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Outdoor Education Provision in Scottish Schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the frequency and nature of outdoor learning provision in Scottish schools, with specific attention paid to teachers' approaches to learning outdoors, and it considers what further support and professional development teachers need to progress their practice. This enquiry is timely as limited data has been gathered over the past ten years (see Higgins *et al.* 2006 and Mannion *et al.* 2007) and little is known about how the policy document *Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning* and associated Education Scotland support has influenced outdoor learning provision. Questionnaires were administered to primary and secondary schools (n=90 returns) across four local authority areas. The results indicate that secondary schools are keen to develop outdoor learning provision and they need support to do so. Also, there is an increased use of school grounds as a context for learning within the primary school sector. In light of these findings and recent developments within national education, recommendations are made for both in-service and pre-service teacher training.

INTRODUCTION

Outdoor learning in Scotland is explicitly positioned as a pedagogical approach to delivering 'experiences and outcomes' from all eight curricular areas (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2006: 2)¹. Despite a growing body of literature concerning the potential of outdoor learning experiences, and a number of positive developments in outdoor learning and classroom-related activities throughout the UK at policy level (Department for Education and Skills, 2006;

¹ See Education Scotland (2013) for curriculum area specific experience and outcomes guides for outdoor learning.