

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Bil arfaethedig – Bil Addysg Awyr Agored \(Cymru\)](#) | [Proposed Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

Ymateb gan Amanda Gisby | Evidence from Amanda Gisby

In what capacity are you responding: Teacher

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## Your opinion

How important is outdoor education to children and young people's overall education and development?

Very important

What are the main benefits to children and young people from having a residential outdoor education experience?

It increases interaction with nature, building confidence and resilience through activities and challenges. It enhances communication and co-operation skills as well as introducing measured risk taking opportunities to encourage independent thinking and problem solving strategies. Classical indoor classrooms are becoming more rigid and overcrowded, students can access their education in a more holistic manner in outdoor educational classes where teachers and outdoor specialist can actually use their professional teaching experience and deliver life long learning opportunities that really do make a difference to our young learners. Not only educational benefits can be obtained from an outdoor based residential setting but students will obtain support for personal wellbeing through an immersive connection to nature. This in turn will solidify the importance of nature to students at a young age and this will be carried through their lives hopefully instilling the requirement to protect our environment for future generations.

Student lives are progressively becoming more immobile due to rise in financial pressures at home seeing an increase on the working hours of parents and guardians which has brought with it a rise in mental health and physical health issues of our younger generation. Lives are being led and lost looking through the lens of a phone, we need to allow our young learners the chance to live once more and experience life, nature, and the environment and develop in a child centred holistic way.

Should children and young people have a guaranteed opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor education experience, at some stage during their school years, if they wish to?

Yes

Should an opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor education experience, at some stage during their school years, be free of charge on one occasion to pupils?

Yes

What are the main barriers which you believe currently exist to children and young people accessing residential outdoor education experiences?

Financial constraints; Parental anxiety / uncertainty; Child anxiety / uncertainty; Cost of transport;

Equality Considerations: Could the proposed Bill have any positive impacts on some children and young people in particular? If so, who and why?

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If funding for such experiences was offered from a separate source of finances, not taking away from current over stretched school funding then the positive impact on young people would be immeasurable. From both mental and physical wellbeing stand points learners would be able to re-establish a solid foundation for further learning to commence. Numerous studies have been conducted where the findings point to increased mental agility and prowess in classroom studies in direct relationship to increased time spent participating in outdoor learning activities. Students with ASD, ALN, and mental health issues would also be able learn new self-regulation strategies that they can employ back inside in the classroom.

Equality Considerations: Could the proposed Bill have any negative impacts on some children and young people in particular. If so, who and why? What could this Bill do to mitigate any negative impacts?

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If funding was not given to all learners there would be a high percentage of students who would once again be left out and the gap between Pupil Premium students and the majority of the student population would increase further still. If funding was taken from the school's already stretched budget the students would once again also suffer along with the teachers, as teachers would then fund trips from their own pockets to help learners so they wouldn't miss out. In addition money would also be taken from vital areas that fund the running and maintenance of school life.

What age do you believe is most suitable for children and young people to be offered an opportunity to undertake a residential outdoor education experience?

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Year 6 (age 10-11)

Is four nights/five days the best length for a residential outdoor experience?

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No

Please explain your answer and highlight any possible implications from having a standard approach of four night/five day experiences (whether positive or negative).

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The best length of time for a year 6 pupil would be between 2 to 3 nights away from home maximum. This is speaking from experience. I am both a teacher and an outdoor educator. Students who participate in residential experiences will have a lot of emotional and physical issues to contend with. Most learners that have stayed at the establishment where I work have never been away from their families before and arrive with deep seated anxiety. The immersive experience that is provided by an outdoor residential is not a 9am to 3pm school day. Learners are engaged in ongoing tasks from life skills, communication, education, physical and mental challenges every minute of every day that they are on the course. Even if this is in a monitored play session the learner will still be undergoing many experiences they have to process and deal with. This is very tiring on the learner and the teachers who have to monitor their students 24 hours a day. A peak in exhaustion is after 3 nights away where in some cases it can be detrimental to the positive experiences gained from the trip in the first few days for some learners. It is also questionable on the ability of teachers and observing staff after 4 nights away with learners having often spent over 36 hours straight with no sleep on making judgements during the daily tasks with the learners.

Do you agree there is a need for legislation to ensure all children and young people are given an opportunity to access a residential outdoor education experience, at some stage during their school years?

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Strongly agree

Is there anything else you would like to say about this proposal?

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This proposal is extremely important for our future generations' developement and understanding of the world around them.