Yes – and the darker they are the more rain is in them and the more likely it is to rain. O →CA Yes M →CA And and and and and and and the er and and and er ….*

*O →CA And when – and when more raindrops start moving about it makes an electricity which*

*comes out of the clouds as thunder.*

*CA →O+M Thunder – What comes with thunder sometimes? O →CA+M Lightning M →CA+O Clouds CA →O+M Lightning – and clouds M →CA+O And clouds CA →O+M Yes O →CA+M I mean it comes out as lightning. CA →O Yea lightning. M →CA  And it comes out with dark dark dark clouds. CA →M Yes M →CA+O Darker than rainclouds. CA →M Yes – great.*

**Analysis** (The weather)

Integrated pedagogy

* Oliver starts the discussion about the weather when he tells me about the weather forecast that he was listening to, on the radio with his mother, earlier in the day. Oliver predicts rain, based on this forecast <<(CI).
* I suggest looking up at the clouds to see if they concur with the forecast (AD)>.
* Oliver says he can see rain. Mary says she can see dark clouds <<(CI).
* I bring these two observations together when she says: “And what d’you think’s in them (the dark clouds)?” (AD)>.
* Mary is excited when she says: “In the clouds it has rain in” and jumps up and down. She has absorbed the concept and finds it exciting <(CI).
* Oliver goes further and explains just what happens in the formation of clouds and how rain falls from them. <<<<(CI).
* Oliver goes on to talk about thunder and lightning. <<<(CI).
* Mary contributes to the discussion by noting that when there is thunder and lightning the clouds are very dark – ‘darker than rainclouds.’ <<(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (40-60+months)

PSED 1.9 Initiates conversations. Attends to and takes account of what others say.

(Oliver and Mary both initiate different parts of the conversation about weather and take account of what others say.)

1.10 Explains own knowledge and understanding and asks appropriate questions of others.

(Oliver explains his own knowledge and understanding of weather.)

* 1. Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions.

(Mary and Oliver speak confidently about the weather.)

Narrative

In the discussion about the weather, it is Oliver who reveals profound understanding about clouds, rain, thunder, lightning, and electricity. The topic clearly interests him, and he is very knowledgeable about how it all works together. This would be a good topic for the adult to pursue, at a later date, with information from books and the internet. For example, Oliver and Mary might be interested in hurricanes, tornados, and other dramatic weather events.

**5.7.2 Communication Interactions – 3-year-olds, Harry & Melody**

The 3-year-old’s communication interactions have the subthemes ‘rubbish in the wood’, and ‘reeds from the reed bed’.

**Rubbish in the wood**

*Transcript from 21st April*

*I am walking with Harry on the last part of the woodland walk.*

*CA →H Here we are – we’re coming back down to the tree. We’ve walked all = the way round the deep dark wood, Harry.*

*Harry points to a notice in the wood.*

*H →CA Look*

*CA →H That’s a notice – it says: “Fly tippers will be prosecuted”. That’s what that notice says – = “Private Property.” That means don’t put your rubbish in the deep dark wood – because that*

*would spoil it, wouldn’t it Harry? We only want animals and trees and bushes.*

*H →CA Not, not, not, tip anything – why don’t put this rubbish – they’ll be naughty.*

*Harry’s words are not very clear – and not in quite the right order – but I know what he means.*

*CA →H Exactly – don’t be naughty – don’t put your rubbish in the beautiful wood. H →CA This is beautiful wood. It’s not dark in here. The light is shining through the trees in this bit of the wood.*

*CA →H It’s not too dark is it? It’s a little bit darker than the path.*

*H →CA  Look – rubbish*

*Harry points at some rubbish in the undergrowth.*

*CA →H Yes – uh – we mustn’t touch it.*

**Analysis** (Rubbish in the wood)

Integrated pedagogy

* Harry takes initiative in noticing a sign in the woods <(CI).
* I read the sign for Harry and explains what it means (AD)>>
* Harry does not express himself very clearly, but his response shows how much he has understood the message on the sign, and he adds his own view on people who engage in fly tipping – “They’ll be naughty” <<(CI)
* I agree with Harry that people should not put their rubbish in the beautiful wood.
* Harry also says that the wood is beautiful and not too dark. Then he sees a piece of rubbish in the undergrowth and points it out <<<(CI).
* I tell Harry not to touch it. I am safeguarding Harry (AD)>. Touching unknown pieces of rubbish in the wood might be dangerous.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (30-50 months)

CL 2.8 Beginning to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions.

(Harry understands that it is wrong to tip rubbish in the woods.)

3.13 Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.

(Harry expresses that he thinks the wood is beautiful.)

3.14 Uses vocab focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them.

(The wood is important to Harry.)

3.15 Builds up vocab that reflects the breadth of their experiences.

(Harry uses vocabulary that reflects his experiences on the walk.)

Narrative

Harry has difficulties with speech and language but in this conversation, he is completely engaged with the topic. He displays real understanding of the topic of fly tipping and the harm it could do to the wood. He is enjoying walking through the wood and doesn’t want it spoiled. He is learning early concepts about protecting the environment.

**Reeds from the reedbed**

The group have walked along the path next to the river and are now deciding which way to go.

*Transcript from 9th June*

*The group stops – to decide which way to go next.*

*CA →All OK stop stop. Harry and Melody – shall we go to the river or the reeds?*

*H → CA Reeds CA →H+Mel Reeds? H → CA Yes*

*CA →Mel Reeds? Mel → CA Yep CA →H+Mel OK – this way H →All We’re going to the reeds! Harry shouts this so that everyone can hear. The group turn towards the path that runs through the reed bed.*

*………………………………………………*

*Adult Patrick cuts some of the old reeds to give out to the children.*

*CA →All Right everyone, anyone who would like to hold a reed can hold a reed.*

*……………………………………….*

*Harry and Melody take the tall brown reeds that are handed to them by an adult.*

*…………………………………………*

*Harry holds up his reed.*

*H →CA It’s bigger*

*CA →H Yours is the biggest Harry? H → CA Yes – it’s very tall CA →H It is a very tall one. CA →Mel What about yours Melody? Mel →CA  Mine is big too.*

*………………………………………..*

*Melody holds her reed up. Melody’s reed has snapped in half. CA →Mel Oh – what’s happened to yours Melody?*

*Mel → CA It’s broken there CA →Mel Now you’ve got 2 pieces. Mel → CA Mm CA →Mel It broke in half. It broke in half. CA →H Now Melody’s got two pieces. H → CA Melody’s is the broken one. CA →H Melody’s got 2 little ones instead of one big one. CA →Mel You’ve got one for each hand Melody! Now they’re not so wobbly. Melody waves her 2 pieces of reed around. Mel →CA This one is.*

*…………………………………………*

*The group walks on along the path, towards the bench. = Mel →CA  And now mine look like scissors*

*Mel snaps her reeds together. Then she snaps at a branch in a scissor motion. CA →Mel Well that’s a clever thing to do with your reeds Melody. Mel →CA Mmm CA →Mel Catching the branches. Mel →CA Yes – (Adult) Catherine, this one is taller than this one.*

*Melody compares the lengths of her reeds.*

*H →CA  Can I take this home? CA →H Yes – yes you can take that home Harry.*

*Harry is pleased with his long reed. He waves it up and down.*

**Analysis**  (Reeds from the reedbed)

Integrated pedagogy

* Harry and Melody make the choice to walk to the reed bed near the river <<(CI).
* Adult Patrick cuts some reeds and hands them out to the children (AD)>
* Harry and Melody start talking about the size of their reeds <<(CI).
* I point out that Melody’s reed has broken in half and that she now has 2 pieces of reed (AD)>.
* Melody plays with her 2 pieces of reed and says they now look like scissors. She uses them to snap at a branch <<(CI).
* Melody compares the lengths of her 2 pieces of reed <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development

30-50 months

CL 3.10 Uses talk to connect ideas and explain what is happening.

(Melody explains what is happening after her reed breaks – she makes it into scissors.)

(40-60+ months)

M 2.16 Orders two or three items by length or height.

(Harry and Melody talk about the length of their reeds.)

Narrative

When Harry and Melody start talking about the size of their reeds, they use the words ‘big’ and ‘tall’. These concepts are not the same and the adult misses an opportunity to discuss the different ways in which things can be measured. On the other hand, the reeds do give a good natural opportunity for using language related to measurement and the children take initiative to do this themselves without adult direction.

**5.7.3 Communication Interactions – 2-year-olds, Greta and Arnold**

The 2-year-old’s communication interactions have the subthemes ‘babies’, and ‘walking together’.

**Babies**

*Transcript from 23rd June*

*Arnold, Greta, and I have a conversation about babies. We are sitting on and around a table with a bench attached, in the back garden, at the start of the session.*

*CA →G Greta – Arnold’s got a new baby too.*

*CA →A So what’s your new baby called Arnold?*

*A →CA Will*

*CA →G And what’s your new baby called Greta?*

*G →CA Elizabeth*

*CA →G Elizabeth*

*CA →A What does your baby do Arnold?*

*A →CA Cry*

*CA →A Cry*

*CA →G What does your baby do Greta?*

*G →CA Er – laughing*

*CA →G Laughing?*

*G →CA Yes*

*CA →A What else does your baby do Arnold?*

*A →CA Er – feeding*

*CA →A Feeding?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →G What else does your baby do Greta?*

*G →CA Er – have milk*

*CA →G Have milk*

*CA →A What else does your baby do Arnold?*

*A →CA Milk*

*CA →A Milk – have milk?*

*A →CA Yes*

*CA →A Milk from …?*

*A →CA Milk from a bottle for Will.*

*………………………………………*

*CA →A+G They just have milk to start with don’t they Greta?*

*G →CA Yes*

*………………………………………*

*CA →A+G We don’t just have milk though do we?*

*G →CA  No*

*CA →A+G We have lots of things to eat.*

*G →CA Yes*

**Analysis** (Babies)

Integrated pedagogy

* I introduce the subject of babies (AD)>
* I keep the dialogue going by asking simple relevant questions that Arnold and Greta can understand (AD)>>.
* Greta and Arnold give their own original answers to the questions. They say their babies’ names <<(CI). They say that their babies cry (Arnold) <(CI), laugh (Greta) <(CI), feed (Arnold) <(CI) and drink milk (Greta) <(CI). Arnold says the sentence: “Milk from a bottle for Will” <(CI).
* I conclude the conversation by pointing out that older people like themselves no longer just have milk, but now eat lots of different things (AD)>>.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

CL 3.1 Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings. Experiences and thoughts.

(Greta and Arnold use language to share experiences of their new baby sister and brother.)

UW 1.1 Has a sense of own immediate family and relations.

(Greta and Arnold talk about members of their immediate families.)

Narrative

Greta and Arnold both have new babies in the family. Greta has a sister and Arnold has a brother. The subject is relevant to their lives and of interest to them. They are better at entering into conversation in June. It is warm, they are feeling relaxed, and they are a few months older than when their first videos were recorded in March. All this makes a difference to their ability to enter into a conversation that is about people who are not present, and that does not involve any actions in the present moment. They both have things to say, and they both manage to sustain the conversation for a while, albeit with a limited number of words. Arnold is quickly picking up English now and can speak more fluently. This conversation is enriched by the children’s funds of knowledge about babies.

**Walking together**

*Transcript from 23rd June*

*Greta, Arnold and I are walking down the slope, from the gate to the road.*

*CA →G What did you say about being in the middle?*

*G →CA Er you can be next to me and I’m in the middle.*

*CA →G Yes – which way do we go Greta?*

*G →CA That way*

*Greta points*

*CA →G Yes*

*CA →A That’s right Arnold isn’t it – Greta’s in the middle and we’re next to her.*

*CA →G Arnold’s on your right hand side and I’m on your left hand side.*

*G →CA And I’m in the middle.*

*CA →G And you’re in the middle, Greta, yes.*

*G →CA I love middles.*

*Arnold and Greta and I walk round the corner and along the pavement.*

**Analysis** (Walking together)

Integrated pedagogy

* Greta says that she is walking ‘in the middle’ <(CI).
* I ask Greta which way to go.
* I take the positional language one step further by talking about right and left-hand sides (AD)>.
* Greta expresses how much she likes being ‘in the middle’ <(CI).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development (22-36 months)

CL 2.3 Understands ‘who’, what’, ‘where’ in simple questions.

(Greta understands ‘what’ and ‘which way’ in conversation.)

2.4 Developing understanding of simple concepts.

(Greta has a developing understanding of positional language as she talks about ‘next to’ and being ‘in the middle’.)

Narrative

In this short dialogue Greta is expanding her understanding of positional language and of relationships. She is happy with her position in the ‘middle’ and feels empowered by being able to point the way back to Woodharp when asked by me. This extract from the data illustrates how a 2-year-old is growing in confidence and self-esteem during a walk in the outdoor environment.

**5.7.4 Sociocultural theoretical framing in Theme (E)**

In Theme (E) – ‘Communication Interactions’, the children are interested in gender, shadows, and weather, (4-year-olds), rubbish in the wood and reeds from the reedbed (3-year-olds), and babies and walking together (2-year-olds).

In a conversation about gender on 24 February, Oliver identifies as a boy, and I refer to Mary as a girl. Oliver and Mary agree that these identities should not limit their ability to join in with the pirate game and climb around on the pirate ship. I support their rights to both take part in the game thus also fostering their identities as children who will not tolerate or agree with gender discrimination.

Oliver has a quite sophisticated working theory about the weather in a conversation recorded on 12May. He describes his theory about rain. He describes how little raindrops float, make a cloud, move about, join together, get heavier and fall out of the sky as rain. He goes on to explain his theories about thunder and lightning. I support Oliver’s working theories about the weather by listening to his ideas and making comments.

In the conversation about rubbish in the wood Harry is building funds of knowledge about protecting the environment. He already understands that it is ‘naughty’ to discard rubbish in the wood, so he is bringing this fund of knowledge from home. Seeing the rubbish for himself makes this an important issue for Harry.

Greta and Arnold are both able to join in with a discussion about babies on 23 June, because they have each had recent experiences of baby siblings being born. They now have funds of knowledge about babies, from their home environment. Arnold has previously been quite reticent, but in this conversation, he is able to focus on the subject, answer questions and say a whole sentence. His recent experiences and new funds of knowledge have inspired him to extend and expand his language skills, with help from me.

Listening is a skill that the adults especially need to employ in the ‘Communication Interactions’ theme, in order to understand and interpret children’s meanings. Hedges and Cooper say:

Adults need to listen carefully to children interpretively and metaphorically. Deeper meanings of the term children’s interests become apparent when attention is paid to the notion of interests as representing their inquiries that arise from their funds of knowledge. Interests are contextually situated but rich with content and meaning (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p.318).

**5.8 Chapter conclusion**

The analysis chapter shows in detail how the theory of integrated pedagogy is worked out in practise through activities in the outdoor environment. The relatively long sections of transcript are included because they show exactly how the interactions between adults and children are taking place, and these interactions are at the heart of integrated pedagogy. The sociocultural theoretical framing highlights the sociocultural roots that underpin the child/adult interactions and the ways in which they approach activities and relationships.

**Chapter 6: Discussion**

**6.1 Introduction to the chapter**

In this chapter, the research question is reconsidered in the light of the evidence that has been presented in the analysis of data, with reference to some of the material in the initial review of literature. All the themes that emerged from the initial body of data show evidence of the potential of integrated pedagogy for supporting children’s learning in outdoor environments, but the way in which this happens is complex and diverse.

**6.2 How the chapter is organised**

The chapter begins with a discussion of how the data in the research relates to natural elements, historical perspectives, and sociocultural influences. There is then a detailed discussion of how the research study relates to the model of integrated pedagogical approaches developed by Wood (2010). This shows some of the intricacies of integrated pedagogy in action, using the different stages of Wood’s model as a framework that sheds light on the research question. This is followed by a consideration of children’s learning in the research study in relation to EYFS goals and wider perspectives. Next, there is a discussion of how the use of the outdoor environment in this research supports integrated pedagogy and learning.

Finally, there is a short review of the research methods used in this research study.

**6.3 Research question**

The research question is:

* What is the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years?
  1. **Integrated pedagogy in relation to natural elements and historical and sociocultural perspectives**

Integrated pedagogy is reflected in all the themes in the analysis of data in this research study and most of the themes begin with an observation of free play or child-initiated activities. Every activity is carried out in the outdoor environment. This resonates with much of the historical background to early years education discussed previously in the literature review.

Froebel believed that natural elements had intrinsic value (Froebel, 1885), a theme that has been elaborated in contemporary contexts by Tovey (2007) and others. Tovey also mentions the importance of adult involvement in introducing children to the natural world. She says:

Without direct experience, it is unlikely that children will acquire a deep intuitive understanding of the natural world, which is the foundation of sustainable development. If we are to safeguard the future of life on earth, then we must allow children to develop an intimate relationship with nature, to understand, but more importantly to feel the interconnectedness of all living things and to see their own place in the world. I would argue that it is play and first-hand experience outdoors with an adult, not lessons on conservation, which forms and sustains this relationship. (Tovey, 2007, p. 31)

The analysis chapter in this thesis records children freely playing in the outdoor environment and being guided by adults to be immersed in the natural world. In Theme A, children use nature as a springboard for imaginative play. In Theme B, ‘The Natural World’, children are interested in minibeasts, flora and sticks. In Theme C, ‘Physical activities’, children enjoy physical challenges stimulated by the outdoor environment such as swinging on a swing that hangs from a tree, climbing on logs and enjoying the space in which to run around. In Theme D, ‘Sensory Experiences’, children are interested in mud, fire and water. These are natural elements that the children chose to focus on or use during child-led play or when sitting round the bonfire. They are elements of intrinsic value that adults, together with children, use for play and in co-constructed activities.

The historical pioneers generally agreed that children’s early education should be based on child-led play, following children’s interests, and preferably having access to an outdoor environment. They differed more on the amount of adult involvement they considered appropriate and the nature of that involvement. In my research, children are initially observed following their own interests in almost all the recorded themes. This freedom of choice is supported by many of the pioneers of early years education including Pestalozzi (Guimps, 1890), Froebel (1885), Steiner (1928), Isaacs (Gardner, 1969), Montessori (Wentworth, 1998), Dewey (1956) and Allen (Tovey, 2007).

Following on from the free play in this research study is the development of adult input and the integration of children’s and adults’ ideas for activities. McMillan (Bradburn, 1976) supported adult engagement with children to extend and develop activities. Montessori used structured resources for children’s activities but then allowed children freedom from adult ‘interference’. Most of the other early years educationalists supported a freer, ‘laissez-faire’ approach.

Vygotsky (1978), emphasising the importance of the sociocultural context in early years education and social mediation, paved the way to the significance of an interactive approach between children and adults in a social context. The findings in the analysis chapter indicate the significance of the social and material context between the children and the adults who are interacting with them in responsive and often spontaneous ways. Even in the child-led free play activities described in the data, there is conversation between the children and the adults. Adults have also provided the environment in which children freely make their own choices.

Doolittle says:

In recent years, Vygotsky’s ideas regarding cognitive development as a social phenomenon have become quite popular with educational psychologists, while cooperative learning remains a favoured instructional strategy. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development provides a robust theoretical background and framework from which to understand the potential contributions of cooperative learning (Doolittle, 1995, p.3).

Doolittle explains how Vygotsky formulated a theory of cognitive development based on the process of internalisation, where children first experience an idea, behaviour, or attitude in a social setting, and then internalise this experience so that the experience becomes a part of the child’s mental functioning. He says:

Central to Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development is his theoretical construct of the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky proposed that a child’s immediate potential for cognitive growth is bounded on the lower end by that which the child can accomplish on their own and on the upper end by that which the child can accomplish with the help of a more knowledgeable other, such as a peer, tutor, or teacher. This region of immediate potential for cognitive growth is the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) … The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state…Consequently, a child develops cognitively by first being exposed to tasks or situations in the upper end of the zone of proximal development, those situations that at first require a significant amount of assistance in order to be completed; as the child learns to complete the task with less and less assistance, and eventually, with no assistance, the child’s cognitive skills develop (Doolittle, 1995, pp. 3,4).

The integrated pedagogy in this research contains many examples of situations in which adults interact with the children and, through social mediation, help them to extend their ideas and skills in a zone of proximal development. Integrated pedagogy has a strong sociocultural basis. The children learn new skills and develop cognitively through social interaction, mediation, and cooperative learning. For example, in Theme I: Physical activities, the 4-year-olds, Oliver and Mary, choose to take turns playing on the swing. They count the number of swings each person does to ensure they are taking turns fairly. Tuning in to this child-initiated activity and seeking to extend their learning with a question that is in the zone of proximal development, I ask “Right, Mary – Mary, if you’ve done 10 swings and Oliver’s done 10 swings, how many altogether – how many swings altogether?”

This question is in the upper end of the children’s zone of proximal development. The children need support from me as they work through the answer to this question. I provide a scaffold to help, by asking the two children to put their hands up with their fingers spread out. The children already know they have 10 digits each, on their hands. I then touch each finger in turn and the children do the counting, until they reach twenty. Then they continue to swing and count and to discuss number problems with me. The children have a strong level of trust, and they can accept the social encounter that leads to working in a zone of proximal development with their number skills. This collaborative activity in turn leads to an extension of their learning and cognitive development.

Doolittle says:

The essence of the zone of proximal development is the social system in which the child learns; a social system that is actively constructed by both the child and the teacher. It is this interdependence that is central to a Vygotskian view of the educational process (Doolittle, 1995, p. 6).

………………………………………………………………………………….

The zone of proximal development provides the vehicle through which enculturation takes place, with the assistance of social mediation. A social encounter creates the zone of proximal development in which learning, development, and enculturation grow and change. The need for social interaction as a prerequisite for learning and development was stated by Vygotsky (1978) (Doolittle, 1995. p. 17).

The interdependence of children and adults in the learning process, described by Vygotsky, resonates with the interdependence of children and adults in the integrated pedagogy identified throughout the analysis of data in this thesis.

Kozulin highlighted Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, and Feuerstein’s theory of mediated learning experience (MLE) and claimed that, together, they were responsible for changing priorities in the theory of learning and instruction. He says:

Each of these approaches has emphasised the importance of sociocultural forces in shaping the situation of a child’s development and learning. Both pointed to the critical role played by parents, teachers, peers and the community in defining the type of interaction occurring between children and their environments. As a result, the ‘obvious’ individualistic identification of the agency of learning was challenged (Kozulin, 2002, p. 8 ).

Kozulin (2002) refers to two forms of learning experience identified by Feuerstein. The first is direct learning because of exposure to environmental stimuli. The second is mediated learning experience. He says:

The phenomenon of MLE occurs in a situation when experienced, well-intentioned and active human beings (parents, teachers, more competent peers) interpose themselves between the child and the sources of stimulation. They select, change, schedule and interpret stimuli to the child, thus creating in him or her an experience of mediated learning (Kozulin, 2002, pp. 11,12).

In the data collected in this research, the extension of activities and of learning, for children in all age-groups, comes about through social interaction occurring between children and adults, and children’s interaction with their environments. In section 5.5 below, under the heading ‘Activities’, there are examples of ‘*Child-led activity’* followed by *‘Development of activity’ – ‘child and adult involvement’.* These examples illustrate ‘direct learning because of exposure to environmental stimuli’ (Kozulin, 2002, p. 8) that happens in the child-led activity in the outdoor environment, with minimal adult involvement. Similarly, mediated learning experiences occur when children and adults work together to develop an activity, selecting, changing, and modifying the resources and environment to extend and develop learning.

Siraj-Blatchford *et al*., carried out a research study into ‘Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years’. They were aiming to identify the most effective strategies to support the development of children’s skills, knowledge, and attitudes. They say:

In the most effective (excellent) settings the importance of staff members extending child-initiated interactions is also clearly identified. In fact, almost half of all of the child-initiated episodes which contained intellectual challenge, included interventions from a staff member to extend the child’s thinking. The evidence also suggests that adult ‘modelling’ is often combined with sustained periods of shared thinking, and that open-ended questioning is also associated with better cognitive achievement. However, open-ended questions made up only 5.1% of the questioning used in even these ‘effective’ settings. In the excellent and good settings the balance of who initiated the activities, staff or child, were very equal, revealing that the pedagogy of these effective settings encourages children to initiate activities as often as the staff (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*., 2002, p.11).

Throughout the analysis chapter of this thesis there are examples of adult staff members extending child-initiated interactions, engaging in sustained shared thinking, and asking open-ended questions. The balance of who initiates activities varies in each theme of the analysis, in the different sections, and with the different ages of the children. The 4-year-old children initiate more ideas and engage in a greater depth of sustained shared thinking than the younger children. The adults sometimes have to work harder to understand the opinions and intentions of the 3-year-olds and to understand their meanings. The 2-year-olds in this research study have a more limited vocabulary and the communications are more reliant on adults’ observing the children’s body language and actions and knowing them well.

Hedges says:

As noted earlier, simply due to maturity and limited life experience, young children may have limited powers of verbal expression, and a partial understanding of the world. However, as Rogoff identified, this does not reflect a lack of energy and effort towards learning, and it may be possible that children’s ideas have their own form of logic and sophistication based on their life experience. A child’s non-verbal responses such as gestures and facial expressions provide adults with feedback about the success of adult contributions to communications and conversations. In this way, when adults know children well they are responsive to the cues children provide about their in-progress thinking and understanding (Hedges, 2021, pp.1059, 1060).

The integrated pedagogy that has been modelled throughout this research results in many rich learning experiences for the children involved, as the analysis of data shows. This resonates with the ‘good practice’ and ‘better cognitive achievement’ outlined by Siraj-Blatchford *et al.,* (2002) in their research.

The findings also reflect recent research involving sociocultural theoretical framing. Sociocultural influences have affected the ways that the children in this research study have been able to make their choices, express their interests and to engage with the adults, their peers, and the environment in this setting. Part of the role of the adult is to understand these sociocultural influences, and thus make participatory learning more effective. The children’s interests are influenced and underpinned by their funds of knowledge, funds of identity and working theories. Chesworth carried out an interpretive study of play where she sought to understand play through the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers. She said:

The findings indicate some recommendations for practice that would enable a funds of knowledge approach to strengthen curriculum and pedagogical decisions informed by children’s play choices and interests. Pedagogical practice informed by dialogue with children and their families may enhance professional understandings of how children’s interests emerge from the everyday practices of homes and communities (Chesworth, 2016, p. 305).

In my research, the dialogue with parents did help to inform the practice of integrated pedagogy and to explain some of the reasons why it worked well with this group of children. The parents were very supportive of child-led play, adults respecting children’s initiatives and being in the outdoor environment. These values that parents expressed contributed to the children’s confidence in their ability to express their interests and make choices, and in their enjoyment and freedom in the outdoor environment.

My research investigates an emergent/responsive approach to early years education through the sociocultural model of integrated pedagogical approaches developed by Wood (2010) and subsequently expanded upon Wood (2013). The practical working out of this model, as a way of supporting learning, in my research, will now be considered.

**6.5 How the research study relates to the model of integrated pedagogical approaches developed by Wood (2010)**

Wood’s model of integrated pedagogical approaches aims to:

…ensure a flow of information about children’s play and learning from two pedagogical zones – adult and child-initiated activities, both of which have contrasting but complementary forms of adult and child involvement, co-constructive engagement and pedagogical strategies (Wood, 2010, p. 20).

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy is central to my research; therefore the diagram and the broad outline of the model are repeated in this chapter of the thesis. Wood (2010) draws a circle around which is written ‘*planning environment’*, ‘*planning activities and adults’ roles’,* ‘*activities’,* ‘*observing’,* and ‘*assessing, reflecting, evaluating’.* From this circle there is an arc towards ‘*adult-directed activities’,* and another towards *‘child-initiated activities’,* with an arrow between these two, pointing in both directions thus implying a flexible and reflexive relationship between these two positions.

The analysis of data in this research study will now be discussed, in relation to this model of integrated pedagogy.

**6.5.1 Free play**

In the analysis of data in this research study, many of the topics, for all age-groups, start with the heading ‘Free play and observation’. For example:

In Theme (A), Oliver chooses to play in the ‘pirate ship’ and Mary readily joins in with this choice. In Theme (B), Arnold and Greta play with sticks and then decide that they want to put them on the bonfire. In Theme (C), Mary and Oliver both make choices to play on the swings. This free play activity quickly develops into a child-initiated activity about numbers as they use numbers to take turns fairly. Also, in Theme (C), Melody chooses a free play activity involving balancing and climbing on logs and a plank while Harry chooses to swing on a tyre swing. In Theme (D), Oliver and Mary choose to play with diggers in the mud, and in Theme (D), Arnold plays with a boat and some water.

**6.5.2 Child-initiated activities arising out of children’s interests**

Throughout this research, one of the most important roles of the adult has been to make the interests of the children the starting point of any interactions and planned activities. This principle ensures that the curriculum is based on child-led interests and child-initiated activities. This approach is endorsed by Hedges and Cooper who say:

Building curriculum around interests utilizes children’s intrinsic motivation to learn that is assumed to accompany these (Hedges & Cooper, 2016, p. 303).

To identify children’s interests in this research study, I initially observed them playing freely and interacting with others, in a spacious outdoor environment, either the garden or on a walk or around the bonfire. From these initial observations the adult can begin to ‘frame understandings of children’s interests’ (Hedges & Cooper, 2016). They can ask questions and build up insight and understanding of children’s choices. This understanding deepens when adults consider children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity that inform and influence their choices.

In this research study, the 4-year-olds express diverse interests; for example, pirates, minibeasts, swinging and mud, and have conversations about gender, shadows, and the weather. The 3-year-olds are interested in the Gruffalo, flora, climbing and balancing and fire and have conversations about rubbish in the wood, and reeds from the reed bed. The 2-year-olds show an interest in ‘animals in the jungle’, sticks, running and rolling and water, and have conversations about babies and walking together. These interests are child-initiated and have not been pre-planned by the adult. However, the adults have taken on the role of providing a stimulating and spacious outdoor environment in a garden that is safe and full of natural resources. The children also have been led by the adults into a walk where there are the additional resources of an off-road path edged with wild grassy borders filled with flora and fauna; a ‘deep dark’ wood; a steep grassy slope; a ‘mighty’ river; a reed bed and a local playground.

In this rich natural environment, the adults have given children the time and space to pursue their interests. The provision of time and space has enabled the children to pursue their interests with exuberance, enthusiasm, a sense of joy and freedom of spirit. It is the integration of what the adults provide and what the children choose to do within that provision that produces the optimum learning potential. This learning, based on children’s interests, can go forward even more productively when joint planning takes place for further activities. Adults have the power to release and encourage children’s choices or to restrict and reduce them. When adults attach significance to children’s choices and value their actions and ideas, they are acknowledging children’s ‘agency’ (Hedges, 2020).

The children in this research study are manifesting ‘agency’. They can express their ideas and make purposeful actions. The adults attach purpose and significance to their choices. However, the adults do make subjective choices in deciding which of the children’s interests to expand and develop into further learning experiences.

Some of the activities initially chosen by the children are not so much ‘play’ as child-initiated exploration or investigation or the initiation of an idea. For example, in Theme (A), on the walk, Harry initiates the idea that there might be a Gruffalo in the wood ahead of us. Then he moves into child-initiated ‘free play’ as he imagines that he is seeing different animals’ homes as he walks through the woods. On another day, also on the walk, Greta initiates the idea of the reedbed being ‘like a jungle’. In Theme (B), Mary chooses to investigate a snail in a tyre, followed by Oliver. This activity then transforms into a free play activity as Mary and Oliver collect ‘food’ for the snail and create a new environment for it. Also, in Theme (B), Melody is digging in a muddy area of the garden with a group of friends when they come across some roots in the soil, she then pulls up a small plant and points out the roots on it. Meanwhile Harry comes along with a toy digger and uses it to dig up some of the mud. Harry’s activity is more like ‘free play’. Then he too finds a root and his activity turns into a child-initiated investigation of aspects of the natural world. In Theme (C), Arnold chooses to run everywhere – in the garden, on the walk and around the bonfire. This is a self-chosen, child-initiated activity. In Theme (E), communication interactions that are child-initiated in the first place are Oliver’s interest in the weather, Harry noticing the notice in the wood that says: “Fly tippers will be prosecuted”, Harry comparing lengths of reeds from the reedbed and Greta’s interest in being ‘in the middle’ when walking down the slope on the way back to Woodharp.

There is a flow between ‘free play’ and ‘child-initiated activities’ and they cannot always be separated as one type of activity leads into another. In all these examples above, activities are ‘emerging’ through children’s choices and ideas. All the choices that the children make will have been influenced to some degree by their funds of knowledge, funds of identity and working theories. The fact that they can express themselves freely and make their own choices reflects the connections they have with familiar adults in the setting and is a strength of the positioning of the practitioner researcher and other members of staff as ‘insiders’ in this process. Initially the role of the adult is mainly to observe the choices that children are making, within the outdoor environment and the broad structure of the session.

Lindfors developed a learning theory that embraced the concept of ‘emergent inquiry’. She claimed that children combine inquiry to learn: ‘to connect with others (social), to understand the world (intellectual) and to reveal oneself within it (personal)’ (Lindfors, 1999, p.46). The self-chosen free play and child-initiated activities above are examples of children’s ‘emergent inquiry’. Adults can then engage with children to extend and develop these initial interests and inquiries.

Sometimes, in this research, activities or conversations are introduced through an integration of child-led and adult-directed ideas at the outset. For example: in Theme (A), I call the wood ‘the deep, dark wood’ and this may have influenced Harry in his subsequent ideas about there being a Gruffalo in the wood. In Theme (D), I draw Melody’s attention to the fire which sparks off her interest in it. Also, in Theme (D) I make the connection between the boat that Arnold is playing with and the water, which he then plays with, after Adult Harriet has turned the hose on and filled Arnold’s bucket. In Theme (E), I initiate the conversation about gender discrimination, after a comment that a child makes: ‘Only boys are allowed’. Also, in Theme (E), Oliver and Mary make comments about their hair blowing back and I point out that ‘In fact you can see it on the shadow’, which leads on to a conversation about shadows. I introduce the conversation about babies with the 2-year-olds, Greta and Arnold, knowing that this relates to their own funds of knowledge about recently born babies in their families. Greta and Arnold are interested in the topic and have working theories about what babies need.

Hedges says:

(Furthermore), if working theories are an important part of a child’s thinking and cognition strategies, the situational conditions then include not only the way curiosity is stimulated and provided for but also responded to. Such considerations place an onus on a teacher to know individual children well in order to make professional judgements about the direction of conversations and have the knowledge and skill to foster understandings (Hedges, 2014, p. 47).

In the example of the conversation with Greta and Arnold I take the lead in introducing the topic of ‘babies’ and provide the conditions in which the children’s working theories and funds of knowledge can be expressed. I ask leading questions, and the children respond with their thoughts and ideas. It is the interaction between me and the children that enables the children to explore this area of interest in a conversation.

The findings indicate that children’s interests and choices emerge through free play, child-initiated activities and through an integration of child-led and adult-led thoughts and ideas. This is a complex, dynamic process. This approach of building the curriculum through sociocultural methodologies and using observation of children’s interests as a starting point is supported by Hedges (2014) who says:

Sociocultural methodologies provide rich, contextualised understandings of children’s thinking and learning. Early years settings provide opportunities to study ways in which teachers might notice children’s everyday thinking and theorising through engaging with children’s knowledge and interests. (Hedges, 2014, p. 40)

The initial observation of free play and child-initiated activities in this research provides the opportunities for noticing and engaging with the children’s thinking, theorising, knowledge, and interests.

**6.5.3 Observing, assessing, reflecting, and evaluating**

The data collected in this research was done through observing children and adults for as much of the session as possible, with the use of a video recorder, aiming to observe a wide range of conversations and activities. In each theme, my observation of child-led play and child-initiated activities was the catalyst for further planning and the development of a curriculum based on children’s interests. An adult working in an early years setting is a fully involved, interested observer who observes a child’s words, body language, choices, actions, intentions, expressions, emotions, relationships and meanings in any given environment. The adults also bring their own knowledge and experience and subjective bias to the process, as well as their relationships with the children they are observing. Adults in this research are at times attentive, understanding, and persistent listeners and observers, such as the time when Harry tries to explain that there may be a Gruffalo in the deep dark wood that we will be walking through. At other times the adult observers stand back to watch what children are doing and there is little dialogue. For example, when Melody is climbing and balancing in the back garden, she has some interaction with Adult Patrick and asks me to watch her, but mostly she is just being observed doing her child-led play on the climbing equipment.

In this research, adults are often interacting with the children at the same time as observing their choices and activities. There are many variables in this extremely complex and subjective process of observing. The adult observers in this research also take account of children’s funds of identity, funds of knowledge and working theories as they move on from observation to assess, reflect and evaluate the activities they have been observing. For example, in the ‘Sensory experiences’ theme, in the transcript of the conversation between myself and Adult Harriet, we reflect on Arnold’s interest in water play and evaluate how to develop this theme to extend his learning opportunities. Leading on from our evaluation we begin to plan the environment and resources needed to set up a water activity the following week. In the ‘Physical activities’ theme, we have a conversation where we assess the importance of the observation that Arnold greatly enjoys running around and think about how to extend and develop his physical skills. Sometimes the assessing, reflecting, and evaluating are done by adults and children together. For example, in the ‘Imaginative play’ theme, Oliver and Mary and I reflect on what pirates need (gold treasure, a treasure map with an X on it, fish to eat, a pirate hat and a sword) and plan the activity together. In this case there is child-led and adult-directed integration in the reflections and the reflections are also interspersed with ideas for planning an activity for the following week.

**6.5.4 Planning the environment, planning activities and adult’s roles**

In my research, the planning is either carried out by the adults, taking account of and building on the interests of children, or it is co-constructed between children and adults together. There is a degree of subjectivity in the decisions being made because adults are making choices about which interests and choices of the children to prioritise above others.

In the imaginative play theme, the children choose to climb and play in a tree, pretending that it is a ‘pirate ship’. This activity is child-led. Then I ask Oliver and Mary if they would like to search for treasure next week and say: “We could be pirates”. Although the children have been consulted, it is I who am suggesting the direction that their imaginative play could take in the following week, based on two previous observations of child-led play, involving pirates in the climbing tree that the children are imagining is a pirate ship. Then planning for the pirate activity is shared between Oliver, Mary, and myself, with children and adults all having ideas and making suggestions. Later, additional planning takes place between the adults in the setting who reflect on the children’s interest in pirates and consider how to facilitate their ideas. The adults then take on different roles, make resources and prepare clues that they place in and around the area normally followed for the walk.

The sequence goes:

*Children’s play > Adult’s suggestion of activity next week > Adult/Child shared reflection and assessment of what pirates need > Child/Adult joint planning of activity > Adult reflection and preparation of roles, resources, and environment*

The planning for the Gruffalo activity is based on Harry’s interest in this story which becomes evident as the group walks round the wood and Harry talks non-stop about the Gruffalo and other characters in the book, imagining where they might be living in this deep dark wood. I say: “Shall we put some pretend ones (Gruffalos) in next week Harry – just pictures of them that we can find – shall we do that?” and Harry says: “Yes”. After this exchange there is some more preparation for adults to do as they produce the pictures and in the following week place them round the wood. I am also taking account of the funds of knowledge of the whole group when suggesting this activity. I know that many of the children are already familiar with this imaginative story. The sequence of this planning goes:

*Child’s interest > Adult/Child interaction while walking round the wood > Adult suggestion of activity next week > Child’s agreement > Adult planning of resources and environment*

The planning for the jungle activity comes out of Arnold’s choice to walk to the reedbed, Greta referring to it as ‘the jungle’ and her choice to go there ‘first’. I suggest an activity for next week. I say: “Shall we pretend the reed bed is a jungle next week…Shall we put some animals in it to find?”. Greta agrees.

The sequence is:

*Child’s choice (to walk to reedbed) > Child’s imaginative idea (the reedbed is like a jungle) > Adult suggestion of activity next week > Child’s agreement > Adult planning of resources and environment*

In subsequent themes there are also shared reflections and co-constructed planning. The reflection and evaluation of a child-led activity and planning for the next week are often interwoven in conversations. This is more evident in discussions with the 4-year-olds.

In the natural world theme of ‘minibeasts’ Oliver, Mary, and I, reflect on the day’s activities and plan for the next week. The narrative records that:

*The adult direction predominates in this reflection and planning, but the children are also engaged and involved. Without adult input the plans would have lacked direction. Without input from the children and their enthusiasm, the plans would have lacked inspiration.*

In the ‘Flora’ theme, the adult takes the lead in the reflection and planning, but Melody is also involved. In the ‘Sticks’ theme, Adult Harriet plans the next week’s activity without consultation with the children but based on Arnold and Greta’s delight in playing with sticks in the previous session.

In this research study, when conversations about reflection and planning happen as children are playing or walking along, they (the children) tend to be more animated and involved than when it happens in a discussion at the end of the session. When reflections about an activity and discussions about planning take place at the end of a session then there is a tendency for more adult direction. Sometimes, children such as Melody, are feeling shy about taking part in a discussion, sometimes they lack the vocabulary and language skills needed, such as Arnold, or sometimes they are just feeling tired at the end of the day.

In both the ‘Imaginative Play’ and the ‘Natural World’ themes, the children’s involvement in planning is greater for the 4-year-olds who can express their thoughts and ideas more fluently. For example, in the ‘Sensory experiences’ theme, Oliver and Mary choose to play with mud, then they agree with my suggestion that it would be a good idea to have a mud kitchen next week and add water to the mud. After this they have a long conversation reflecting on what happens when mud and water are mixed together. They come up with a working theory about clay and plan to test out their theory next week. This is an evolving plan with input from both the children and the adult, while playing and investigating mud and water outside. The sequence is:

*Child-led play > Adult suggestion > Child/Adult reflection > Adult/Child planning > Child-initiated working theory > Further Adult/Child planning*

In some cases, the adults plan activities that are outside the children’s experience or involve going to a different environment, to extend their learning opportunities. For example, after observing Melody and Harry’s child-led play on the tyre swing, planks, and logs, in the ‘Physical play’ theme, Adult Catherine suggests visiting a nearby playground next week that is within walking distance and has a better range of equipment than is available in the setting. Harry and Melody agree with enthusiasm. The plan is in line with their observed interests and will give them new physical challenges.

There is another example of this in the ‘Physical play’ theme. After observing Arnold’s love of running and encouraging all the children to join in with the running activity that Arnold initiates on the walk, Adult Harriet and I plan an activity for the following week that involves running but adds the additional challenge of a steep hill and different ways of moving down it. Arnold does not have the knowledge of features of the local environment to be able to plan this activity himself.

Sometimes an adult can bring an area of expertise or skill to a plan that can help children to extend their learning. For example, Adult Patrick, formerly an architect, helps with the plans to make houses for insects in Theme B, ‘The natural world’. Once he has demonstrated how to make a ‘house’, the children take over and make it their own, with some ongoing support. I know the best place to find all kinds of creatures – under the logs in the bonfire area. Once I have demonstrated how to turn logs over to find creatures, the children carry on with enthusiasm. The children and I investigate the creatures together and collect some to take back to the insect houses. Adult Patrick also has knowledge of how plants grow and helps with the plans to prepare the planting seeds activity in the ‘Flora’ section of the ‘Natural World’ theme. These are examples of a sociocultural learning theory developed by Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chávez, and Angelillo called ‘intent participation’:

Intent participation involves a collaborative, horizontal participation structure with flexible, complementary roles. This contrasts with assembly-line instruction’s hierarchical structure, organized with fixed roles in which someone manages others’ participation, acting as a boss (Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chávez & Angelillo, 2003, p. 187).

…

In the intent participation tradition, experienced people play a guiding role, facilitating learners’ involvement and often participating alongside learners—indeed, often learning themselves. New learners in turn take initiative in learning and contributing to shared endeavours, sometimes offering leadership in the process (Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chávez & Angelillo, 2003, p. 189).

Hedges discusses the development of Rogoff’s thinking in which the term ‘intent participation’ has now evolved into ‘learning by observing and pitching in’:

In short, children learn actively during informal, everyday activities that are integrated into family and community life. Children learn by watching, listening, and attending, with great concentration, then through participation by taking purposeful initiative and by contributing and collaborating (Hedges, 2021, p. 1059).

In the above examples of ‘intent participation’ or ‘learning by observing and pitching in’, Adult Patrick is the experienced person playing a guiding role, but he is also collaborating with the children in the activities.

In some of the themes there are no planned activities, but the activity evolves through the integration of child-led and adult-led involvement from the start. An example of this is the ‘Swinging’ activity in the Physical activities theme. In this instance, with no planning, the activity follows the sequence:

*Child-led play > Child initiated number activity to facilitate fairness in taking turns, encouraged, and supported by adult > Adult extension of number activity to promote learning*

Another example of an activity that develops without planning is the ‘Fire’ activity in the theme of ‘Sensory experiences.’ In this case, the activity develops through a conversation about the fire initiated by me together with the sensory experiences of the actual experience of seeing the fire burning the logs with flames and smoke, singing the song ‘London’s Burning’, looking at the smoke blown by the wind and seeing the ash that is left when the wood burns.

In the recorded conversations in the ‘Communication Interactions’ theme, there is again no specific planning. The topics, the working theories and the learning opportunities emerge through the course of the integrated child-led and adult-led conversations.

The sequences of planning, arising from children’s interests and developed cooperatively between children and adults, represent a more dynamic, three-dimensional aspect of Wood’s model rather than a simple circle representing observing > assessing, reflecting, evaluating > planning environment > planning activities + adult roles. The planning sequences in this research are more like a three-dimensional ball inside which the elements described above bounce round from side to side in slightly different orders and with varying degrees of input from adults and children before emerging as a new set of activities to explore.

Through the analysis of data in this research, the findings indicate that the integration of child-led and adult-led input in the planning of activities brings the themes alive as children and adults’ ideas and interests weave in and out of each other in a dynamic, interactive flow. The curriculum is being constructed as it emerges out of this process and plans for activities are formed.

Wood and Hedges say:

Children’s joint engagement and participation indicate that the environment becomes more meaningful for them through their own thinking, actions, and interactions. Therefore knowledge-building is inherently bound with agency, control, power, and identities (Wood & Hedges, 2016, p. 399).

The role of the adult is complex and multi-faceted. It includes observing, encouraging, building trust, practising deep listening, understanding children’s funds of identity and taking account of their funds of knowledge and working theories, respecting children’s choices, being interested in children’s interests, being proactive with children in developing a dynamic curriculum, supporting their learning and development, questioning (open and closed questions), giving direct instruction when that is appropriate and helpful, keeping children safe and providing stimulating environments. It involves reciprocity, joint involvement, and relationships. It is not so much about knowledge building as it is about making and developing meaning in all aspects of life and learning. In the current research study, the role of the adult encompasses all the above qualities with special emphasis on integrating child-led and adult-led activities in the outdoor environment to support children’s learning.

**6.5.5 Activities**

The analysis of the different themes shows how different activities emerge after the initial observation, reflection and planning have taken place. In this research, a dynamic child-led curriculum emerges through the integration of child-led and adult-led activities, conversations, interactions, thoughts, and ideas. The following list of activities illustrates how the curriculum emerges and then develops, from an initial child-led activity or interest:

Theme A – Imaginative Play

*4-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 24th February & 12th May*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Playing pirates in the garden (+ co-constructed reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 19th May*

*(developing curriculum)*

> treasure hunt dressed as pirates, broadly following the ‘walk’ route

> eating fish fingers round the bonfire

> post activity discussions between children and adults

*3-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 21st April*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Talking about the Gruffalo and other characters from the book during a walk round the ‘deep dark wood’ (+ co-constructed reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 28th April*

*(developing curriculum)*

> listening to the Gruffalo story + interactive discussion

> taking part in the planned Gruffalo game round the deep dark wood

> post activity discussions between children and adults

> reflections of a parent (Harry’s mother)

*2-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 23rd June*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Choosing to go to the reedbeds. Calling the reedbeds a jungle.

(+ co-constructed reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 30th June*

*(developing curriculum)*

> talking about animals we might find in the jungle

> exploring in the ‘jungle’

> finding pictures of animals

> identifying different animals

> post activity discussion and reflection round the bonfire

Theme B – The Natural World

*4-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 24th February*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Investigating a snail in a tyre and creating a ‘garden’ for it (+ co-constructed reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 3rd March*

*(developing curriculum)*

> adult demonstrating how to make ‘houses’ for minibeasts

> collecting materials for building the ‘houses’

> constructing a little ‘house’

> finding minibeasts and identifying them

> putting the minibeasts in the ‘houses’

*3-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 28th April*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Discovering roots in the soil, while digging, and investigating a small plant (+ co-constructed reflection & planning).

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 5th May*

*(developing curriculum)*

> planting seeds

> finding bag with name on it

> collecting flowers and leaves on the walk

> post walk activity matching collected flowers and leaves with cards and identifying them

*2-year-olds*

*Child-led Activity – 23rd June*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Playing with sticks in the garden and putting them on the (unlit) bonfire. (+ adult led reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 30th June*

*(developing curriculum)*

> listening to the plan

> collecting sticks

> finding things to put on their sticks

> taking the decorated sticks home

Theme C – Physical Activities

*4-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 12th May*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Playing on the swings and counting go’s

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 12th May*

*(developing curriculum)*

> adding 10 swings and 10 swings

> comparing numbers

> continuing number activities

*3-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 9th June*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Climbing and balancing on logs and a plank. Spinning on a tyre (+ co-constructed reflection & planning).

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 16th June*

*(developing curriculum)*

> walking to a nearby playground

> climbing, balancing, swinging and taking part in other activities in the playground using a variety of equipment

*2-year-olds*

*Child-led Activity – 17th March*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Running around in the garden, running on the walk and running round the bonfire (+ adult-led reflection & planning).

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 24th March*

*(developing curriculum)*

> walking to a steep hill on the path normally followed on the walk

> running up the hill

> rolling down the hill

> running down the hill

> walking up and down the hill

Theme D – Sensory Experiences

*4-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 12th May*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Playing with mud, exploring ideas about clay (+ co-constructed reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 19th May*

*(developing curriculum)*

> playing in the mud kitchen

> mixing mud and water

> making muddy puddles, a mud cake and mud soup

> experimenting with making mud thicker and thinner

*3-year-olds*

*Child-led activity – 5th May*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Expressing interest in the bonfire

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 5th May*

*(developing curriculum)*

> Singing ‘London’s Burning’

> Experiencing fire

> Talking about the colours in the fire

> Talking about smoke and ash

> Thinking about how to put out a fire

*2-year-olds*

*Child-led Activity – 17th March*

*(emerging curriculum)*

Playing with a boat – playing with water (+ co-constructed reflection & planning)

*Development of activity – child and adult involvement – 24th March*

*(developing curriculum)*

> scooping up water from a water tray in a bucket

> sending a boat down guttering by pouring water down it

> playing with water

> using a hosepipe

In Theme E – ‘Communication Interactions’ – the cycle of integrated pedagogy is different because the conversations are spontaneous and unplanned. However, all the conversations are interactive and involve contributions from both children and adults. Sometimes the adult leads the communication and sometimes the child. The conversations reflect children’s interests while the adult involvement encourages the children to express and develop their ideas.

In this research, the integration of child-led activities and ideas together with adult-directed help with planning, support, and provision of resources, enables the activities to be developed. Some of the activities involve more adult direction than others. For example, when the group go to the playground in the ‘Physical Activities’ theme, the adult gives specific directions to Harry about where to put his hands and feet to climb into the swing. This is a highly adult-directed activity. On the other hand, when children are playing with mud in the ‘Sensory Experiences’ theme, and the running and rolling down the hill in the ‘Physical Activities’ theme, very little adult direction is given beyond setting up the activity and providing resources.

Some of the activities are more structured than others. For example, in the treasure hunt in the ‘Imaginative Play’ theme, children follow the clues, and the activity is structured by the adults.

In every section of the analysis in this research, integrated pedagogy is recorded. All the activities quoted above involve some degree of integrated pedagogy both in initial child-led activities that are being observed by adults, in reflection and planning, and in the extended activities that emerge through this process.

Hedges, in reviewing the work of Wells (1999) says:

Wells established the active role that children enact in their own learning as they construct both their knowledge of the world and a linguistic system for understanding and communicating. He demonstrated ways adults can collaborate and mediate in children’s learning to achieve children’s full potential as makers of meaning and creators of knowledge. (Hedges, 2021, p. 1059)

Integrated pedagogy encompasses relational pedagogy because there can be no development of integrated child-led and adult-led activities without relationships. Hedges and Cooper in their theorising of relational pedagogy, emphasise the importance of teachers paying attention to children’s knowledge and thinking in ways that are meaningful to children:

Vygotsky (1986) claimed that it was critical in the early years to develop children’s rich experiences to reduce the difficult leaps that might otherwise occur in trying to understand complex academic concepts…Blending teaching, learning and play negotiates a middle ground of appropriate relationship-based pedagogy that Grossman et al. (2009) argue is necessary to preserve the integrity and complexity of teaching. (Hedges & Cooper, 2018, p. 379)

The accounts of the cycles of integrated pedagogy in each theme of the analysis give examples of rich experiences for children and many interactions between children and adults that lead to many learning opportunities that will now be considered.

**6.6 Children’s learning in the research study in relation to EYFS goals and wider perspectives**

One of the roles of the adult in early childhood education is to develop a curriculum that will support children’s learning. Despite evidence that freely chosen child-led play, guided by adults, promotes learning and development, contemporary policy frameworks have tended to influence practitioners towards developing a curriculum that focuses on specific curriculum goals (Wood & Hedges, 2016). This has led, in some settings, to practises of adult-planned learning activities and ‘educational play’ dominating curriculum planning with children’s interests considered but not necessarily at the heart of the process. Wood and Hedges identify a ‘dual focus’ that has emerged in curriculum planning over recent years:

…as play has been brought into discourses of curriculum control, a dual focus emerged that would, theoretically, enable practitioners to respond coherently to children’s developmental needs, choices, and interests and to introduce content to achieve curriculum goals. The dual focus comprises:

* children’s freely chosen play and activities can be the sources for curriculum planning, informed by their interests and inquiries; AND
* curriculum goals can be a source for planning ‘educational play’, that is, learning activities that develop and extend children’s interests. (Wood & Hedges, 2016, p. 391)

In the current research study, it is the first focus that has predominated. Children’s interests and choices have provided the sources for curriculum planning, resulting in a dynamic child-led curriculum that has been worked out through the integration of both child and adult input and experience.

In giving the children freedom to roam in the garden, (a stimulating, natural environment), follow their own interests, and then plan activities together with an adult, the adult is valuing ‘learner autonomy, exploration and a participatory style of pedagogy.’ (Hedges and Cooper, 2016, p. 304). The adult is also following the principle of the emergent/responsive approach to curriculum development as outlined by Wood in her model of integrated pedagogical approaches (2010). The integration of what the adults provide and what the children choose to do, within this framework, and then taking this forward in joint planning and further planned activities, have contributed to rich learning experiences, and have also fulfilled many of the EYFS curriculum goals without this outcome actually being the focus of the activity.

In the analysis of data, the EYFS ‘Areas of Learning and Development’ are used as an analytic tool. The EYFS goals are applied as a measure of learning, albeit an imperfect one, because they are informed by developmental norms. Learning is a fluid, dynamic process that cannot be squeezed into ‘goals’ with any great accuracy, especially in the early years when children are so creative and original. Nevertheless, they can give an overview to reflect on the potential for supporting children’s learning in the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in this research study. An example of the number of goals recorded in one of the Themes is given below.

**Theme A** – Imaginative Play – Pirates

Free Play goals: PSED (1)

CL (1)

PD (3)

EAD (1)

Reflection & Planning goals: PSED (2)

CL (4)

Becoming Pirates goals: PSED (4)

CL (3)

PD (4)

L (1)

EAD (2)

The Treasure Hunt goals: CL (3)

PD (3)

L (1)

EAD (6)

Discussion & Reflection goals: PSED (3)

CL (2)

In the initial free play activity that is predominantly child-led, the children are imaginative and expressive and meet 6 goals in 4 different areas of learning as classified by the EYFS goals. However, once adults become involved in co-constructed planning and the activities are developed in the following week, the number of learning goals being met increases. Now, the children meet 38 goals in 5 different areas of learning. This pattern is repeated throughout the different themes. The children meet learning goals in child-led, free play activities or child-initiated activities, but once adults are involved and there is integration of child-led and adult-led activities, the number of learning goals met increases.

The curriculum that emerges in this research study has some limitations in that it does not cover all areas of learning equally. The different themes reflect different areas of learning more strongly. For example, the ‘Imaginative play’ theme reflects more EAD goals, the ‘Natural world’ and ‘Sensory experiences’ themes reflect more UW goals, the ‘Physical activities’ theme reflects more PD goals and the ‘Communication interactions’ reflect more CL goals. PSED goals and CL goals are also met throughout all the different themes. There are a few literacy and mathematics goals that are also met, principally by the 4-year-olds. The perhaps surprising outcome of this research is how many of the EYFS goals are met spontaneously, during the research, through a curriculum that is developed through children’s interests with an integration of child-led and adult-directed activities, working with what is proximal and of interest to a child. The approach to curriculum making in this research contrasts with a curriculum developed by adults with an agenda in mind, forcing academic concepts to meet EYFS goals.

Many of the goals in the EYFS give an indication of learning that is taking place but are poor reflections of the actual learning experiences that children are engaged in. For example, in the ‘Imaginative play’ theme, Harry fulfils the goal ‘Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play’. However, this does not reflect Harry’s excitement and utter delight in pretending that a dark tunnel through the trees is a Gruffalo cave, that a tree is the owl’s house, as he walks through the wood, and that he can communicate these ideas and be understood by others who are sharing his experiences and initiatives. In the area of ‘Understanding the World’ (UW) there is only one goal for the 40-60+ age group. This is: ‘Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change’ (Early Education, 2012). This single sentence does not reflect all that Oliver and Mary are learning about the world in their experiences of observing and collecting minibeasts in the ‘Natural World’ theme, their experiences of playing with mud in the ‘Sensory experiences’ theme, and in their observations about shadows and the weather in the ‘Communication interactions’ theme. They are learning so many more things about the world they live in than this sentence implies.

There are many instances in this research where children’s learning and conceptual understanding could have been taken further and extended over more weeks, building on children’s interests and initiatives. For example, the pirate theme could have been extended, all the ‘natural world’ topics could have been developed, and all the ‘physical activities’ could have been repeated, with variations. Furthermore, all the ‘sensory experiences’ are fundamental to learning about the basic elements that make up our world and could have been built on. In addition, all the interests that arose in the ‘communication interactions’ could have become topics in themselves. The potential for supporting learning in outdoor environments through making the children’s observed interests the starting point, engaging in some shared reflection and planning, and then developing integrated child-led and adult-directed activities, is limitless.

The EYFS goals have been used in this research as a tool to show evidence of learning but, as has been discussed, there are other ways of looking at learning in the early years that are not about achieving learning goals, may be more in tune with the learning processes in early years education, and are supported by sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978), as mentioned above, was one of the pioneers of looking at learning and cognitive development through social interactions and mediation.

Wells (1999) introduces the metaphor of a spiral of knowing where learning is ‘an ongoing incremental process of the four components of the spiral: experience, information, understanding and collaborative knowledge building.’ (Hedges, 2021, p.1063). In this learning theory, children relate their experiences to previous learning, refine their working theories to develop a better understanding of their world, and change their actions to reflect the new knowledge. Relating this to the integrated pedagogy explored in this thesis, the spiral of knowledge can happen during free play or in child-initiated activities, or in collaborative activities with peers. It is then enhanced by collaborative planning to extend activities and develop new knowledge through working together with adults – as seen in the sequences of planning and developments of activities in all the themes of the analysis, recorded above.

Hedges when looking at contemporary principles that lead to understandings of children’s learning, says:

Rogoff, Callanan, Gutiérrez, and Erickson (2016) propose that the value of informal learning is often under-recognized because of its assumed inferior opposition to formal learning. In contrast, these authors argue that informal learning is valuable because of the following features that have resonance with the Vygotskian concepts outlined earlier:

* Informal learning is interactive and embedded in meaningful activity.
* Guidance is available to learners and their partners through social interaction and the structure of activities.
* Talk is conversational, not didactic.
* Involvement builds on individual initiative, interest and choice.
* Assessment occurs in support of contributing to the activity, not for external purposes.
* Participants hone their existing knowledge and skills and also innovate, developing new ideas and skills. (pp. 359–360). (Hedges, 2021, p.1059)

This quote from Hedges (2021) sums up the kind of learning experience that is explored in this thesis. The learning through integrated pedagogy in this research is interactive and embedded in meaningful activity in the outdoor environment. It is guided by adults, in collaboration with children. The talk is almost all conversational. The involvement of children is based on their initiatives, interests, and choices. Assessment and reflection are based on children’s involvement in activities, and they also contribute their ideas to possible extensions of activities. The analysis of data also shows that, in the ‘Development of activities’ with child and adult involvement (see above), children hone existing knowledge, innovate, and develop new ideas and skills.

Hedges synthesises the work of Vygotsky, Rogoff, Wells and Lindfors to produce a list of contemporary principles of children’s learning. These are as follows:

* Significant learning in the early years is largely informal, rich with possibility, and promoted through authentic, collaborative community participation;
* While intentional and purposeful, learning can appear disorganized because it is fluid and dynamic;
* Children’s life experience may be limited but their thinking, inquiry and use of imagination reflects effort, and therefore may have its own internal logic and sophistication;
* Children’s efforts to learn reflect their interests and inquiry into personally meaningful questions, and a wish to understand and participate knowledgeably;
* Children benefit when adults empower their learning in a range of ways that are responsive to their learning trajectories and with good knowledge of children and their families, communities and cultures;
* Learning in the early years involves children having opportunities to act on learning, including to recreate, represent and internalize experiences in play;
* Holistic learning outcomes might recognize the interrelationship of intellect, affect and imagination in the development of children’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions. (Hedges, 2021, p. 1061)

She says:

These principles suggest that there is a need for newer, holistic and multimodal ways of understanding children’s learning as non-linear, having complex trajectories and requiring peers and adults to support an inquiry mode of learning (Hedges, 2021, p. 1061).

…

From a sociocultural perspective, valuable learning is informal, rich, dynamic and personally meaningful. Mutual engagement in participatory, collaborative, reciprocal and responsive relationships is essential. Learning builds on and re-visits previous experiences but not in a linear fashion. Observation, participation, collaboration, inquiry, intellect, affect and imagination combine in children developing their own understandings of their lives and worlds through developing a ‘mind to learn’ and creating ‘knowing’ that supports increasingly competent participation in the activities and practises of families, communities and cultures (Hedges, 2021, pp. 1063,1064).

I would argue that the integrated pedagogy presented in this research does represent non-linear learning that is holistic and multimodal, meaningful, dynamic, and rich in supporting children’s life experiences and empowering them to extend their skills and understanding. The kind of learning experiences that Hedges describes, and that the children in this research study embrace, contrasts with the impoverished view of learning measured through meeting learning goals in the EYFS framework.

**6.7 How the use of the outdoor environment in this research supports integrated pedagogy and learning**

In this research, the outdoor environment plays a pivotal role in inspiring children to be imaginative, adventurous learners and investigators. It provides space for children to play in, and the natural provision of so many interesting resources for exploration and experimentation. In the ‘Imaginative Play’ theme, Mary and Oliver imagine that a tree is a ‘pirate ship’ and this sparks off the pirate topic. Harry imagines that the wood we visit is the ‘deep, dark wood’ in the Gruffalo story, and amongst the undergrowth, fallen trees and nooks and crannies of this environment he imagines that he is finding the homes of different animals in the story, which leads to a Gruffalo game played through the wood in the following week. Greta imagines that the reedbed is a ‘jungle’ and this initiates the jungle topic.

In the ‘Natural World’ theme, the natural environment provides the minibeasts, the flora and the sticks that the children become interested in and explore in different ways. The ‘houses’ for the minibeasts and the decorations for the sticks are all made from natural materials collected in the garden. The children’s interest in plants growing in the garden leads to planting seeds in the next week and then collecting flowers and leaves on the walk, from the natural flora growing beside the path.

In the ‘Physical Activities’ theme, the swing that hangs from the branches of an ancient ash tree leads to the swinging activity for Mary and Oliver. The logs and planks provided in the garden, together with the climbing tree that had many accessible branches, invite Melody to climb and balance. The space to run around in the garden, around the circle of logs surrounding the bonfire, and the steep hill to roll down at the end of the path, on the walk, inspire Arnold’s running and rolling.

The ‘Sensory Experiences’ theme shows children becoming interested in some of the most fundamental elements in our world that are readily available in the outdoor environment at Woodharp. The ancient Greeks believed that there were four elements that everything was made up of: earth, water, air, and fire. Although this was later found to be over simplistic, they do remain important elements in our world.

Mary and Oliver are interested in the mud found in the ground in the garden, Melody is interested in the fire when the bonfire is lit in the bonfire area and Arnold is interested in playing with water. All the children are learning about the fundamental elements of the world around them. In the outside environment, they are also being exposed to lots of fresh air. In the ‘Communication Interaction’ theme, conversations about shadows, the weather, rubbish in the wood and reeds from the reed bed are all related to the outdoor environment that the children are immersed in throughout this research.

This immersion in the outdoors is supported by parents of the children in this study as seen in the data relating to interviews with parents. For example, when asked:

*Did the fact that we do a lot of outdoor play at Woodharp, and outdoor activities, influence your choice to send your children here?*

Mary’s mother replies:

*Yea –yea definitely…I kind of think it’s the best place to – for play and, and um and just being.*

When asked:

*Do you find the outdoor environment a good environment for learning for Greta?*

Greta’s mother replies:

*Yes definitely …because she’s just, she’s quite free-spirited and slightly wild but in a lovely way and I think that’s what being outside is all about – so she feels less inhibited and she’s just an explorer I suppose. So, I suppose it kind of meets all of her traits.*

The parents have positive attitudes towards the potential for learning in the outdoor environment.

In this research study, the outdoor environment is providing the resources for supporting children’s learning that can be built on through integrated pedagogy.

Little and Wyver (2008) discuss learning and development in outdoor play. They claim that outdoor play allows children to engage in more active physical play than indoors and to learn and gain competence in a vast range of motor skills. They highlight the importance of movement as central to children’s lives and learning. They point to the importance of outdoor experiences for children in the early years, in the current cultural climate of parents’ fears for their children’s safety, and tendency to restrict their play to ‘safe’ spaces of playgrounds or more sedentary indoor play. In this thesis, children have access to large, varied outdoor spaces including gardens, a pathway along a river, a reedbed and a small wood. This inspires their interests and activities throughout the themes explored in the analysis.

**6.8 Review of research methods**

This research is an example of the epistemology of constructionism where meaning has been constructed from the experiences of children and adults and their interactions. The effectiveness of integrated pedagogy in the outdoor environment for supporting children’s learning has emerged through the data. The thematic framework changed as I looked for dominant themes in a large quantity of raw data. Many different themes wound in and out of the data, some too fleeting to use. The use of video recording and the extent to which it was used to record almost all the activities and conversations in every session was both thorough and potentially overwhelming. However, once edited, it did produce good quality data from which conclusions about the effectiveness of integrated pedagogy to support children’s learning could be deduced. The amount of data included in this thesis is there to illustrate the nature and quality of the integrated interactions between adults and children so that the social expressions between them could be better described and interpreted. This resonates with practitioner research using ethnographic methods, as a research method.

**6.9 Chapter conclusion**

The discussion chapter looks briefly at some historical perspectives on early years education and how they still resonate with aspects of this research. The sociocultural nature of this research is highlighted, reflecting how children learn and develop concepts through the social interaction that is at the heart of integrated pedagogy. The relationship between the research data and all the elements of Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy are explored (Wood, 2010). Children’s learning is discussed in relation to the model of integrated pedagogy and sociocultural theory. The limitations of EYFS goals as a measure of learning in this research are highlighted and wider perspectives of learning are explored. Finally, the benefits of the outdoor environment in this research are highlighted and the relevance of the epistemology of constructionism and practitioner research using ethnographic methods as a methodology for this thesis is affirmed.

**Chapter 7:**

**An Expanded Model of Integrated Pedagogical Approaches**

**7.1 Introduction to the chapter**

I have designed an expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches that combines integrated pedagogy with sociocultural theory. It is based on the original model designed by Wood (2010) that is explored in my research, but I have created a 3-dimensional model by adding other dimensions, as shown below:



A larger version of this ‘Expanded Model of Integrated Pedagogical Approaches’

may be seen in Appendix 8.

In this chapter I start by returning to Wood’s original model of integrated curriculum and pedagogical approaches (Wood, 2010). I look at the pedagogical zone of child-initiated activities and free play, the pedagogical zone of structured play, the pedagogical zone of adult-directed activities and work/non-play and the flexible continuum between different zones of engagement. I give examples from my research showing evidence of adult/child interactions and joint engagement in each of these zones. These zones of engagement are all still present in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches, but additional sociocultural dimensions are added.

I discuss the sociocultural background to the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches. I look at sociocultural influences on children’s choices and sociocultural influences on adult’s choices. I give examples from my research showing how these influences impact child/adult interactions.

I illustrate how curriculum planning has become dynamic and interactive in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches. I use evidence from my research to show how this works in practice.

Finally, I discuss the importance of relationships in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches. This is shown by a red line going through the centre of the model.

**7.2 The original model of integrated pedagogical approaches**

Wood’s original model of integrated curriculum and pedagogical approaches is based on a continuum between playing, learning, and teaching (Wood, 2010). It is underpinned by sociocultural theories. It enables practitioners to develop ‘reflexivity and responsiveness in their curriculum and pedagogical approaches’ (Wood, 2013 p. 68). This is a model with flexibility for practitioners to engage with children and practise co-constructive learning. It is an emergent/responsive pedagogical approach incorporating children’s cultural practices, meanings, and purposes (Wood, 2010). Wood’s model is based on a continuum between work and play. In my research, the model is explored. It becomes a working model demonstrating practices of joint engagement, co-constructive learning, and participation in curriculum planning.

**7.2.1 The pedagogical zone of child-initiated activities and free play**

In the pedagogical zone of child-initiated activities and free play, children have choice and activities are freely chosen. The players have control and there is no pressure for outcomes. Children can engage with adults as co-players or ask for help, or initiate conversations, if these are their own choices. Children will express their choices differently according to their own sociocultural background and experiences. In this zone children have agency and autonomy. The role of the adult in this zone is to respond to children without directing their activities.

For example:

In my research, themes A, B, C and D all start with free play or follow children’s choices and initiatives. The following are extracts from the data showing how each subtheme has started:

5.3.1 PIRATES - Free Play and Observation

5.3.2 THE GRUFFALO - Conversation (in which Harry chooses the destination for the walk)

5.3.3 THE JUNGLE - Conversation (in which Arnold decides to go to the reedbed)

5.4.1 MINIBEASTS - Free Play and Observation

5.4.2 FLORA - Free Play and Observation

5.4.3 STICKS - Free Play and Observation

5.5.1 SWINGING - The 4-year-olds, Oliver and Mary choose to play on the swings.

5.5.2 CLIMBING AND BALANCING - Free Play and Observation

5.5.3 RUNNING AND ROLLING - Free Play and Observation

5.6.1 MUD - Free Play and Observation

5.6.2 FIRE - Melody points towards the fire and says, “I can see orange a bit.”

5.6.3 WATER - Free Play and Observation

The adult does have a role in this pedagogical zone. The adult’s role is to observe the children’s free play or to respond to children in conversations.

**7.2.2 The pedagogical zone of structured play**

In the structured play zone adults and children are engaging somewhere in the middle of the continuum between child-initiated and adult-directed activities. There is some direction from adults but also engagement with children. There is sensitivity towards children’s choices and interests and joint participation in activities.

For example:

In my research, examples of structured play are following clues to find the treasure in the PIRATES theme, finding pictures around the wood in the GRUFFALO game, finding pictures of animals in the reeds in the JUNGLE theme, and decorating sticks in the STICKS theme. Adult Harriet set up the structure in each of these scenarios. The children continue to interact freely with each other and with the adults, while following the structure of the game. There is joint engagement and enjoyment between adults and children in these activities that were initially based on children’s interests and choices.

**7.2.3 The pedagogical zone of adult-directed activities and work/non-play**

In the pedagogical zone of adult-directed activities and work/non-play, activities are tightly controlled by adults with ‘focused instructional strategies’ (Wood, 2013, p. 73). In this zone adults have control. The role of the child is to respond to the adult without initiating the activity.

For example:

In my research there is an example of an adult-directed activity in the FLORA theme. Adult Harriet leads Melody in an activity that helps her to identify all the flowers and leaves that she has collected on the walk. They sit at a table together and sort through all the things that Melody has collected in her bag. Adult Harriet has cards with pictures of flowers or leaves on them. Together they put flowers and leaves on top of the pictures and talk about them. This activity, at the end of the session, and at the end of the FLORA theme, is adult-directed. There is a role for the child in this adult-directed activity. Melody is keen to join Adult Harriet in identifying different flowers and leaves. She has ownership of what is in her bag because she has chosen what to collect. There is joint engagement in the activity. The topic has emerged out of Melody’s interest in plants and has been developed through co-constructed reflection and planning.

**7.2.4 The flexible continuum between different zones of engagement**

There is a flow of information and activity across the pedagogical zones described above (Wood 2013). The model represents the flexible continuum between adult-directed and child-initiated activities by putting arrows, in each direction, on the line going horizontally across the model. The zones are connected and interconnected with a flow of interactive engagement between children and adults.

For example:

The data shows that in every theme and subtheme there is a flow of interactive engagement between children and adults. Actions and interactive conversations are recorded throughout the data. This is illustrated by the following extract from the data:

*Oliver and Mary run towards the swings.*

*O →CA+MI’m going to go on the swing.*

*CA →O On the swing. O →CA Mary’s having 10 goes and then it’s my go.*

*CA →O How many go’s? O →CA 10 CA →O 10 go’s. O →CA And then it’s my go. CA →O+M OK - Mary, are you going to count them?*

*Mary sits in the tyre swing and swings backwards and forwards*

*O+M+CA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10*

*The counting is very precise. There is nothing random about it.*

*O →M My go. M →O You have 10 go’s as well Oliver. O →M OK CA →O+M So Oliver’s having 10 go’s as well.*

*M →CA And then it’s my go. CA →M Are you going to stand here and count them, Mary?*

*Oliver swings.*

*CA+M+O 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.*

*Oliver gets off the swing.*

*M →O My go, my go.*

*The conversation is carried on with Oliver and Mary leaning against a tree near the tyre swing. CA →M Right, Mary – Mary, if you’ve done 10 swings and Oliver’s done 10 swings how many*

*altogether – how many swings altogether?*

*O →CA 13 CA →O+M 10 and 10 more. O →CA 6 M →CA  6 CA →O+M But 10 is more than 6 – so it’s got to be more than 10. 10 and another 10.*

*M →CA 10 then Mary thinks a bit and repeats 10.*

*CA  →O+M Right, let’s put our fingers up and see.*

*Oliver and Mary put their hands up, with their fingers spread out. =*

*CA →M You’ve got 10 fingers and Oliver’s got 10 fingers – right – I’ll count them all – I’ll count them all and you - I mean I’ll touch them, and you count.*

*O →CA It’s 15, I think.*

*I touch each finger in turn.*

*M →CA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. 9. 10, What comes after 10?*

*O →CA 11 O+M 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 CA →O+M 20, 20 fingers altogether. CA →M Your turn, add on Oliver’s turn – 20.*

*………………………………………..*

In this extract from the data, the child-led activity of swinging leads on to a child-led number activity, introduced by Oliver, enabling Oliver and Mary to take turns fairly. I then engage with them, asking questions that will extend their understanding of numbers, and there is child/adult joint engagement in solving a number problem. This data extract illustrates a flow of information across the pedagogical zones.

**7.2.5 The recursive cycle of curriculum planning**

The varied pedagogical interactions inform a recursive cycle of curriculum planning. In Wood’s original model the cycle starts with observation and leads on to assessing, reflecting, and evaluating; planning the environment; and planning activities and the adult’s role (Wood, 2010). Wood says: “Planning can be informed by the children’s play and practitioners can inspire further play by making or responding to suggestions.” (Wood, 2013, p. 73).

As I explored Wood’s model, the recursive cycle of curriculum planning became a dynamic, interactive process between children and adults. It developed from a recursive cycle to a more complicated structure.

**7.3 Expanding the original model of integrated pedagogical approaches**

I have explored Wood’s original model of integrated curriculum and pedagogical approaches in my research and then expanded it. It has been brought to life through the dynamic practices in the setting of Woodharp Nursery School. I have used Wood’s model as a framework and then added another dimension of sociocultural influences and interactive planning. Wood acknowledges that how the curriculum is experienced by children will be influenced by dimensions of diversity and by children’s interests, working theories and funds of knowledge (Wood, 2013). In the expanded model of integrated pedagogy these sociocultural dimensions are made visible. Rogoff (2003) argues that culture is profoundly situated within every aspect of our lives and that culturally responsive provision enables children to participate and learn. The expanded pedagogical model can potentially facilitate culturally responsive provision for children.

**7.4 Sociocultural background to the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches**

Vygotsky’s work has laid the foundation for sociocultural theoretical framing as an attempt to understand children’s development (Hedges and Cooper 2016).

According to Vygotsky (1978) children do not simply imitate what they see and hear around them, but they also have the capacity to make meanings out of what is proximal to them. This leads to the re-organising of their thinking and speech and the development of their learning. The meanings children make may not be the same as the meanings of adults. They may not be the same as the meanings of other children with different life experiences and sociocultural backgrounds. Children are not just imitating; they have the capacity to be meaning-makers and independent thinkers. According to Vygotsky there needs to be a social context for this learning and development to occur, including joint or collaborative productive activity. Respect for children’s meaning making and independent thinking is important in co-constructive learning and joint engagement. Vygotsky’s sociocultural principles, and the sociocultural theory that has been developed by more recent sociocultural research, are an integral part of the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches. If children can make their own meanings from their experiences, then adults need to understand and take account of their perspectives.

In my model and in my research, children and adults are involved in social exchanges, joint engagement, and the co-construction of the curriculum, leading to the development of their learning.

For example:

In ‘Theme A: Imaginative play - The Gruffalo’, the adults were seeing an activity as a walk through the woods. Harry was imagining it as a setting for the Gruffalo story. Harry had a different perception and meaning for the activity. Through conversation and social interaction, the child and adults managed to understand one another. A Gruffalo activity was planned for the following week. Harry struggled to make himself understood, but he was drawing on his funds of knowledge about the story and persevering through his language difficulties. In this instance the adults involved, knowing Harry’s difficulties with speech, took extra time to listen and interpret what he was saying. This is an example of joint engagement and collaborative effort in understanding a child’s meaning, leading to the development of the curriculum and subsequent learning opportunities.

Stephen confirms the significance of sociocultural influences on pedagogy in early years education:

Adopting a sociocultural perspective on learning means being concerned with the influence of the contexts in which children learn, how learning varies with social and cultural experiences and the ways in which adults, other children, tools and resources support and shape learning. For those who adopt the sociocultural approach acting and thinking with others drives learning and at the heart of that process is dialogue and interaction. (Stephen, 2010, pp. 20,21)

In the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches, I have made visible the sociocultural dimension of integrated pedagogy that underpins Wood’s original model. I have shown the lower part of Wood’s model as a three-dimensional ovoid where sociocultural influences on children’s choices are shown on one side and sociocultural influences on adult’s choices are shown on the other side. These sociocultural influences affect child/adult engagements and interactions. Examples of sociocultural influences on children’s choices and adult choices in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches will now be considered.

**7.4.1 Sociocultural influences on children’s choices**

There will be different sociocultural influences on children’s choices in different cultures. The list given in my expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches shows examples of sociocultural influences in my research. These are funds of identity, funds of knowledge, children’s interests, working theories, personality, and neurodiversity.

For example:

Funds of identity - Arnold has a Polish identity. He has a Polish family who speak Polish at home. The data shows that his English is limited, and this affects his social interactions with others. In the research data more of his actions are recorded than his speech. He communicates with smiles and gestures, as well as words.

Funds of knowledge – There are many examples of children’s funds of knowledge throughout all the themes in the research. For example, in ‘Theme A – Imaginative Play’, Oliver and Mary have funds of knowledge about pirates, and this enables them to co-construct the pirate activity with me. Harry has funds of knowledge about the Gruffalo story which enables him to imagine that the Gruffalo might be hiding in the deep, dark wood. Greta has funds of knowledge about jungles and animals, and this initiates the jungle subtheme. The children’s funds of knowledge enrich interactions with the adults and facilitate joint engagement, and co-constructive planning.

Children’s interests – Every subtheme in the research is based on children’s interests. Some interests become evident through observation of children’s play and activities. Some of the children’s interests are revealed in conversations. For example, when Arnold and Greta play with water, they laugh and express joy. Arnold persists with the water play for 45 minutes. His reactions and activity highlight his interest in water. Oliver’s interest in weather emerges through a conversation about the weather forecast. The conversation leads on to a discussion about clouds, rain, thunder, and lightning. When children’s interests inform curriculum development, they tend to be more engaged in the activities.

Working theories – As children play, they extend their understandings and show curiosity about the world around them. They develop working theories to make sense of their world. If adults tune into children’s working theories, they can use them to extend children’s learning. In my research Mary expresses a working theory about mud. She thinks that if you add water to mud it might turn into clay. This leads to an activity that involves mixing water and mud, in a mud kitchen, to test out this theory. Working theories can lead to deeper understanding of how adults can interact with children to take their learning forwards.

Personality – Children’s personalities affect how they make their choices. For example, in my research, Melody is shy. This sometimes causes her to draw back from activities and watch what other children are doing rather than take part. However, the data in my research shows that when adults support and encourage her, she is enabled to engage with other children and take part in activities.

Neurodiversity – Children’s neurodiversity affects how they think, communicate, and learn. In my research Oliver has lots of creative ideas and excellent language skills. He tends to jump from one topic to another and sometimes has difficulty listening and taking in information. He demonstrates enhanced creativity and original thinking. His neurodiversity affects how he relates to others and his ability to co-construct plans and activities. Oliver is later found to be dyslexic. In this research his dyslexia is a strength as his original thinking and creative energy contribute to discussions and the development of activities.

**7.4.2 Sociocultural influences on adults’ choices**

Adults from different cultures will reflect sociocultural differences in how they interact with children. In my research the adults have a responsibility to keep children safe, to work with government policies, and to respect setting policies. They have different backgrounds, life experiences and personalities. They have varied training, experience, and ideas about pedagogical approaches. In working within the EYFS framework, practitioners currently have to manage the inherent tensions between the transmissive/directive and emergent/responsive pedagogical approaches. The former will tend to encourage a more adult-directed approach, to fulfil prescribed goals. The latter will focus on joint engagement and co-construction of a curriculum that emerges in response to children’s interests, choices, and ideas. These sociocultural influences will affect how adults interact with children in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches.

For example:

My own practitioner training and experience affect my practice. I have completed Bed Hons degree in Maths and Education, followed by postgraduate studies in two other universities and an Early Years Professional Status award. In addition, I have been a practitioner in Woodharp Nursery School for over 30 years. This combination of training and experience affects how I relate to children and engage with them. I respect Government and setting policies, but I am also interested in developing an emerging curriculum through integrated pedagogical approaches.

**7.5 Curriculum planning in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches**

The recursive cycle of curriculum planning through observing, assessing, reflecting, evaluating, and planning, in Wood’s original model of integrated pedagogy (Wood, 2010) becomes three-dimensional in the expanded model. The circle becomes a sphere in which adults interacting with children in a range of activities leads on to observing, assessing, reflecting, evaluating; planning the environment, and planning activities and adult roles, but not necessarily in that order.

For example:

Planning for the pirate activity is shared between Oliver, Mary, and me, with all of us having ideas and making suggestions. Later, additional planning takes place between the adults in the setting who reflect on the children’s interest in pirates and consider how to facilitate their ideas.

The sequence goes:

*Observation of children’s play > Adult’s suggestion of activity next week > Adult/Child shared reflection and assessment of what pirates need > Child/Adult joint planning of activity > Adult reflection and preparation of roles, resources, and environment*

In this instance, the initial observation is made by Oliver and Mary who watch other children playing a pirate game in the tree. This is an example of a ‘*child -> child’* observation. The adult is also observing, in a ‘*adult -> child’* observation. The sequence then goes straight to planning an activity for next week. This is suggested by me in an ‘*adult -> child’* interaction. This is followed by interactive reflection and assessment of what pirates need, and joint planning of the activity in *‘child -> adult’* and *‘adult -> child’* interactions. Finally, the adults discuss what resources will be needed for this activity and plan the environment in ‘*adult -> adult’* interactions.

In the expanded model of pedagogical approaches, the planning of the curriculum becomes a dynamic, co-constructed process between children and adults, arising from the flow of information from the two pedagogical zones of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. There can be different sequences of planning. In the example above the sequence is:

Observation -> Planning activities -> Reflection and assessment -> Planning activities -> Reflection -> Planning resources and adult roles -> Planning environment

The arrows in the sphere in the upper part of the model allow for different sequences of curriculum planning and show dynamic flexibility in the planning process. The different child and adult interactions are shown on the top right-hand side of the model.

**7.6 Relationships in integrated pedagogy**

In the centre of the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches is a red line labelled ‘relationships.’ Every part of the model involves relationships. In adult-directed activities, children are involved. In child-initiated activities, adults are involved. In the development of the curriculum, children and adults are working together. Relationships are at the heart of the model. Respect and trust between adults and children are integral to the effective working of integrated pedagogy.

Hedges and Cooper highlight the significance of pedagogical relationships for conceptual learning:

Conceptual learning can be achieved over different time frames, and may take indirect steps, as teachers make the most of different opportunities to employ their professional knowledge and skill to draw out children’s own understandings, name concepts, deepen conversation and utilise experiences that develop understandings in thoughtful, proactive, and respectful ways (Hedges & Cooper 2018 pp. 380,381).

Conceptual learning is also achieved through what Rogoff (2003) refers to as the mutual bridging of meaning that develops between people as they interact. In my research the data shows close working relationships between adults and children and a depth of shared understandings and respect that illustrates how integrated pedagogy can work in practice.

**7.7 Chapter conclusion**

In this chapter the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches has been explained and illustrated by examples from my research. It is based on the original model developed by Wood (2010) but made into a three-dimensional model which includes sociocultural theory. It has added dynamism where children and adults are interacting in curriculum planning as well as in carrying out activities. The model draws attention to curriculum and pedagogical processes and to the co-constructive nature of learning.

**Chapter 8: Conclusion**

**8.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the thesis in relation to the research question: What is the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years?

**8.2 Methodology and participants**

My practitioner researcher’s case study using ethnographic methods, based on the principles of constructionism and interpretivism, is unique. I have been immersed in the field for over 30 years in this setting that I originally founded. I used reflexive thematic analysis as a framework for my research. I have collected data from the setting and have been both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ during this research. My ‘insider’ positioning and researcher subjectivity have been a valuable resource in the reflexive thematic analysis. I chose to video and transcribe almost all the conversations and actions of the children who were the subjects of this research on Friday afternoons so that I could study the data and pick out codes and themes. This was very time consuming, but it did potentially make the research more thorough.

Berg says:

To be reflexive is to have an ongoing conversation with yourself…The ideal result from this process is reflexive knowledge: information that provides insights into the workings of the world and insights on how that knowledge came to be (Berg, 2009, p. 198).

The methodology used in this research was effective for investigating the research question. The data collected, together with the analysis, provided insights into how the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments supported children’s learning.

The work at Woodharp Nursery School is not based on anyone else’s model of education, nor does the curriculum follow a pattern dictated by a central management team. The staff team are open to exploring new ideas and seek to create what they believe is best practice in early years education. This gives the research an extra dimension of integrity and originality. The positive and supportive staff attitudes gave me the freedom to explore Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy (Wood, 2010), and to develop it into the expanded model of integrated pedagogy.

The outdoor session on Friday afternoons and the mix of children we had at that time provided the ideal combination of environment and participants for exploring Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy (Wood, 2010). At the time of data collection, there were two 4-year-old children with summer birthdays who had deferred entry to school for a year. This enabled the research to include the two eldest children in the group, the two youngest and the two in the middle, all of whom had summer birthdays. Each pair of children were approximately one year apart in age. There was also a boy and a girl in each age group. These children were not typical, but the research did give an example of how integrated pedagogy worked in this case with these children, in the specific outdoor environment in and around Woodharp Nursery School, and the potential for supporting learning that resulted. In conclusion, this is a small-scale research project but one that gives interesting insights into the research question.

**8.3 Integrated pedagogy – the development of the original model**

This research brings to life Wood’s original model of integrated pedagogical approaches (Wood, 2010). Evidence of the integration of child-led and adult-led practice was present throughout the analysis of data, in all the themes and subthemes of the research. There were opportunities for children’s learning and development in the different activities and in the emerging co-constructed curriculum. The theory of integrated pedagogy, as presented by Wood (2010), developed into a living, breathing, more complex three-dimensional framework, the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches. The latter is an original theoretical model that makes a unique contribution to understanding early years pedagogy. It builds on Wood’s original model by making visible the sociocultural influences on the choices of children and adults. It demonstrates a co-constructed development of the curriculum through the joint engagement of children and adults.

Through this research, I became aware of how the data highlighted Vygotsky’s principles of the importance of social relationships, mediation and working in the zone of proximal development (1978). The research also showed examples of sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009), and the sociocultural theories of funds of knowledge (Hedges & Cooper, 2016), funds of identity (Hedges, 2020) and working theories (Lovatt & Hedges, 2015). Throughout the research and in every theme picked out for analysis there were a range of interactions between adults and children. There was so much interaction and communication in the transcripts of the video data that choosing which themes to analyse was challenging. Adults were constantly being knowledgeable participants alongside children during play (Hedges & Cooper, 2018). The approach of the adults towards the children in this study showed a high level of intuition, empathy, respect and understanding. These attitudes helped the children to develop trust and openness. The reciprocal relationships enriched the social and communicative encounters between children and adults. The new, expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches makes sociocultural dimensions visible and includes the importance of relationships running through the centre of the model.

**8.4 Integrated pedagogy, the curriculum and learning**

The content and characteristics of the child/adult interactions and the outcomes for learning are different across the age-groups in this research. The children have a variety of funds of identity, funds of knowledge and working theories.

The 4-year-olds have detailed discussions with adults and are able to share in the planning for activities and making suggestions for resources. They are capable and confident in giving their opinions and having ideas. They express many interesting working theories. They can be absorbed in tasks for relatively long periods of time. They fulfil many EYFS goals in every activity, but their learning goes deeper and wider than these goals.

The 3-year-olds are more action-orientated and enjoy physical exploration. They depend on the interaction with adults to extend activities but are keen to join in. Harry has more language but is difficult to understand. Melody is shy but she opens up and becomes much more expressive with the encouragement and support of an adult. The 3-year-olds have good ideas and enjoy extending their learning, but they need more adult support than the 4-year-olds to do this.

The 2-year-olds particularly enjoy sensory activities. Communication is more of a challenge with the 2-year-olds. Arnold has good understanding but very few English words because his first language is Polish. Greta is quite tired in the afternoons. Nevertheless, the adults do find ways to interact with them and can work out their interests through what they choose to do while playing. The plans for the 2-year-old’s activities are more adult-directed but are still based on their interests.

One of the surprising findings to come out of the research is that, even though the content and characteristics of the child/adult interactions and the outcomes for learning are different across the age-groups, a model of integrated pedagogy can still be put into practice and show the potential for learning.

The research gives an example of a rich and varied curriculum that is developed through integrated pedagogy around the child’s interests, choices and working theories, in the outdoor environment. The curriculum that emerges is considered in detail in the discussion chapter. Sometimes the planning is intentional and sometimes the curriculum emerges ‘in the moment’. In this research, the child and the child’s interests are at the heart of the process, in all the age-groups. This principle is endorsed by researchers such as Hedges and Cooper (2016) and Wood and Hedges (2016). Wood and Hedges argue:

Children’s joint engagement and participation indicate that the environment becomes more meaningful for them through their own thinking, actions, and interactions. Therefore knowledge-building is inherently bound with agency, control, power, and identities (Wood & Hedges, 2016 p. 400).

Curriculum should be seen as incorporating dynamic working practises, specifically what children choose to do and talk about with each other, and what practitioners enact with children to support their learning and development in a variety of ways – through play-based provision, through reciprocal relationships, as well as through intentional and responsive teaching (Wood & Hedges, 2016, p. 401).

My research offers a living and dynamic illustration of these principles of curriculum development. In this research, what the children are learning, and the meeting of EYFS goals, are outcomes of the curriculum but not the focus in themselves. The children and their interests are the starting point of the curriculum development and learning. If the goals are used in this way rather than as learning objectives in themselves, they have value as a guide to making reasonable assessments of children’s progress and development. Throughout the analysis of data there are references to the EYFS learning goals which are met in the context of the activities. In the discussion chapter, it was seen that learning in the early years is much more complex, multi-dimensional and centred in relationships and social exchanges than can be contained in a list of goals that have been achieved. Although many EYFS goals were achieved, as shown in the research data, in many cases they did not really show the depth of learning and development that was being experienced by the children. The problem is that whereas EYFS goals may be measurable (even if they try to measure unmeasurable learning experiences), depth of learning through social exchanges, exploration, and investigation, with children’s interests as a starting point, does not fit into neat assessment criteria. Nevertheless, however learning is defined, it is a clear conclusion that the integrated pedagogy practised in this research supported children’s learning in all the age-groups in deep and meaningful ways. The Woodharp setting allowed for original, ground-breaking research into how integrated pedagogy can be practised in an outdoor environment. The outdoor environment itself was extensive and varied, contributing to the originality of the research.

This research has shown the potential of the integration of child-led and adult-led activities in outdoor environments for supporting children’s learning in the early years. However, it is also true that the children’s learning is supported more in some areas of development than others. For example, there is not a great deal of literacy or numeracy. In practise, at Woodharp Nursery School, the morning sessions include some indoor adult-directed activities that help to build a foundation for the development of skills in these areas of learning, along with songs, rhymes and interactive discussions built around a topic that is of interest to the children. There is also free play inside and outside. These planned activities are more structured, even if introduced playfully, and fall more into the ‘adult-directed’, ‘work/non-play’ category in Wood’s model (Wood, 2010). However, there is always room for child/adult interactions and deviation from the plan.

This research shows that building a curriculum primarily through children’s interests can be achieved, (with joint interaction from children and adults) and can lead to high levels of motivation and enjoyment in learning. It is this love of learning, and the excitement of learning that I would argue is the most important thing for children to experience in their early years. This research shows that, when the curriculum is built around their interests, and adults and children work together, children can be engaged and inspired.

In an article in *The Times* Magazine, Rachel Sylvester writes an article about a radical approach to education in the Netherlands in a school called ‘Agora’:

“We start with you,” the school tells its pupils, who range from 12 to 18 years old. “What do you want to learn? What are your talents, interests, and ambitions?” It could not be more different from the traditional English education system, but the innovative approach has become increasingly popular in the Netherlands, where happiness is valued as much as academic outcomes (Sylvester, 2022, p. 42).

Sylvester says that Agora has come about because of the autonomy given to head teachers that has enabled them to be innovative and experimental. In this research project at Woodharp Nursery School, our exploration of Wood’s model of integrated pedagogy and its effectiveness for children’s learning has also been innovative and experimental. We have left the indoors behind and looked at new ways of engaging with children. We have put integrated pedagogy into practise. We have developed a new model of integrated pedagogy. We have based the co-constructed curriculum on children’s play and self-chosen activities in the outdoor environment.

Although Agora is in the Netherlands and the children are aged 12-18, the principle of starting with the children and building a curriculum around their interests, is an educational ideal that has been applied in this research. Children’s happiness and well-being has been highly valued, and children’s ideas have been respected. The results of the analysis of data show that these approaches have enhanced children’s learning. The idea of ‘starting with the children’ and then engaging with them to extend and develop their learning opportunities, is not new in early years education, but the principle has perhaps been lost amidst the avalanche of bureaucracy, assessments and inspections that have affected early years settings and the way in which they frame children’s play and education.

**8.5 Integrated pedagogy and contemporary government policy**

The practice of integrated pedagogy could be applied in any early years setting. However, its implementation is problematic in the current political climate. The expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches involves developing a curriculum through the co-construction of activities and joint engagement of children and adults. It is based on socio-cultural perspectives and emergent/responsive pedagogical approaches.

Ofsted have produced a research review, in November 2022, that privileges a cultural transmission/directive approach to the early years curriculum and pedagogy (Ofsted, 2022). From this perspective, the role of educators is to transmit socially approved forms of knowledge, skills and understanding to children. In the review there are references to ‘teaching’, ‘explicit teaching’, ‘direct instruction’, and ‘guided play’. These words all have a bias towards adult-directed activity, and a ‘top-down’ approach to early years education. In the introduction to the review, it is implied that ‘preparing children for school and for learning separate subjects’ are some of the principal purposes of early education (Ofsted, 2022, p.3). There is little mention of child-led play and only a negative reference to planning a curriculum based on a child’s interests. The curriculum is seen as:

A framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage… It determines what learners will know and be able to go on to do by the time they have finished that stage of their education (Ofsted, 2022, p.11).

At the end of the review a summary is given of the main points (Ofsted, 2022, p.17). I have highlighted in red all the phrases that privilege adults’ responsibilities in the summary below:

**Based on this research review, high-quality curriculum and pedagogy may have the following features:**

* The curriculum considers what **all** children should learn. It offers plenty of opportunity for children who are disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language to learn and practise speaking and listening.
* Practitioners choose activities and experiences **after** they have determined the curriculum. The most appropriate activities and experiences then help to secure the children’s intended learning.
* Adults think carefully about what children already know and can do when deciding what to teach first.
* Children with gaps in their knowledge get the additional teaching they need so that they can access the same curriculum as their peers.
* Practitioners consider a child’s interests when choosing activities and they expand children’s interests, to make progress in all areas of learning.
* Children’s play is valued and is used to teach many aspects of the curriculum. Their learning through play is enhanced by skilful adult intervention.
* Explicit teaching is used to introduce children to new knowledge and followed up by practice through play.

In this model of pedagogy adults plan the curriculum, decide what children should learn, choose activities, intervene, and use explicit teaching to introduce children to new knowledge. This is a strongly prescriptive, adult-directed approach to early years education with a narrow outcome-focused agenda.

Although the practice of integrated pedagogy could be applied in any early years setting, the government is making this difficult by advocating a primarily adult-directed approach. All early years settings in England are subject to Ofsted inspections. Their inspectors base their understanding of the quality of education on the criteria in their inspection framework (Ofsted, 2022, p.9). Their inspection framework follows their own principles of what constitutes high quality early years education. This makes following a different model of pedagogy, such as that advocated in the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches, challenging and risky. The model itself is complex. It involves sensitive interaction with children and professional expertise in working out how to prioritise children’s ideas and interests in developing the curriculum. The risk is that Ofsted may not rate a setting highly that is pursuing a different model of pedagogy. I would argue that the quality of learning experiences and engagement in learning that is shown in this research make it a risk worth taking.

**8.6 Implications of the research**

This research shows that, rather than basing early years education predominantly on educational goals and government reviews that privilege adult-directed knowledge acquisition, it could be based on a sociocultural model such as integrated pedagogy. The expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches offers potential for practitioners in early years pedagogy to engage with theory that could underpin their practice. Stephen says: “The reasons why practitioners are still reluctant to engage with pedagogical discussion or find it difficult to articulate the practices they adopt to support learning, warrant further research” (Stephen, 2010, p.18). When the government gives such strong direction to early years practitioners, as in the recent Ofsted review for early years (Ofsted, 2022), this may discourage practitioners from engaging with pedagogical discussion about alternative models of pedagogy. However, this research shows how effective the model of integrated pedagogy, combined with the application of sociocultural theory can be in promoting children’s learning in the early years. The expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches is an original model that could be used in early years settings to inform practice if practitioners are willing to take up the challenge and work with children in new ways.

The outdoor environment is also integral to the results of this research as it inspired and interested the children across all the age-groups in so many ways. In a national culture that is trying to encourage children to be more active, the outdoor environment offers an ideal space for a greater range of physical activities, and it is desirable that children should experience this environment at an early age. This research shows that the outdoor environment can offer a full range of learning experiences and is so much more than ‘a place to play’.

**8.7 Recommendations for future research**

Future research is needed into the value of an interests-based curriculum in early years education in the outdoor environment and the relevance of the current pedagogical approaches and methods of assessment of learning. The current policy-led recommendations for practice may consolidate the predominance of adult-led activities. In addition, the assessment of children’s achievements may satisfy the accountability agenda, but do not give realistic or meaningful information about the breadth and depth of children’s learning and development. Whilst it is difficult for teachers and practitioners to challenge current early childhood education policies, further research is needed on how they find different ways to enact pedagogy and curriculum in different types of settings.

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Appendix 1: EYFS goals (2014)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PSED)** | | |
| **22-36 months** | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1. Making relationships** |  |  |
| 1.1 interested in others' play and starting to join in. | 1.5 Can play in a group, extending and elaborating play ideas, e.g. building up a role-play activity with other children. | 1.9 Initiates conversations. attends to and takes account of what others say. |
| 1.2 Seeks out others to share experiences. | 1.6 Initiates play, offering cues to peers to join them. | 1.10 Explains own knowledge and understanding and asks appropriate questions of others. |
| 1.3 Shows affection and concern for people who are special to them. | 1.7 Keeps play going by responding to what others are saying or doing. | 1.11 Takes steps to resolve conflicts with other children, e.g., finding a compromise. |
| 1.4 May form a special friendship with another child. | 1.8 Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adults. |  |
| **2. Self-confidence and self-awareness** | |  |
| 2.1 Separates from main carer with support and encouragement from a familiar adult. | 2.3 Can select and use activities and resources with help. | 2.9 Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions. |
| 2.2 Expresses own preferences and interests. | 2.4 Welcomes and values praise for what they have done. | 2.10 Can describe self in positive terms and talk about abilities. |
|  | 2.5 Enjoys responsibility of carrying out small tasks. |  |
|  | 2.6 Is more outgoing towards unfamiliar people and more confident in new social situations. |  |
|  | 2.7 Conﬁdent to talk to other children when playing and will communicate freely about own home and community. |  |
|  | 2.8 Shows conﬁdence in asking adults for help. |  |
| **3. Manage feelings and behaviour** | |  |
| 3.1 Seeks comfort from familiar adults when needed. | 3.9 Aware of own feelings and knows that some actions and words can hurt others’ feelings. | 3.13 Understands that own actions affect other people, for example, becomes upset or tries to comfort another child when they realise they have upset them. |
| 3.2 Can express their own feelings such as sad, happy, cross scared, worried. | 3.10 Begin to accept the needs of others and can take turns and share resources, sometimes with support from others. | 3.14 Aware of the boundaries set, and of behavioural expectations in the setting. |
| 3.3 Responds to the feelings and wishes of others. | 3.11 Can usually tolerate delay when needs are not immediately met and understands wishes may not always be met. | 3.15 Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression, e.g., when someone has taken their toy. |
| 3.4 Aware that some actions can hurt or harm others. | 3.12 Can usually adapt behaviour to different events, social situations, and changes in time. |  |
| 3.5 Tries to help or give comfort when others are distressed. |  |  |
| 3.6 Shows understanding and cooperates with some boundaries and routines. |  |  |
| 3.7 Can inhibit own actions/behaviours. e.g. stop themselves from doing something they shouldn't do. |  |  |
| 3.8 Growing ability to distract self when upset. e.g. by engaging in a new play activity. |  |  |
| **COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE (CL)** | |  |
| **22-36 months** | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1. Listening and attention** |  |  |
| 1.1 Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories | 1.5 Listens to others one to one or in small groups when conversation interests them. | 1.10 Maintains attention, concentrates, and sits quietly during appropriate activity. |
| 1.2 Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds. e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door. | 1.6 Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. | 1.11 Two channelled attention - can listen and do for short span. |
| 1.3 Shows interest in play with sounds, songs and rhymes. | 1.7 Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. |  |
| 1.4 Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained — using child's name helps focus. | 1.8 Focusing attention — still listens or does but can shift own attention. |  |
|  | 1.9 Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity). |  |
| **2. Understanding** |  |  |
| 2.1 Identiﬁes action words by pointing to the right picture. | 2.5 Understands use of objects. | 2.9 Responds to Instructions involving a two-part sequence. |
| 2.2 Understands more complex sentences, e.g. 'Put your toys away and then we'll read a book'. | 2.6 Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. | 2.10 Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. |
| 2.3 Understands 'who', what', ‘where' in simple questions. | 2.7 Responds to simple instructions, e.g., to get or put away an object. | 2.11 Able to follow a story without pictures or props. |
| 2.4 Developing understanding of simple concepts (e.g., big/little). | 2.8 Beginning to understand ‘why’ and ‘how' questions. | 2.12 Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion. |
| **3. Speaking** |  |  |
| 3.1 Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings. experiences and thoughts. | 3.8 Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g., using and, because) | 3.17 Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming. exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. |
| 3.2 Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. | 3.9 Can retell a past simple event in correct order. | 3.18 Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. |
| 3.3 Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. | 3.10 Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening, anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. | 3.19 Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. |
| 3.4 Uses gestures, sometimes with limited talk, e.g., reaches towards toy, saying 'I have it'. | 3.11 Questions why things happen and gives explanations. | 3.20 Uses talk to organise, sequence, and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings. and events. |
| 3,5 Uses a variety of questions, e.g. what, where, who. | 3.12 Use a range of tenses. | 3.21 Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play. |
| 3.6 Uses simple sentences, e.g. 'Mummy gonna work'. | 3.13 Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others. |  |
| 3.7 Beginning to use word endings e.g. going, cats. | 3.14 Uses vocab focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them. |  |
|  | 3.15 Builds up vocab that reflects the breadth of their experiences. |  |
|  | 3.16 Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play. |  |

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| **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)** | |  |
| **22-36 months** | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1. Moving and handling** |  |  |
| 1.1 Runs safely on whole foot. | 1.11 Moves freely and with pleasure and with confidence in a range of ways, such as rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding, and hopping | 1.22 Experiments with different ways of moving. |
| 1.2 Squats with steadiness to rest or play with object on the ground and rises to feet without using hands. | 1.12 Mounts stairs, steps or climbing equipment using alternate feet. | 1.23 Jumping off an object and lands appropriately. |
| 1.3 Climbs confidently and is beginning to pull themselves up on nursery climbing equipment. | 1.13 Walks downstairs, two feet to each step while carrying a small object. | 1.24 Negotiates space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children, adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles. |
| 1.4 Can kick a large ball. | 1.14 Runs skilfully and negotiates space successfully adjusting speed or direction to avoid obstacles. | 1.25 Travels with confidence and skill around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment. |
| 1.5 Turns pages in a book, sometimes several at once. | 1.15 Can stand momentarily on one foot when shown. | 1.26 shows increasing control over an object in pushing, patting, throwing, catching, or kicking it. |
| 1.6 Shows control in holding and using jugs to pour, hammers, books and mark-making tools. | 1.16 Can catch a large ball. | 1.27 Using simple tools to effect changes to materials. |
| 1.7 Beginning to use three fingers (tripod grip) to hold writing tools. | 1.17 Draws lines and circles using gross motor movement. | 1.28 Handles tools, objects, construction, and malleable materials safely and with increasing control. |
| 1.8 Imitates drawing simple shapes such as circles and lines. | 1.18 Uses one-handed tools and equipment, e.g. makes snips in paper with child scissors. | 1.29 Shows a preference for a dominant hand. |
| 1.9 Walks upstairs or downstairs holding onto a rail two feet to a step. | 1.19 Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers, no longer using whole-hand grasp. | 1.3 Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines. |
| 1.10 May be beginning to show preference for dominant hand. | 1.20 Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control. | 1.31 Begins to form recognisable letters. |
|  | 1.21 Can copy some letters, e.g., letters from their name. | 1.32 Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed |
| **2. Health and self-care** |  |  |
| 2.1 Feeds self completely with spoon. | 2.7 Can tell adults when hungry or tired or when they want to rest or play. | 2.13 Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food. |
| 2.2 Drinks well without spilling. | 2.8 Observes the effect of activity on their bodies. | 2.14 Usually dry and clean during the day |
| 2.3 Clearly communicates their need for potty or toilet. | 2.9 Understands that equipment and tools have to be used safely. | 2.15 Shows some understanding that good practices with regard to exercise, eating, sleeping and hygiene can contribute to good health. |
| 2.4 Beginning to recognise danger and seeks support of significant adults for help. | 2.10 Gains more bowels and bladder control and can attend to toileting needs most of the time themselves. | 2.16 Shows understanding of need for safety when tackling new challenges. |
| 2.5 Helps with clothing, e.g., puts on hat, unzips zipper on jacket, takes off unbuttoned shirt. | 2.11 Can usually manage washing and drying hands. | 2.17 Shows understanding of how to transport and store equipment safely. |
| 2.6 Beginning to be independent in self-care but still often needs adult support. | 2.12 Dresses with help, e.g., puts arms into open-fronted coat or shirt when held up, pulls up own trousers, and pulls up zipper once it is fastened at the bottom. | 2.18 Practises some appropriate safety measures without direct supervision. |

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| **LITERACY (L)** |  |  |
| **22-36 months** | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1. Reading** |  |  |
| 1.1 Has some favourite stories, rhymes, songs, poems or jingles. | 1.4 Enjoys rhyming and rhythmic activities. | 1.20 Continues a rhyming string. |
| 1.2 Repeats words or phrases from familiar stories. | 1.5 Shows awareness of rhyme and alliteration | 1.21 Hears and says the initial sound in words. |
| 1.3 Fills in missing word or phrase in a known rhyme, story or game, e.g. 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a …'. | 1.6 Recognises rhyme in spoken words. | 1.22 Can segment the sounds in simple words and blend them together and knows which letters represent some of them. |
|  | 1.7 Listens to and joins in with stories and poems, one-to-one and also in small groups. | 1.23 Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet. |
|  | 1.8 Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases rhymes and stories. | 1.24 Begins to read words and simple sentences. |
|  | 1.9 Beginning to be aware of the way stories are structured. | 1.25 Uses vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by their experiences of books. |
|  | 1.10 Suggests how the story might end. | 1.26 Enjoys an increasing range of books. |
|  | 1.11 Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. | 1.27 Knows that information can be retrieved from books and computers. |
|  | 1.12 Describes main story setting, events, and principal characters. | |
|  | 1.13 Shows interest in illustrations and print in books and print in the environment. | **2. Writing** |
|  | 1.14 Recognises familiar words and signs such as own name advertising logos. | 2.4 Gives meaning to marks as they draw, write and paint. |
|  | 1.15 Looks at books independently. | 2.5 Begins to break the flow of speech into words. |
|  | 1.16 Handles books carefully. | 2.6 Continues a rhyming string. |
|  | 1.17 Knows information can be relayed in the form of print. | 2.7 Hears and says the initial sound in words. |
|  | 1.18 Holds books the correct way up and turns pages. | 2.8 Can segment the sounds in simple words and blend them together. |
|  | 1.19 Knows that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom. | 2.9 Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet. |
| **2. Writing** |  | 2.10 Uses some clearly identifiable |
| 2.1 Distinguishes between the different marks they make. | 2.2 Sometimes gives meaning to marks as they draw and paint. | letters to communicate meaning, representing some sounds correctly and in sequence. |
|  | 2.3 Ascribes meanings to marks that they see in different places. | 2.11 Writes own name and other things such as labels and captions. |
|  |  | 2.12 Attempts to write short sentences in meaningful context. |
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| **UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD (UW)** | |  |
| **22-36 months** | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1. People and Communities** |  |  |
| 1.1 Has a sense of own immediate family and relations. | 1.5 Shows interest in the lives of people who are familiar to them. | 1.10 Enjoys joining in with family customs and routines. |
| 1.2 In pretend play, imitates everyday actions and events from own family and cultural background, e.g., making and drinking tea. | 1.6 Remembers and talks about significant events in their own experience. |  |
| 1.3 Beginning to have their own friends. | 1.7 Recognises and describes special times or events for family or friends. |  |
| 1.4 Learns that they have similarities and differences that connect them to and distinguish them from others. | 1.8 Shows interest in different occupations and ways of life. |  |
|  | 1.9 Knows some of the things that make them unique and can talk about some of the differences and similarities in relation to friends or family. |  |
| **2. The World** |  |  |
| 2.1 Enjoys playing with small world models such as a farm, a garage or a train track. | 2.3 Comments and asks questions about aspects of their familiar world such as the place where they live or the natural world. | 2.8 Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns, and change. |
| 2.2 Notices detailed features of objects in their environment. | 2.4 Can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects. |  |
|  | 2.5 Talks about why things happen and how things work. |  |
|  | 2.6 Developing an understanding of growth, decay and changes over time. |  |
|  | 2.7 Shows care and concern for living things and the environment. |  |
| **3. Technology** |  |  |
| 3.1 Seeks to acquire basic skills in turning on and operating some ICT equipment. | 3.3 Knows how to operate simple equipment, e.g. turns on CD player and uses remote control. | 3.7 Completes a simple program on a computer. |
| 3.2 Operates mechanical toys, e.g. turns the knob on a wind-up toy or pulls back on a friction car. | 3.4 Shows an interest in technological toys with knobs or pulleys, or real objects such as cameras or mobile phones. | 3.6 Uses ICT hardware to interact with age-appropriate computer software. |
|  | 3.5 Shows skill in making toys work by pressing parts or lifting flaps to achieve effects such as sound, movements or new images. |  |
|  | 3.6 Knows that information can be retrieved from computers. |  |

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| **EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN (EAD)** | |  |
| **22-36 months** | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1.Exploring and using media** | **and materials** |  |
| 1.1 Joins in singing favourite songs. | 1.5 Enjoys joining in with dancing and ring games. | 1.18 Begins to build a repertoire of songs and dances. |
| 1.2 Creates sounds by banging, shaking, tapping or blowing. | 1.6 Sings a few familiar songs. | 1.19 Explores the different sounds of instruments. |
| 1.3 Shows an interest in the way musical instruments sound. | 1.7 Beginning to move rhythmically. | 1.20 Explores what happens when they mix colours. |
| 1.4 Experiments with blocks, colours and marks. | 1.8 Imitates movement in response to music. | 1.21 Experiments to create different textures. |
|  | 1.9 Taps out simple repeated rhythms. | 1.22 Understands that different media can be combined to create new effects. |
|  | 1.10 Explores and learns how sounds can be changed. | 1.23 Manipulates materials to achieve a planned effect. |
|  | 1.11 Explores colour and how colours can be changed. | 1.24 Constructs with a purpose in mind, using a variety of resources. |
|  | 1.12 Understands that they can use lines to enclose a space, and then begin to use these shapes to represent objects. | 1.25 Uses simple tools and techniques competently and appropriately. |
|  | 1.13 Beginning to be interested in and describe the texture of things. | 1.26 Selects appropriate resources and adapts work where necessary. |
|  | 1.14 Use various construction materials. | 1.27 Selects tools and techniques needed to shape, assemble and join materials they are using. |
|  | 1.15 Beginning to construct, stacking blocks vertically and horizontally, making enclosures and creating spaces. |  |
|  | 1.16 Joins construction pieces together to build and balance. |  |
|  | 1.17 Realises tools can be used for a purpose. |  |
| **2. Being imaginative** |  |  |
| 2.1 Beginning to communicate, e.g. drawing a line and saying, 'That's me'. | 2.3 Developing preferences for forms of expression. | 2.13 Creates simple representations of events, people, and objects. |
| 2.2 Beginning to make believe by pretending. | 2.4 Uses movement to express feelings. | 2.14 Initiates new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences. |
|  | 2.5 Creates movement in response to music. | 2.15 Chooses particular colours to use for a purpose. |
|  | 2.6 Sings to self and makes up simple songs. | 2.16 Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play. |
|  | 2.7 Makes up rhythms. | 2.17 Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme. |
|  | 2.8 Notice what adults do, imitating what is observed and then doing it spontaneously when the adult is not there. | 2.18 Plays cooperatively as part of a group to develop and act out a narrative. |
|  | 2.9 Engages in imaginative role-play based on own first-hand experiences. |  |
|  | 2.10 Builds stories around toys, e.g., farm animals needing rescue from an armchair 'cliff'. |  |
|  | 2.11 Uses available resources to create props to support role play. |  |
|  | 2.12 Captures experiences and responses with a range of media, such as music, dance and paint, and other materials or words. |  |

**MATHEMATICS (M)**

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| **22-36 months** | | **30-50 months** | **40-60+ months** |
| **1. Numbers** | |  |  |
| 1.1 Selects a small number of objects from a group when asked, e.g., 'please give me one', 'please give me two'. | | 1.7 Uses some number names and number language spontaneously. | 1.20 Recognise some numerals of personal significance. |
| 1.2 Recites some number names in sequence. | | 1.8 Uses some number names accurately. | 1.21 Recognise numerals 1 to 5. |
| 1.3 creates and experiments with symbols and marks representing ideas of number. | | 1.9 Recites numbers in order to 10. | 1.22 Counts up to 3 or 4 objects by saying one number name for each item. |
| 1.4 Begins to make a comparison between quantities. | | 1.10 Knows that numbers identify how many objects are in a set. | 1.23 Counts actions or objects which cannot move. |
| 1.5 Uses some language of quantities, such as 'more' and 'a lot' added or taken away. | | 1.11 Beginning to represent numbers using fingers, marks on paper or pictures. | 1.24 Counts objects to 10 and beginning to count beyond 10. |
| 1.6 knows that a group of things changes in quantities. | | 1.12 Sometimes matches numeral and quantity correctly. | 1.25 Counts out up to six objects from a larger group. |
|  | | 1.13 Shows curiosity about numbers by offering comments or asking questions. | 1.26 Selects the correct numeral to represent 1 to 5 then 1 to 10 objects. |
|  | | 1.14 Compares two groups of objects, saying when they have the same number. | 1.27 Counts an irregular arrangement of up to ten objects. |
|  | | 1.15 Shows an interest in number problems. | 1.28 Estimates how many objects they can see and checks by counting them. |
|  | | 1.16 Separates a group of three or four objects in different ways, beginning to recognise that the total is still the same. | 1.29 Using the language of 'more' and 'fewer' to compare two sets of objects. |
|  | | 1.17 Shows an interest in representing numbers. | 1.30 Finds the total number of items in two groups by counting them all. |
|  | | 1.18 Shows an interest in representing number. | 1.31 Says the number that is one more than a given number. |
|  | | 1.19 Realises not only objects, but anything can be counted, including steps, claps, or jumps. | 1.32 Finds one more or one less from a group of up to five objects, then ten objects. |
|  | |  | 1.33 In practical activities and discussion, beginning to use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtraction. |
|  | |  | 1.34 Records, using marks that they can interpret and explain. |
|  | |  | 1.35 Begins to identify own mathematical problems based on own interests and fascinations. |
| **2.Shape,space & measure** | |  |  |
| 2.1 Notices simple shapes and patterns in pictures. | | 2.6 Shows an interest in shape or space by playing with shapes or making arrangements of objects. | 2.13 Beginning to use mathematical names for 'solid' 3D shapes and 'flat’ 2D shapes, and mathematical terms to describe. |
| 2.2 Beginning to categorise objects according to properties such as shape or size. | | 2.7 Shows awareness of similarities of shapes in the environment. | 2.14 Selects a particular named shape. |
| 2.3 Begins to use the language of size. | | 2.8 Uses positional language. | 2.15 Can describe their relative position such as 'behind' or 'next to'. |
| 2.4 Understands some talk about immediate past and future, e.g., 'before', 'later' or 'soon'. | | 2.9 Shows interest in shapes by sustained construction activities or by talking about shapes or arrangements. | 2.16 Orders two or three items by length or height. |
| 2.5 Anticipates specific time-based events such as mealtimes or home time. | | 2.10 Shows interest in shapes in the environment | 2.17 Orders two or three items by weight or capacity. |
|  | | 2.11 Uses shapes appropriately for tasks. | 2.18 Uses familiar objects and common shapes to create and recreate patterns and build models. |
|  | | 2.12 Beginning to talk about the shapes of everyday objects e.g. 'round' and 'tall'. | 2.19 Uses everyday language related to time |
|  | |  | 2.20 Beginning to use everyday language related to money. |
|  | |  | 2.21 Orders and sequences familiar events. |
|  | |  | 2.22 Measures short periods of time in simple ways. |

Appendix 2:

Example of letter sent to all colleagues working in the Friday afternoon session to inform them about the research.

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Appendix 3:

Example of staff participant consent form.

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Appendix 4:

Example of letter sent to parents with children attending the Friday afternoon session to inform them about the research.

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Appendix 5:

Examples of participant consent forms.

A piece of paper with writing on it

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Appendix 6:

List of children attending on Friday afternoon sessions while the research was being carried out and participant consent forms received.

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Appendix 7:

Ethics approval letter from the University of Sheffield

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Appendix 8:

Larger version of the expanded model of integrated pedagogical approaches

