



Outdoor Philosophy for Children trips - Case Study

Philosophy for Children Outdoor Learning sessions, at East Lancashire LCC Spring Wood with Padiham St Leonard's Primary School, autumn 2020

Partnership with:

The Ernest Cook Trust, through the funding of the Outdoor Learning Officer (Alison Cross) within the **Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership (PHLP)** project. The PHLP is led by the **Forest of Bowland AONB** and funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**. The objective of the Outdoor Learning officer is to help schools embed outdoor learning, use the local landscape as an expansion on the classroom and to invite young people to get involved in the various PHLP projects.

Little Chatters is run by Gina Parker (Mullarkey), offering support for schools in Philosophy for Children (P4C), Outdoor and Global Learning. Gina has worked with **St Leonard's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School in Padiham** for over 3 years via a contract with the **Society for Advancing Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERRE)** and their linked **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)** project. The school has achieved their SAPERE Philosophy for children (P4C) Silver Award through their work.

Definitions:

Outdoor Learning – is the practise of being in the natural world, while developing knowledge, skills and understanding. This can be through discovery, connection with the environment, adventure or experimentation. Sessions are planned, tailored and flexible learning experiences, designed to enrich and enhance the national curriculum. The benefits to the participants are improved wellbeing and mental health; and improved academic, social and transferable skills. This outdoor experience results in personal learning and self-reflection, about one self and the world around us. Overall this results in a positive experience, additional understanding of our local environment, and a greater respect for nature. (Alison Cross, ECT, OLO)

Philosophy for Children, or P4C – is an approach to teaching and learning, in which children take part in philosophical enquiry. It enhances thinking and communication skills, boosts confidence and self-esteem, and improves behaviour and academic attainment. It can be used across the curriculum, in every subject, and with all ages and abilities. P4C is intended to be a regular activity so that the children develop their skills and understanding over time. The role of the facilitator is crucial to ensuring quality dialogue and progress, as well as integration with the curriculum. Over time, the teacher supports the children to think more deeply and philosophically by encouraging the development of the 4Cs of P4C – critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking. (www.sapere.org.uk/about-us.aspx)

What was done:

Gina and Alison met at the North West eco schools conference in 2019. Though emails and meetings, it was induced there was a potential to overlap their two projects, with a school that would suit both organisations requirements. Padiham St Leonard's school is located within the PHLP area and a priority school on the PHLP educational institution database list. (The school is located within a deprived area and has 25% of pupils with free school meals). The School were completing their SAPERE Silver Award. The SAPERE P4C Silver Award recognises that P4C is a regular part of teaching and learning within a school. To fulfil this, the children need to demonstrate familiarity with philosophical concepts and questions while teachers should be beginning to integrate planning and reviewing P4C across the curriculum. Gina specialises in P4C in the outdoors, has worked with other outdoor organisations to bring greater opportunities for P4C to schools, and wanted to replicate this approach with St Leonards.

In February, a meeting was held between the partners and school staff. Through discussion, a field trip was deduced as the best outcome to support the school in their SAPERE P4C Silver Award and to allow the school teachers to experience how beneficial an off-site trip into the local landscape is. After a site visit to Spring Wood, the woodland habitat was chosen as a suitable location, (only 20 min travel distance, a variety of habitats and a key PHLP engagement site). The school discussed which of the PHLP ECT outdoor learning sessions would fit their topic and P4C objectives. Local History and Geography theme was chosen for year 3/4 classes, with preferred activities about historical maps, journey sticks, compass and mapping.

Alison and Gina created a lesson plan that combined the history and geography study elements, with the P4C concepts of beauty, change and value. The lesson plan (figure 1), was confirmed with teacher leads and role responsibilities were defined for each section (Alison leading the national curriculum elements and lead teacher delivering some P4C sections to allow further expansion of teachers P4C delivery to the outdoors). Gina held a meeting with all three-teacher leads to confirm the delivery of the P4C sections and to offer support in advance.

Due to the pandemic, the spring delivery was postponed to October, and extra policies, RA and procedures were put in place to make it Covid safe. For the delivery of the three-day trips, the LCC site ranger was informed about the school trips. The ECT transport fund used to cover one of the day's coach hire costs, as the cost of hire was a barrier. Alison facilitated each day, moving the pupils through the activities and supporting the teachers in their P4C dialogue. Gina attended the second school trip session to guide the newest teacher at the school with the P4C concepts. Both facilitators steered with a participant-led approach and offered prompts and open questions to teachers and pupils, to achieve each objective. In addition, opportunities for enquiry and reflection were given, as an important aspect of P4C.



Activity	Morning	Activity	Afternoon
	Welcome, H&S. listening game activity introduced		Journey Stick – collect natural materials, collate from those you like best to those you like the least using the stick as a continuum (so may need re-ordering as more are added) Look at map route on way up hill.
	Summarise activity. Number of sounds—categorising by type and degree—e.g. bird, one type, but hear lots of different kinds within this—degree—how loud. Draw out likes/dislikes and differences in opinion (begin to value and connect with the environment around us and our reactions to it). Listen a second time.		Perfect picture – From this view what is the best picture in pairs—need to persuade partner you have found the 'best view'. What if someone altered your view, impose a change. Introduce that of course the landscape has changed over time...
	Where are we		Historic photos of spring wood and the view—children asked to order by date and explore reasons for their placement.
	Landscape discovery - Bingo game 1. Look for natural, physical and human features in the landscape, compared to where live, home, school.		Local history—who would have lived here 2,000 years ago, how would they survive . Collect resources onto journey stick that link to these. Local history of the area talk, how different to history of own area.
	Choose something from the environment that interests you—justify to a partner why you have chosen it. How do you use that item—can you be creative in your thinking?		Conservation—creating habitat piles for minibeasts who live here today.
	Spirals in time—divide into 2 groups to produce to allow space for justification of placement. Ordering items oldest to newest. Discussion hopefully touches on mans impact to lead to next section		Share most and least favourite item collected from story stick with another group. Concepts reflect, work on P4C questions to take back to school and of course ask an expert at the end.
	Local Tourism – investigate positive and negative impact of humans, countryside code		Show with body feedback from the day.
	Reflect and record concepts		
	Lunch and toilet break—this will finish at 12:30 for afternoon session.		

Figure 1. Local geography lesson plan for teachers and leaders, with P4C concepts in green.

Activity examples:

Gina states "Children can be supported to develop philosophical questions and explore concepts in greater depth through specially designed outdoor sessions or activities, and/or in addition to the traditional outdoor learning activities." Below are a few examples of what P4C and outdoor learning activities were used during this particular project, with links to show how they are beneficial for P4C objectives and taking the national curriculum objectives outside into a natural environment.

Activity	Outdoor learning and national curriculum objectives	Core P4C objectives
Habitat explore , choose a natural object that interests you and tell your partner why, then how to use the item.	Learning identification skills of parts of plants and their role. Exploring the physical components that make up a habitat. Creative or physical actions using resources.	Listening to other's ideas Reasoning Creativity Justification Exploration of the concepts 'interest', 'natural' and 'use'.
Spirals in time , place item on a time line defined by groups justification. Such as a leaf, rock, soil or stick.	Classification and justification of items, depending on time, value, purpose and use. Sorting and things according to whether they are living, dead or were never alive, and recording their findings along a timeline, describing how they decided where to place things. Stating what rocks and soil are made from, but their different appearances and properties.	Connecting objects through identifying the concepts Trying to understand other's points of view Reasoning Building on the ideas of other's Exploration of the concepts 'time', 'value', 'natural', 'living' and 'dead'.
Perfect Picture , choose the best view and then discuss the impact when it is changed with a manmade addition. Look at historic maps of the area.	Locational place knowledge, history of site using historical terms and the impact of the seasons on the view. Identification of physical and human features in the landscape. Comparisons made between, natural or manmade features, and how the view has changed over time. Use aerial photographs to recognise landmarks and basic features.	Sharing feelings to support exploration of the concepts Critically evaluate evidence Looking for examples to support an idea Exploration of the concepts of 'change', 'value' and 'beauty'.

Outputs/Outcomes:

Over the three school trip sessions, 79 year 3 and 4 pupils and 15 adults took part in the Outdoor learning and P4C trips. The school has now completed their SAPERE P4C Silver Award.

The head teacher at the school has been inspired to revisit Spring Wood with other classes in the Spring term. Alison has provided the information that the school need, to gain site access and where to walk. In addition, the school has been educated about the H&S points and RA that are needed for the trip.

What was learnt from this project:

This project showcased how it is possible to combine two projects aims, without too much compromise. It was deemed easier for the two separate project leads (Alison and Gina) to make decisions between them, and then confirm with the school and teachers. Constant communication between everyone was key to the success, between teachers and project leads, then communication between transport, site permission and school reception. This good communication and constant reassurance meant all involved knew what the plan was and what was required of them.

The joint delivery and session success, proves how P4C fits nicely within outdoor learning and that it can be taught onsite or off site. Once teachers are confident with delivery, they should be able to recreate this within any local wild space, which allows for sessions to be repeated in different habitats and landscapes, adding to further discussions about change and critical thinking. The P4C enhanced activities on the day worked really well, and demonstrated how a simple listening game could be expanded into lots of questions, discussion and further activities. All three teachers approached this activity differently to suit their pupils, and plan to repeat it back in their own school grounds. Spiral in times activity generated a lot of discussion, with all the individual groups of children giving different justification for their reasoning. This opened up more questions than answers and left everyone excepting the concept of no right answer.

The local geography and history activities worked well within Spring wood and the school hope to carry on some of the learning aspects back in the classroom, such a looking at the historical maps more and finding out more about their local history. Each class plan on repeating the landscape bingo game to compared natural and human features within different landscapes. Compass and mapping skills were all developed (in adults too). One class had recently learnt points on a compass, so it was wonderful to see the children put this new knowledge into practical use. Overall, the activities and the information provided by the OLO inspired the teachers to continue their topic and expand on new ways to teach that aspect of the national curriculum for lower KS2.

The delivery approach as always, needed to be flexible on the day, to suit the weather and pupils, which meant that not all of the activities were completed. However, all teachers were able to continue these aspects back at school. This has since led to further discussions and continued learning between staff and pupils about the local landscape.

The OLO learnt more about P4C and how to use different questioning styles, to encourage children to be more enquiry based in their learning. The OLO also learnt how important reflection time is at the end of each activity, to allow the participants to understand their learning and ask any further questions. The OLO will use more of the P4C approaches during school delivery, family events and other educational delivery.

Evidence:



Figure 2. From top left clockwise. Spring Wood pond habitat. Weather chart for determining if group are prepared for session outdoors and to discuss weather and seasons. Journey stick. Perfect view with manmade addition of pylons. Perfect view from top of Spring Wood. Map of the area to use with compass and the countryside code.

Quotes from project manager:

Alison Cross, Outdoor Learning Officer funded by the Ernest Cook Trust, said "Working in partnership with Little Chatters has been a brilliant experience. It has allowed me to learn new delivery styles, enhance my teaching skills and the ability to offer wellbeing support to teachers and pupils through P4C. Delivering the three outdoor learning days at Spring wood was really successful. Only about a third of each class had been to the woodland, so hopefully some will travel the 20 min again with their family. It is really important that I am able to bring local children out into their landscape, and showing them how to engage with the countryside safely and sustainably. These fully funded sessions also all me to educate how to use the countryside as an extension of the classroom for teachers."

Little Chatter's Gina Parker commented "I was so pleased to have met Alison at the NW Eco conference, which has resulted in so many opportunities for pupils and teacher from St Leonards CE School, Padiham. The school have been working on embedding Philosophy for Children across their school for the last 3 years and the chance to visit a site local to them to link Philosophy for Children to the Outdoors was too good to be missed. Alison was a pleasure to work alongside, illustrating fantastic organisation skills as well as creative activities. The majority of the children and teachers had not visited Springwood before and I do hope that this supports them in returning in the future and continuing with their work in the outdoors at a time that this is needed more than ever.

Quote from participant:

Year 4 teacher said, "The session was very well run! Really engaging and exciting activities for the children! We all loved the experience, we wish we had more time between some stations, but apart from that, it was perfect. Since being back at school we have been looking at the outdoors and wildlife and what affect littering does to our environment. As this discussion in Spring Wood shocked a number of children, so we have been talking about potentially looking into litter picking on the grounds near school to help the environment. We looked at how life has changed within the Ribble Valley on the trip and I aim to bring that into the classroom and look at what good has come from the change but also the affect it's had on wildlife in the North. I believe that now the children have hands on experience with this P4C session they understand the importance of the sessions."

Year 3 teacher said, "The children thoroughly enjoyed the journey sticks and talked about them for days after. This is something we have redone in school and it has had the same impact. The map work, whereby the children needed to plot a route to get to a point was great. We would just do it without the compass, as this was difficult for the children to access. It was fantastic to link P4C with the outdoors and the local area. It would be great if we could do this on a yearly basis to ensure all children can experience this. All had a fantastic day and the children spoke at length to parents about it. We also got some great writing about the day. Just want to say thank you to Alison for such a great day."