



Mental & Physical Benefits of Outdoor Education

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IRELAND

LEAF Ireland 2016-2020



63 Schools



142 Classes



3,600 Students



3,800 Trees



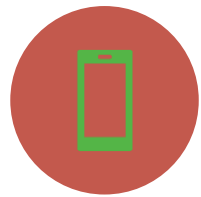
Engagement



142 Forest Based
Workshops = approx.
568 hrs educating
outdoors

142 School Based
Workshops = approx.
284 hrs educating
outdoors

Why are children spending less time outdoors?



Screen time



Location



Parent's &
Teacher's
anxieties around
safety




Increase in
structured
activities



Lack of free
outdoor play



Perceived lack
of 'safe' places
to play



'We are living in very transitory times - child obesity, video games and sedentary lifestyles. In a lot of cases, so much of the child's stimulation comes from screen time.'

Cathy Keyes, Limerick School Project

*What are
the Issues ?*

Obesity

Lower concentration
levels

Lack of contact with
the natural world

Lack of understanding
of the natural world



LEAF Learning Objective 1

ENSURE STUDENTS LEARN TO ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

How the LEAF programme helps address some of the problems



Screen time

Maximise the amount of time spent outdoors



Location

All participating students visit the forest for their Forest Based Workshop
Identify green space for School Based Workshop



Anxieties and Perception around 'Safety'

H&S training for all LEAF staff / H&S introductory talk

Communicate with teachers & students about what to wear / what to expect prior to workshops

Ensure appropriate ratios are adhered to.



Structured Activities / Free Play

Workshops are loosely structured

Are adaptable depending on ability, age & size of group

Include free play time



Benefits of the LEAF Programme

- ✓ Improved concentration
- ✓ Builds confidence
- ✓ Children able to enjoy the natural world around them
- ✓ Outdoor learning without the restrictions of walls and desks
- ✓ Active learning for students
- ✓ Tapping into children's innate love for nature and sense of wonder





**LEARNING
ABOUT
FORESTS**

 An Taisce

An Choill Bheag

(Little Woodland)

- ✓ Small, dense, biodiverse native woodland habitat
- ✓ Planned, Planted & Managed by students
- ✓ Outdoor living classroom
 - LEAF
 - Citizen Science
 - Woodland Skills
 - Nature Connection
 - Wellbeing



Objectives of An Choill Bheag



Keep it site specific



Be creative, flexible, dynamic in our approach



Share and collaborate with others



Be accessible, affordable and replicable for any school



Acknowledge the work and voluntary commitment by schools

Choill Bheag in Scoil Mháthair Dé

- ✓ Planted approx. 400 mixed native trees (200m²) over 2 days, March 2018
- ✓ Included 'classroom space' in the centre
- ✓ Develop nature trail over time.
- ✓ Include signage





Benefits of An Choill Bheag

- ✓ Incorporate outdoors into curriculum
- ✓ Foster interest in local, natural environment
- ✓ Learn Lifelong Skills
- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Sense of Ownership & Responsibility
- ✓ Links with Wellbeing programmes in schools



LEAF Activity



EYE SPY

Suitable for
AGES 6 - 11

LEARNING
ABOUT
FORESTS

Tick the box if you spotted...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A brown leaf	<input type="checkbox"/>
A berry	<input type="checkbox"/>
A wind-dispersed seed	<input type="checkbox"/>
An insect on the bark of a tree or under a rock	<input type="checkbox"/>
A herbivore	<input type="checkbox"/>
A carnivore	<input type="checkbox"/>
A feather	<input type="checkbox"/>
A fungus	<input type="checkbox"/>

MEASURING AND EVALUATING IMPACTS

AN CHOILL
BHEAG

Measuring and Evaluating impacts of An Choill Bheag in our School Grounds - Biodiversity, Social and Wellbeing

How much space in your school grounds is covered by An Choill Bheag?	200m2 approx
How many trees were planted?	200
How many different species?	14-15
What was the success rate of the trees?	
Did the mulching do its job?	
Does it require more bark mulch or cardboard?	
How many students took part in the planting?	
How many students have benefited from the	

We continuously develop and share resources online:
www.leafireland.org

Wellbeing Activities

Quiet Time Outdoors

- Sound Mapping
- Listening to the sounds of nature

Free time to explore & immerse themselves in nature

- Den building



'Outdoor education helps to elevate mood and decrease anxiety as it is a welcomed change to hours of sitting at a desk indoors.

The children become more active which makes them healthier and happier which in turns means they can do better academically.

Learning about nature appeals to the senses as children get the opportunity to see, smell, hear and touch the world around them.....



Continued ...

...One of the most memorable moments of the LEAF programme was when we climbed the hill overlooking the lake, the house and the trees; we all stopped for a moment, closed our eyes and listened to the sound of the birds in the trees, the whistling of the wind and the flowing water. These moments of silence and appreciation of the natural world around us are few and far between in our everyday busy classroom.

It was a very memorable positive experience for the children.'

**4th Class Teacher, St. Brigid's
National School**



'There is no doubt that the programme is hugely beneficial to the health and wellbeing of our students.'

Ann Kilby, Roxbouragh National School

