Case study: Building teacher confidence to take the curriculum outdoors

Taking the Curriculum Outdoors | Accredited professional development | Coventry

Helping teachers turn outdoor learning into everyday practice

How can primary school teachers make outdoor learning a more regular, purposeful part of the curriculum? For teachers attending the *Taking the Curriculum Outdoors* accredited course in Coventry, the answer began with practical experience, adaptable ideas and the confidence to try something new.

Delivered by Deborah Lambert and accredited by the Institute for Outdoor Learning, the course was designed to help teachers explore how learning can be taken beyond the classroom and adapted to a range of subjects, learning objectives and pupil needs.

Feedback from participants highlights the value of a practical, hands-on approach that connects professional learning with the realities of everyday school life.

From new ideas to greater confidence

A consistent theme throughout the feedback was that teachers had developed their knowledge of how to adapt learning for outdoor environments. Participants valued the opportunity to experience activities themselves, observe demonstrations and consider how the approaches could work with their own classes.

One participant commented:

"I feel more confident in delivering a variety of learning outdoors."

Another reflected:

"I have developed further confidence and knowledge and regained enthusiasm."

Teachers also highlighted how the course had broadened their understanding of cross-curricular outdoor learning, helping them recognise opportunities in subjects beyond the more obvious outdoor activities.

As one participant explained:

"It has helped me understand how I can adapt lessons from across the curriculum."

The emphasis was not simply on collecting activities, but on understanding how to make outdoor learning purposeful, adaptable and relevant to the curriculum.

Practical ideas teachers could use straight away

The hands-on nature of the course was particularly well received. Participants valued the practical demonstrations, the opportunity to take part in activities and the range of ideas and resources they could bring back to school.

One teacher described how the course had introduced:

“Activities, which were shown to us today that I can take to my class tomorrow.”

Another highlighted the value of the practical approach:

“I enjoyed being the learner and the hands-on experience of learning.”

This immediate applicability was an important feature of the feedback. Teachers were not only inspired by the possibilities of outdoor learning; they could identify specific activities and approaches to adapt for their own pupils.

Taking learning into the curriculum

The feedback also revealed clear intentions to translate learning from the course into changes in planning and teaching.

Participants described plans to review curriculum plans, identify opportunities for outdoor learning across subjects and make greater use of school grounds. Some identified specific next steps, including taking maths interventions outdoors and exploring opportunities to support intervention groups.

One participant stated:

“I'm going to review my curriculum plans with a view to adapting my lessons for the outdoors.”

Another intended to:

“Develop more opportunity to make learning outdoors more focused and more frequent.”

These responses suggest that the course encouraged teachers to consider outdoor learning not as an occasional extra, but as an approach that could be integrated more deliberately into curriculum planning.

Participants also recognised the potential to support colleagues and contribute to a wider whole-school approach to outdoor learning.

Enthusiasm, practical support and realistic advice

Teachers praised the organisation of the course, the quality of the resources and the trainer’s knowledge, enthusiasm and realistic suggestions.

One participant described the trainer as:

“Very passionate, knowledgeable and realistic in her suggestions of activities.”

Another summed up their recommendation simply:

“Just go for it, not to be scared and just take the learning outside.”

The feedback also identified an area where further support could be valuable: managing behaviour outdoors. This is an important practical consideration for teachers developing their confidence, and it highlights the value of addressing the challenges as well as the opportunities of learning beyond the classroom.

What did the feedback tell us?

All participants awarded the course five out of five in every category assessed.

Alongside these ratings, their written feedback highlighted several key outcomes:

- Increased confidence in delivering learning outdoors.
- A wider bank of adaptable, practical activities.
- Greater understanding of cross-curricular opportunities.
- Intentions to review planning and incorporate outdoor learning more regularly.
- Ideas for applying outdoor approaches to intervention groups and maths.
- Enthusiasm for sharing learning and developing outdoor practice further.

The written responses provide encouraging evidence of the course's immediate value and of participants' intentions to apply their learning. Longer-term follow-up would help establish how consistently these intentions translated into sustained changes in classroom practice.

Looking ahead

The feedback reinforces the importance of practical, relevant professional development that gives teachers both the ideas and the confidence to take learning outdoors.

The message from participants is clear: when teachers have opportunities to experience outdoor learning for themselves, explore adaptable approaches and connect these with their own curriculum, the outdoors can become a more accessible and purposeful part of everyday teaching.

Sometimes the first step is simply having the confidence to take the learning outside.

Find out more here: National Curriculum Outdoors

This case study was generated by ai, using feedback from participants on the Coventry course run in October 2025.