



VALUING NATURE

Enhancing wellbeing:
Can engaging with nature in the
school grounds improve children's
attention and mood?

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Our backgrounds



Deborah Harvey



School of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway University of London



Ecology, entomology, citizen science



Dawn Watling



Department of Psychology, Royal Holloway University of London



Children's social development, peer relations, emotion recognition, mental health and wellbeing



Shared interests in:



Biological sciences



Wellbeing and education



Project background



Increasingly frequent reports of:

- Decreasing global biodiversity
- Declining child wellbeing



Biophilia hypothesis

- Natural affinity for nature
- Spending time outdoors can benefit wellbeing



Can we address both problems in tandem?

The screenshot shows the RCPCH website interface. At the top right is the RCPCH logo (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) and a navigation menu. Below the logo, it says 'You are here: Home' and 'State of Child Health'. A section titled 'In this section' features a large blue banner for the 'State of Child Health Report 2017' with the subtitle 'CHILD HEALTH IN JEOPARDY DUE TO AN ALARMING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR'. Below this is a green banner for the 'State of Nature 2016' report. Further down, there are news snippets: 'Growing crisis in children and young people's mental health demands action' and 'Child obesity rates 'on the rise''. The news items include small images and brief text summaries.



Our project



Schools' Biodiversity Project



Citizen science



Engage pupils in projects to improve and monitor biodiversity in their school grounds



Good for (declining) biodiversity?



Good for (declining) pupil wellbeing?






Why the placement ?

 Perfect opportunity to turn our interests into beneficial scientific research



 Learn skills to carry out meaningful social science surveys



 Proof of concept pilot for planned large-scale evaluation (across all school years) on key sub-group transition years (Yr5/6)





What will we do?

 Five schools, two parallel year 5/6 classes from each – one involved in biodiversity project, one control

 Measures:

 Wellbeing survey (KIDSCREEN-52)

 Attainment test (KS2 science)

 Mood survey (PNAS)

 Attention (reverse digit span)

 Parents' SES and interest in nature



Outputs and outcomes

- Immediate outcomes:
 - Boosting habitats and species in schools grounds
 - Encouraging children's interest in nature and the environment
- Broader outcomes:
 - Methodology to reliably test mood, science attainment and attention in children related to engaging with the environment
 - A scheme to improve and monitor species diversity and habitats in schools



Outputs and outcomes

-  Video case study
-  Presentation at BPS Developmental Psychology Section conference
-  Publication of peer-reviewed paper