

# Teaching, learning and play in the outdoors: a survey of provision in Scotland in 2022

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# Background

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- Outdoor learning, play and LfS are embedded in the Scottish policy context
- 2020 planned survey, delayed due to Covid; 2022 still being impacted
- This 2022 survey provides an updated measure of the prevalence of teaching, learning and play provisions in the outdoors in early years and school settings

# Research Design

- A repeated, cross-sectional survey of the prevalence of provision outdoors in 2006, 2014, 2022 for 3-18 year olds
- Use of a time-limited window in May June
  - 8 weeks for schools,
  - 2 weeks for early years
- Core measures of duration, location, focus: the same design enables comparison
- In 2022:
  - Online data collection
  - Survey of confidence / professional learning in Outdoor Learning and Learning for Sustainability
  - Perceived Covid Impact

# Sample & Returns

- Recruitment: invitation via 18 local authority to all
- Returns were made from 108 teachers
- Returns sent from 34 primary schools and 19 early years settings.
- Secondary Schools: not in a position to take part.
- Career stage: 19% Early, 50% Middle, 32% Late
- SIMD – Schools in all quintiles represented
- Primary 2022: 119 OL events (25 schools) (1 residential)
- Primary 2014: 258 OL events (26 schools) (9 residential)

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	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	ASN
n Practitioners	24	62	3	19
n Schools	19	34	3	2

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# Key Findings: Early Years

- **Early Years' 2022 provision outdoors has increased compared to 2014 survey**
- The survey showed that on average 39% of the time was spent outdoors. This figure has risen from 23% in the 2006 survey and 36% in 2014.
- Early years provision continues to reflect a focus on 'play' (as in 2006 and 2014). 2022 data show a noticeable increase in 'off site' provision for the first time.
- When away from the centre, early years' outdoor learning & play takes place predominantly in woodland areas.

## Duration of early years provision

	2006	2014	2022 <sup>2</sup>
Outdoor learning hours	3246	3811	6545.5
Time at pre-school centres	14105	10647	16787
Percentage of day	23%	36%	39%

## Location of early years provision

	2006	2014	2022
Within setting grounds	90.80%	94.80%	85.06%
Farm/Farmland	0.60%	0.80%	1.15%
Public park	1.60%	1.80%	0%
Urban/civic area	4.50%	0.80%	1.15%
Woods/forests/wildlife area	2.50%	2.40%	12.64%

# Key Findings: Primary

## Primary schools' outdoor provision has decreased compared to 2014

In 2014 the duration 'per pupil per week' was 30 minutes. In 2022, this was 7 minutes.

In 2022 residential provision was virtually non-existent due to Covid restrictions. However, this did not account for all of the decline.

Non-residential provision took place predominantly in school grounds and their immediate locale.

Grounds provision outdoors was down by over 75%.

Proportionally, 85% of the time outdoors was spent in school grounds, whilst 12% was spent mostly locally in woodland or similar environments.

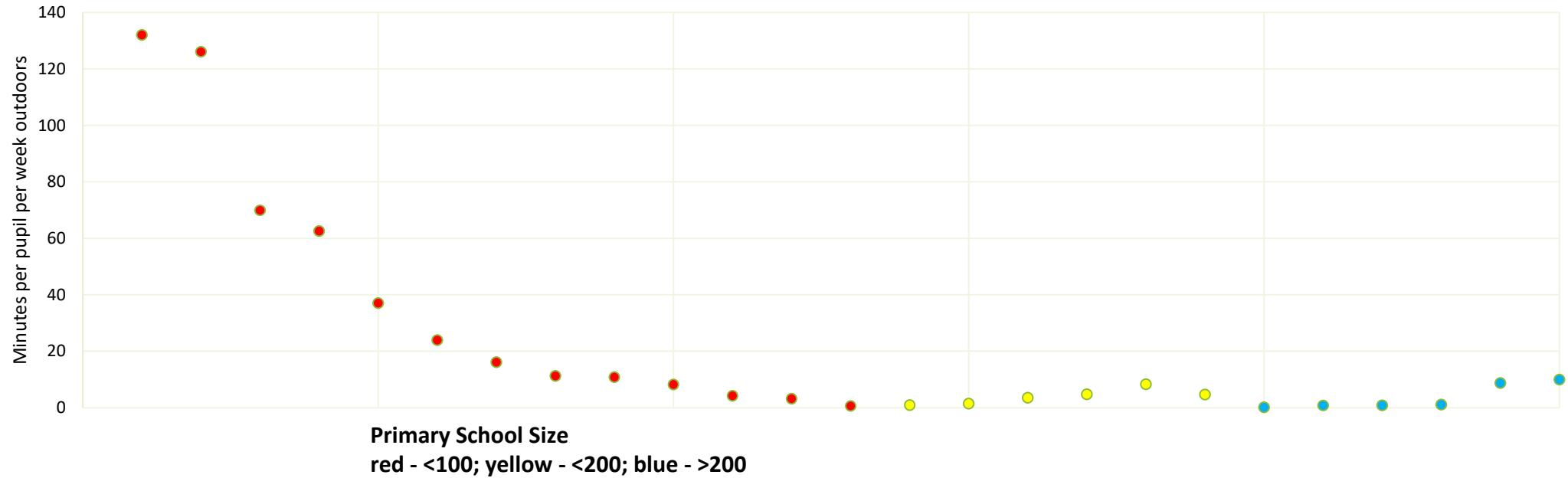
## Duration of Primary outdoor provision

	2006	2014	2022
Outdoor learning hours	3390	22366	3539
Roll	1343	5615	3559
Average hours per pupil during 8-week period	2.52	3.98	0.99
Minutes/pupil/week (rounded)	19	30	7
Not inc. residential		24	7

# Key Findings: Primary

Schools providing more OL time also tend to be smaller in roll size.

Minutes per pupil, per week, spend outside by school and color coded for school roll size

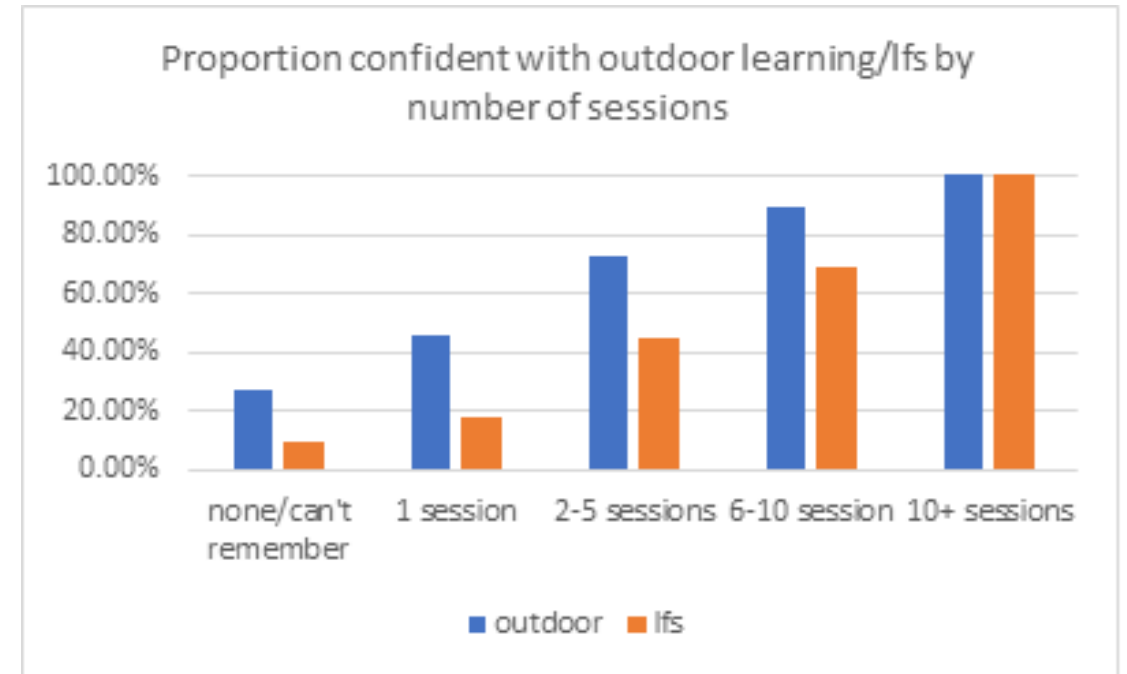


# Key findings: Practitioner Confidence

Considerable numbers of staff still lack confidence in outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability.

Staff in receipt of lower levels of professional learning report lower confidence in outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability

	Confident outdoors	Confident LfS
Early years	91.67%	70.83%
Primary	62.90%	40.32%





# Impact of Covid

Over half of participants believed that their outdoor provision *increased* in comparison with pre-pandemic levels

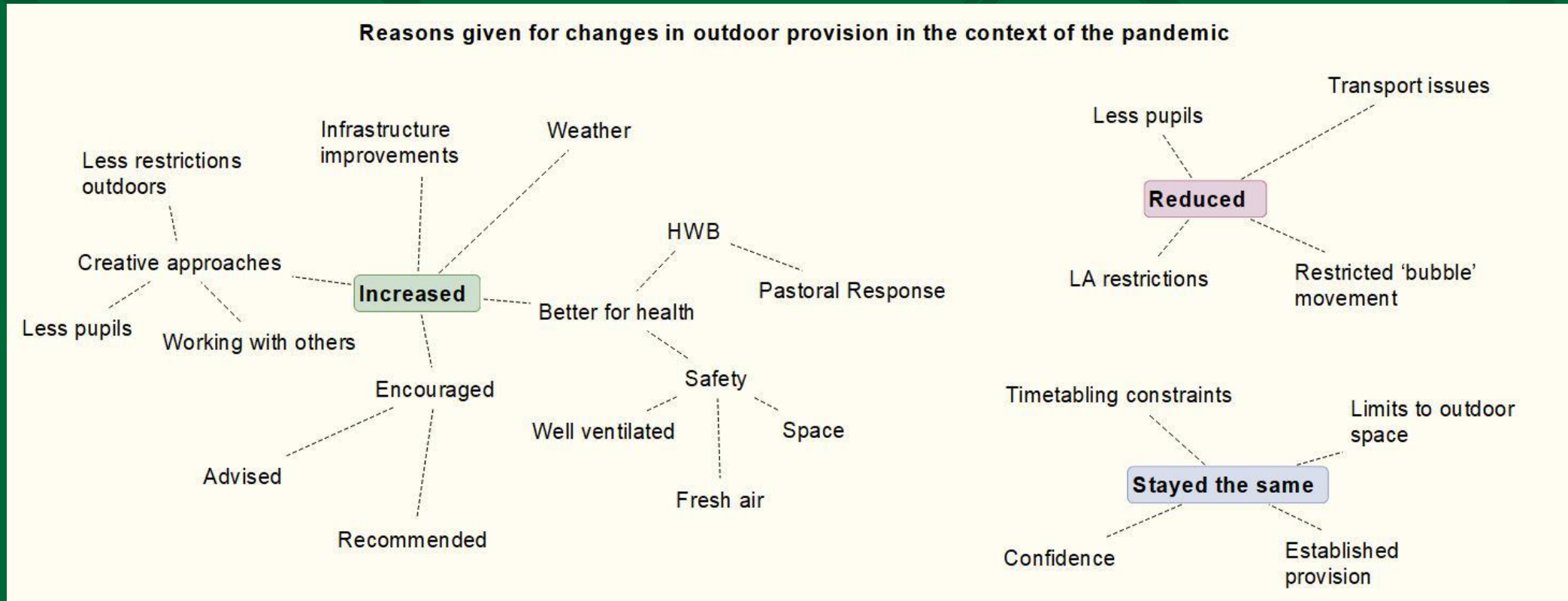
For a minority, provision of OL was felt to be reduced due to Covid

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Outdoor provision compared to pre-pandemic

	reduced	same	increased
Early Years	3 12.50%	7 29.17%	14 58.33%
Primary	5 8.20%	19 31.15%	37 60.66%

# Ecology of Factors: responses to Covid



For some, Covid provided new reasons for going outdoors more: **ventilation and HWB**

But a wide variety of **possible factors** existed for any one school

**BE THE DIFFERENCE**

# Key Findings

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- Provision has increased in early years settings compared to 2014 survey
- Provision is much lower than in 2014 for primary schools
  - Off-site, residential and full-day outdoor experiences accounted for some decline
- Professional confidence in OL and LfS is linked to CLPL experience
- Increasing professional learning has the potential to increase outdoor provision
- Larger schools appear to offer less outdoor provision
- Teachers report that learning outdoors enhances engagement and enjoyment

# Recommendations: Early Years

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- Support for outdoor provision needs to be sustained and expanded
- Enhance pre- and in-service professional learning
- Support for off-site visits and further use of local areas

# Recommendations: Primary Schools

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- Support for all types of outdoor provision needs to be sustained and expanded, particularly for large schools and more deprived areas
- Expansion of pre- and in-service professional learning
- Support is needed for increased use and regular access to off site local areas (e.g. parks, green/bluespaces, woodlands)
- Enhance connectivity between outdoor provision and Learning for Sustainability (in CLPL, in policy, in school development...)

# Recommendations: Research

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- Secondary settings
- ASN settings
- Review of contemporary literature to inform steps needed for professional learning and ongoing curricular reform, policy reset



# Discussion