

Draft framework guidance on embedding a whole-school approach

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by 30 September 2020 to:

Health and Well-being in Schools

Support for Learners Division

The Education Directorate

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: Mentalhealth.Schools@gov.wales



Cyngor Cymru ar Gyfer
Dysgu yn yr Awyr Agored

Wales Council for
Outdoor Learning

The [Wales Council for Outdoor Learning](http://www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/) acts as a voice for the outdoor learning and environment sector bringing together organisations that support and deliver high quality teaching and learning in the outdoor environment.

The partnership shares good practice and influences policy development, highlighting the many benefits of outdoor learning and its contribution to the development of ethical and informed citizens of future generations.

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning helps to raise the profile of Out of Classroom Learning aiming to foster greater understanding and appreciation of its value and its vital contribution to education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

More information can be found at: www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft framework guidance on embedding a whole-school approach

- the importance of out of classroom learning and real-life experiences in nature for all ages and abilities supported by confident and competent teaching staff
- the essential role of environmental education, ESDGC, outdoor learning, adventure education and scientific literacy
- the importance of the sustainable management of our natural resources now and in the future and an understanding of what this means from a young age
- the need to embed the environmental learning and sustainable development in the widest sense throughout the curriculum

The ability to teach and learn in the natural environment significantly contributes to all 6 Areas of Learning and Experience, delivers against the Four Purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and provides the required ‘opportunities and activities that expand horizons within and beyond the traditional learning environment of the classroom.’

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning is happy to work with Senedd Cymru to ensure the role of the natural environment in improving young people’s mental health and well-being is embedded in the framework. The Network can provide advice and guidance on quality assured outdoor teaching and learning and provide training and support for teachers and education professionals.

For further clarification or information please contact the current chair:
Phil Stubbington – John Muir Trust – phil.stubbington@johnmuirtrust.org

Question 1 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance will promote consistent whole-school approaches, supporting the positive emotional well-being and mental health of all learners and staff?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected ‘Slightly disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’, please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

Acting as a voice for the outdoor learning sector the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning would like to see overarching guidance to explain the multiple benefits to health and well-being, of learning and playing in the natural environment.

Outdoor learning should be portrayed as a fundamental pedagogy, a way of teaching and learning, a unique space in which to promote learner well-being through connection to nature and the social aspects of playing and learning outdoors.

Experiences such as residential stays, adventure education, recognised accredited methods like forest school and coastal school, field work, environmental education and the use of school grounds, local parks, woodlands and beaches - all the places which can “provide rich

experiences” for learners - are fundamental to developing emotional literacy, resilience and a sense of self.

Evidence from around the world demonstrates the benefits to well-being of a connection with and learning in the natural environment.

Despite being deemed as important enough to include the natural environment threaded throughout the Curriculum for Wales guidance, AoLE’s and the recent Operational Guidance for Schools, this vital resource is not mentioned as a cost-effective well-being intervention in this guidance.

Question 2 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance provides the right level of support for school staff and senior leadership teams to develop and embed best practice for delivering a whole-school approach to emotional well-being and mental health?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected ‘Slightly disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’, please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

Acting as a voice for the outdoor learning sector the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning views the guidance as slightly helpful in terms of promoting a two-dimensional whole school ethos. The failure to include the outdoor element, specifically natural spaces undermines the development and embedding of best practice.

We welcome a whole school approach to promoting positive well-being for learners and school staff. Teaching children in the natural environment is also beneficial for the well-being of school staff and can lay down valuable foundations for future experiences and subject knowledge.

However, if we see school staff and senior leadership struggling with how to use the outdoors for learning, there is even more concern at the understanding of the health and well-being benefits of a connection to nature and how to promote positive change through interaction with the natural environment.

The content and experiences within Initial Teacher Education, child care and youth work courses are going to be critical if the framework is to serve our learners well.

However, this requires a different pedagogical approach to truly address the intentions set out. There is a need to:

- draw on evidence-based practice for the delivery of well-being in schools
- provide universal professional learning for all school staff
- provide a targeted approach for more specialist well-being coordinators

If our learners are to enjoy positive well-being while meeting the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, experiences must include significant amounts of learning in, learning about and learning for the natural environment to ensure an early connection with nature and

an understanding of local action and global consequence. Research shows that there are important positive correlations between human health, well-being intelligence and nature. Various studies have shown children are healthier, happier, smarter and more creative when they have a connection to nature.

Question 3 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance provides sufficient direction to promote collaboration between schools and key partners such as statutory bodies, the third sector and parents/carers?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected ‘Slightly disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’, please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

It is important for the WP Education Department to highlight those public-sector bodies, organisations and Networks who can offer high quality, reputable and free support, advice and guidance.
 For example the [High Quality Outdoor Learning for Wales](#) document has been included in recent safe return to school guidance and includes sections on:
 Outcome 2 – confidence and character
 Outcome 3 – health and well-being
 Outcome 4 – social and emotional awareness
 Outcome 5 – environmental awareness
 Outcome 6 – activity skills
 Outcome 7 – personal qualities
 Outcome 8 – skills for life
 Outcome 9 – increased motivation and appetite for learning
 Outcome 10 – broadened horizons

Question 4 – To what extent do you agree that the guidance provides the right balance between focusing on promoting and building emotional well-being and addressing the needs of those requiring targeted support for their mental health?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slightly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Slightly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you selected ‘Slightly disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’, please expand on what further amendments you think are necessary.

Supporting comments

It should be noted that a strong outdoor learning pedagogical approach should be available to all learners

Question 5 – Following the introduction of remote learning as a result of Covid19, please explain what (if any) changes to the guidance could be made to ensure it fully supports a ‘blended learning’ approach which combines remote and traditional classroom learning.

Acting as a voice for the outdoor learning sector the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning would like to see overarching guidance to explain the multiple benefits to health and well-being, of learning and playing in the natural environment.

Outdoor learning should be portrayed as a fundamental pedagogy, a way of teaching and learning, a unique space in which to promote learner well-being through connection to nature and the social aspects of playing and learning outdoors.

Blended learning approaches must also embed these principles.

Despite being deemed important enough to include the promotion of learning outdoors in Operational Guidance for Schools, there is no mention of the health benefits of promoting well-being through teaching, learning and playing in the natural environment. Learner, teacher and family well-being will be improved by feeling safer outdoors.

Operational Guidance states:

It also has important benefits during the COVID-19 outbreak as:

- *evidence indicates that the risk of infection is reduced outdoors*
- *evidence suggests that the virus suffers in sunlight*
- *social distancing is easier to observe and maintain outside, which Practically, it may be easier for practitioners to manage larger groups of learners outdoors.*

Question 6 – Following publication of the guidance, what (if any) implementation activity (e.g. training and/or awareness-raising for specific audiences) do you consider will be necessary?

This will be a new mandate for many school staff and senior leadership at a time of great change and with the embedding of the new curriculum already resulting in an existing deficit in confidence and competence across school staff. There is a risk of inflating this further. They may/will have limited experience or exposure during initial teacher training to health and well-being pedagogies including outdoor learning to promote well-being.

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning and its member organisations would be willing to support training and awareness raising across Wales and many members already have courses and materials to support this.

Question 7 – Are our proposals for governance and accountability enough to ensure the guidance is embedded in practice? In particular, are Regional Partnership Boards best placed to hold all stakeholders to account?

No comment

Question 8 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the guidance would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

No comment

Question 9 – Please also explain how you believe the guidance could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

No comment

Question 10 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

In Operational Guidance to Schools Welsh Parliament has advocated the use of the *High Quality in Outdoor Learning in Wales* document to underpin pupil health and well-being. This would continue to be a valuable resource to support this framework.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: