

LTL Cymru Annual Review 2009

Learning through Landscapes
Grounds for Learning
Learning through Landscapes Cymru

Inspiring outdoor learning and play for children



Key achievements

In our first full year of operation we:

- led the team that developed the **Outdoor Learning training module for the Foundation Phase training pack** in order to embed quality outdoor experiences into practice.
- trained and supported the Foundation Phase Training Support Officers to **build the capacity of practitioners** in schools and settings across Wales.
- supported children and teachers from Cwmaber Junior School in achieving their **Dream Playground** and transforming their outdoor space into a place all pupils could enjoy.
- held our first **LTL Cymru Conference** inspiring practitioners and education professionals from across Wales to get active and innovative outdoors.
- **raised the national media profile** of Early Years Outdoors initiatives with coverage in the *TES Cymru* and the *South Wales Echo* as well as other key publications.
- delivered **practical and popular training and workshops to over 850 participants** at WAG Foundation Phase and Estyn training conferences.

Welcome

This year thousands of children across Wales have been encouraged and supported to get outdoors to play and learn thanks to LTL Cymru's work. Our team has been welcomed by enthusiastic schools and early learning settings across the nation, and we are proud to be working alongside the Welsh Assembly Government and Countryside Council for Wales to secure stimulating outdoor learning and play experiences for children.

We are building on these successes to offer a sustainable programme of support and inspiration into the future, and I look forward to continuing our work with our existing and new stakeholders to ensure all children have access to great outdoor experiences. Meanwhile, here's a brief look at what we have achieved so far...

Kath Bunt (above right)

LTL Cymru Manager



Promoting best practice

Completing the Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning training module was one of the team's first objectives, and this was achieved in July 2008. We then trained the Foundation Phase Training Support Officers on the module content so they were confident in cascading it to all practitioners in schools and settings across Wales.

The team developed five off-the-shelf outdoor learning and play modules. The modules aim to develop practitioners' outdoor practice and provision, primarily in the Foundation Phase, and offer CPD at minimal cost to settings, schools and local authorities.

Over 800 early years practitioners up and down the country have benefited from our expertise through a wide range of training opportunities, including workshops at our first-ever national conference, a sell-out success with over 70 delegates.

We also ran training days on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, Careers Wales and the Training and Learning Partnership Wales.

The LTL Cymru website traffic has increased significantly over the year. During March 2009 for example, the site averaged 597 hits a day. The bilingual site continues to offer Wales-specific news and advice.

To support practitioners further we contributed significantly to the *Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning Experiences 2009 Report* and the *Outdoor Learning Handbook*, both published by the Welsh Assembly Government. Teachers and early years practitioners can view an expanding number of case studies on our website. And *Measuring Success – a guide to evaluating School Grounds Projects* is now available in English and Welsh and can be downloaded at no charge.

Looking ahead we are:

- delivering a Training into Practice event (the LTL accreditation course for those who work developing outdoor spaces) in February 2010 to build up our professional network.
- expanding our training to schools through the LTL Cymru membership package.
- developing an Early Years Toolkit with the Welsh Assembly Government.
- contributing to the 2010 Welsh Assembly Government Foundation Phase conferences.
- developing and expanding our training and support packages in order to support professionals working with children from birth to 19 years of age.

Delivering innovative programmes

Real practical changes transformed playgrounds for hundreds of children through our Dream Playground project and five Supergrounds projects. National evaluation of participating schools showed that 91 per cent found that transforming their school grounds has introduced new ways of teaching and learning; 89 per cent that their children are having more fun and are happier and that on average their pupils are spending an extra hour a week learning and playing outside.

Looking ahead we are:

- aiming to launch a new two-year programme, Ysgolion Ffrwythlon, to establish heritage orchards in 15 school grounds across Wales.
- working with CyMAL to develop quality outdoor spaces at Welsh museums and libraries.
- developing a 'Leading Learning Outdoors' CPD package for early years practitioners.
- working with colleagues across the UK to develop and deliver programmes and support to all those who want to use and improve their outdoor spaces.



'All workshops very helpful and informative'

Delegate feedback

'A jam-packed day full of ideas. You have worked very hard... it's now up to us!'

Delegate feedback

Influencing policy

Politicians in Wales have been keen to endorse our work. Jane Hutt, the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, attended the opening of our Dream Playground winner's new grounds, saying: 'It is heartening to see the positive contributions that the pupils have made, both for their own personal development and for their community.'

Welsh Assembly minister Nick Bourne signed up to our national 'Love School Grounds' campaign, and we met with other ministers to press for changes in policy.

We have continued to disseminate research and evaluation demonstrating the value of outdoor learning and play. For example, in our survey of 700 schools with improved school grounds 65 per cent reported improved attitudes to learning, 73 per cent an improvement in behaviour, 52 per cent improved academic achievement and 85 per cent increased active play.

Looking ahead we are:

- working with WAG and WLGA to ensure school grounds are integrated into the 21st Century Schools programme.
- training surveyors carrying out the All Wales Schools Survey to include school grounds in their audit, then collating, analysing and disseminating the data.

'A really good, informative and user-friendly module'

Delegate feedback

Making the case

We have secured news stories in the national Welsh press and written articles for specialist magazines such as *Nursery World*. The Welsh edition of *The Times Educational Supplement* covered our first-ever national conference with a full page article.

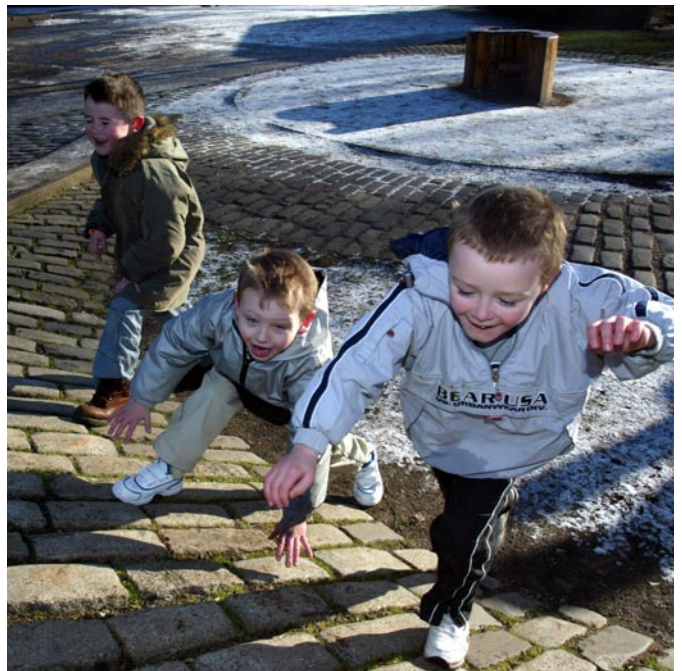
Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, launched the celebration event held by Cwmaber Junior School. This featured in the *South Wales Echo* and on the BBC Cymru and Welsh Assembly Government websites.

We were invited to speak at a number of high-profile conferences held by other organisations with a shared interest in getting children outdoors, including the Welsh Assembly Government and Estyn. The focus of these conferences drew on our expertise in outdoors within the Foundation Phase.

Our new electronic newsletter is distributed termly to all schools and settings, local authorities and other organisations with a shared interest in getting children outdoors. All local authorities received our publication *Opening Doors* outlining our packages of support.

Looking ahead we are:

- planning our second national conference for May 2010 with the key theme 'Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Outdoors'.
- publishing bilingual versions of LTL publications including *Opening Doors*, membership leaflets and training materials.



Winning support

Collaboration and partnership with other interested organisations gives strength to our message to promote understanding of the value and significance of school grounds. In addition to a close relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government, Countryside Council for Wales and Estyn, we have been working with Real World Learning Partnership Cymru, Woodlands for Learning forum and the BBC's Breathing Places initiative.

Looking ahead we are:

- expanding the team at LTL Cymru to sustain and grow collaboration with key local authority, governmental and NGO partners.

About Learning through Landscapes Cymru

Our vision is that every child benefits from stimulating outdoor learning and play experiences as part of their education. If you wish to talk to the team about a bespoke training event or find out about activities and plans for the next year, please email: cymru@ltl.org.uk or check out our website: www.ltl-cymru.org.uk.



To find out more visit www.ltl-cymru.org.uk

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