

# Supporting pupil wellbeing by embedding nature connection opportunities

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SERNS Workshop 27/06/2025



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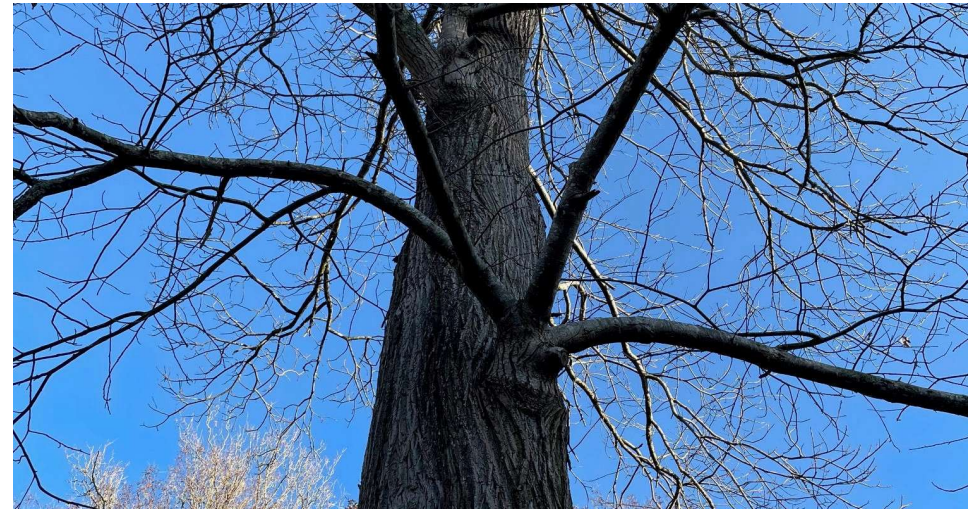
# HOW DO YOU CONNECT WITH NATURE?

Imagine your favourite nature spot?

Close your eyes, use your 5 senses and take time to reflect on what you notice.



# NATURE CONNECTEDNESS DESCRIBES AN INDIVIDUAL'S SENSE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATURAL WORLD





# Why explore connection to nature?



## Global societal challenge

- 1 in 5 sixteen+ year olds experience symptoms of anxiety and depression
- 10% of 5- to 16-year-olds have a clinically diagnosable mental health condition
- Wellbeing declines between 10-12 years

Children with anxiety disorders are unlikely to access support services.

- 1 in 5 access mental health services



Spending time in nature is associated with physical fitness, learning and attention, wellbeing & mental health.

Social prescribing nature?



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Reports indicate that 90% of UK population is in urban environments and that children growing up in urban environments are less likely to enjoy the natural environment, have less contact with green areas and native wildlife.

**We can help children access nature in schools.**







## Past work has shown us ...

Evaluation of a hands-on engagement in 21-week nature engagement programme

With >500 child participants, we found positive increases in mood, wellbeing, resiliency & connection to nature.

- Mood, wellbeing, and connection to nature; improvements in particular for those initially low in connection to nature (Harvey et al., 2020)
- Perceptions of biodiversity, which is associated with improvements in wellbeing (especially when perceived greater trees and fewer insects than existed over time) and resilience (when perceived greater number of invertebrates and animals over time; Montgomery et al., 2022).





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# SCHOOL GROUNDS AS NATURE SPACES

The Department for Education (DfE) estimates the combined green space area of just state schools in just England to be 263.3 m sq metres

Learning from and connecting with nature essential if young people are to care about and protect nature in the future  
DFE

Over 1 in 8 schools in England are turning sites from grey to green



# Research collaboration

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# Nature connectedness with schools

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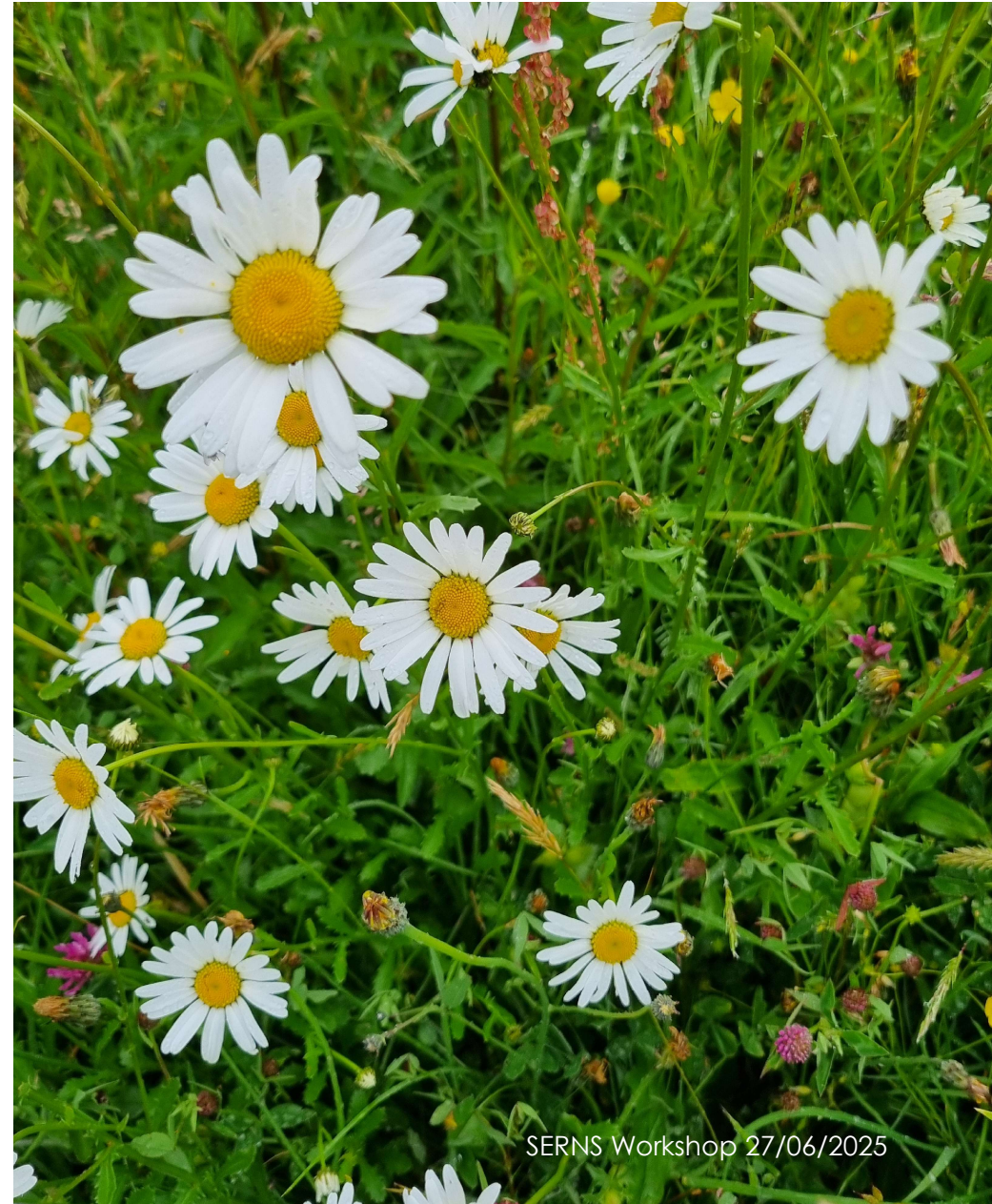
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Young people want to be  
spending time outdoors.

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# Outdoor engagement: Reports from 599 young people

Percent reporting frequency of spending time playing outdoors		Percent reporting frequency of visiting parks		Percent reporting levels of satisfaction with amount of time spent outdoors.	
30%	Every day	9%	Every day	28%	Would like to spend a lot more time outdoors
29%	Most days (4-6 days per week)	16%	Most days (4-6 days per week)	24%	Would like to spend more time outdoors
26%	Some days (2-3 days per week)	29%	Some days (2-3 days per week)	43%	Spends the perfect amount of time outdoors
8%	Not very often (1 day per week)	21%	Not very often (1 day per week)	3%	Would like to spend less time outdoors
5%	Rarely (couple days per month)	22%	Rarely (couple days per month)	3%	Would like to spend a lot less time outdoors
2%	Never	4%	Never		



What are you  
already doing in  
terms of  
connecting to  
nature or even  
learning outside at  
your school /  
nursery?



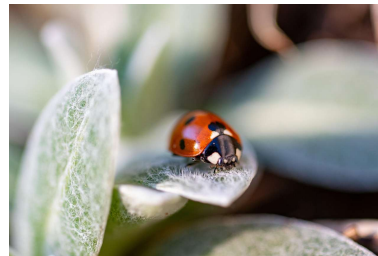
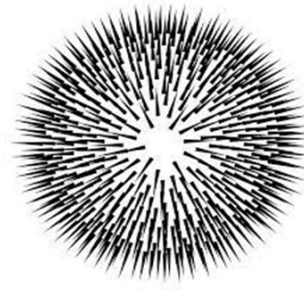
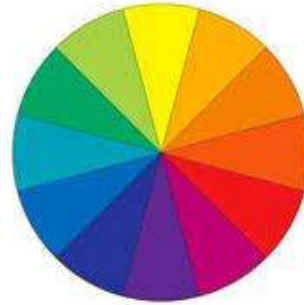
What are the barriers to  
connecting to nature in your  
school? (yours and pupils')



# Take away activities



Wakehurst autumn © RBG Kew







Thank you!



Interested in hearing more? We will be holding a workshop as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science, here at RHUL with collaborators from the University of Sussex. Keep informed, scan QR code.



ECHO-O LAB

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