

CASE STUDY

Brilliant Beach Schools Reflecting upon Physical Activity and Self-Regulation

Helen Pugh, Forest and Beach Adventures Ambassador at Little Adventures Nursery, Weston-Super-Mare, attended a study day with Woodland House Nursery at Severn Beach, exploring Beach Schools and the relationship between physical activity and self regulation.

Since the event, Helen has implemented a range of new evidence informed approaches inspired by the day's learning, enhancing children's experiences and wellbeing through greater opportunities for active play in natural environments. Here, she reflects on the actions she has taken and the positive impact these changes have made on the children in her setting.



“The biggest takeaway for me was seeing how important nature is for children’s wellbeing, giving them space to feel calm, curious, and free.”

What did the study day help you reflect upon?

“The training made me think about how powerful the beach can be as a learning environment. I noticed how calm and at peace I felt being at the beach, and it was the same for everyone else on the course. It made me want to give that same feeling to the children, so they can experience the beach as a place to relax and be at one with nature, as well as to learn and explore.”

We reflected upon the EEF’s Early Years Evidence Store which tells us that evidence suggests promoting physical activity can have a positive impact on children’s executive function and, to a lesser extent, their self-regulation. Beach School sessions provide an opportunity for regular physical activity as children attend once a week for a six week block.



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What have you implemented since attending the study day?

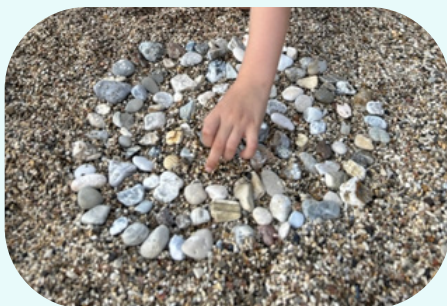
“As a result of the training, I have been able to strengthen my practice and pedagogy when working with the children at the beach. The training gave me the confidence to plan meaningful sessions that use the beach as a rich learning environment for physical activity and so much more. I now weave natural beach materials into activities, encourage children to explore and manage risk safely, and tie learning into seasonal changes. I also bring in discussions around beach safety and environmental topics like tides, helping children to develop both knowledge and respect for the coast.”



What difference has it made to the children?



“The children love going to the beach. They benefit hugely from the repeated experience and always have fun while learning and exploring. I’ve seen them grow in confidence as they explore the beach environment. No matter what the weather brings, they embrace it with excitement and curiosity, showing me just how much, they value these experiences. Their wellbeing levels are always so high at the beach and we really see a difference in their self-regulation.



It’s not just the children that benefit, my coworkers genuinely enjoy the experiences alongside the children. It’s been wonderful to see the whole team more confident and excited about outdoor learning, which has really strengthened our practice and our shared approach to exploring the natural environment.”

Would you like to further explore physical activity, self-regulation and Beach Schools?

- Explore the Physical Development evidence informed approaches on the [EEF’s Early Years Evidence Store](#)
- Explore the evidence informed approaches in the [EEF’s Early Years Evidence Store: Self-regulation](#)
- Explore [Woodland House Nursery’s Beach School Ethos](#)