



10 steps to developing and delivering a sustainable outdoor learning programme.



Supported by The Dufferin Foundation and part of the Learning Without Walls initiative.



Photo: Cavehill Primary School at Cavehill Country Park

Introduction

NIFSA has been developing and delivering outdoor learning programmes for hundreds of schools and nurseries across Northern Ireland over the last 12 years.

The following 10 steps will help you develop your own outdoor learning programme. Each step will have dedicated resources and useful links to make your journey as easy as possible.



*Photo: Dungannon Primary School at
Ranfurly House, Dungannon*

Step 1

Register with NIFSA

It is free to register with NIFSA to begin your journey.

Once you decide you want to continue, we would ask you to become a member.

Annual membership is used to support outdoor learning initiatives across Northern Ireland.

Useful tools:

NIFSA Membership benefits presentation.



*Photo: Wheatfield Primary School
using Ballysillan Park in Belfast*

Step 2

Planning your outdoor learning programme

Why – why do you want to develop an outdoor learning programme?

Who – what teacher(s) will be involved and what support will they need?

Where – can you use your school grounds or walk to a local site?

What – what resources will you need? – clothing, equipment etc.

When – what is your timescale?

Useful tools:

Outdoor learning programme template.

Various publications.

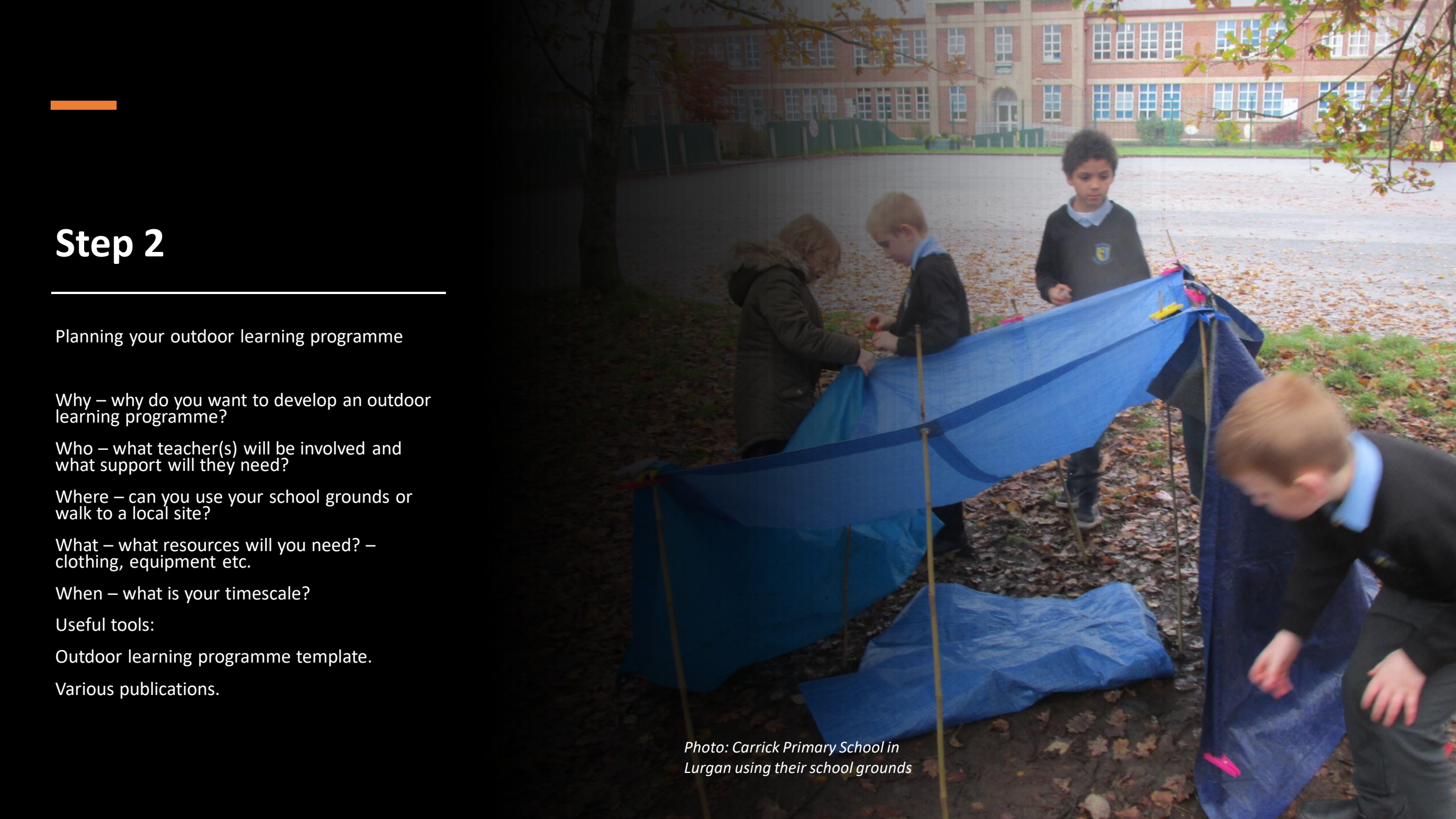
A photograph of four children in school uniforms building a shelter in a schoolyard. They are using blue tarpaulin and wooden sticks. The ground is covered with fallen leaves, and a large brick school building is visible in the background.

Photo: Carrick Primary School in Lurgan using their school grounds



Step 3

Identifying your outdoor learning area and health and safety considerations

When you choose your outside learning area whether it is your school grounds, Council or Country Park or agree a lease with a Private landowner you need to consider whether it is sustainable (can you walk there?), what risks are on-site and getting to site and how could the area be developed?

Useful tools:

Risk Assessment template.

School grounds audit.

NIFSA Examples of outdoor sites presentation.

NIFSA Forest School Handbook template.

Photo: Campbell College, Belfast



Step 4

Involving the local community – Forest School Family

Outdoor learning should not stop once the pupils leave school. The Forest School Family scheme is the perfect way to engage with local families and encourage them to take part.

Useful tools:

NIFSA Forest School Family Presentation.

Forest School Family QR code.



*Photo: Forest School Family Day at
Clandeboyne Estate, Bangor*

Step 5

Forest School Leader Level 3

This qualification is recognised across the UK and is generally acknowledged as the foremost award required for taking learning outside.

The qualification covers all theory and practical elements.

Useful tools

Dedicated On-line Forest School Leader Level 3 MIS for every member of staff undertaking the qualification.

Photo: Cairnshill Primary School





Step 6

Delivering your outdoor lessons

What does a typical session look like?

How can I keep a record of all my activity?

Where can I get ideas for lessons?

Useful tools:

NIFSA examples of outdoor sessions.

Record all your activity in your school's personalised Management Information System (MIS).

Hundreds of downloadable lesson plans available in your MIS.

*Photo: St Joseph's Primary School
using Crumlin Glen*



Step 7

Pupil recognition – Nature Ranger Certificates

Reward your pupils for participating in your outdoor learning programme.

Receive a Nature Ranger Certificate when you have delivered six outdoor lessons.

Useful tools:

Downloadable Nature Ranger Certificate template.

Nature Ranger Logbook template.

Photo: Bush Nursery School receiving their Nature Ranger Certificates at Ranfurly House



Step 8

Friends of Forest School

Get help with delivering your outdoor learning programme. Develop your own Friends of Forest School using parents and the local community. They could help to fundraise, walking to site, managing the site etc.

Useful tools:

Friends of Forest School presentation.

*Photo: Whitehead Primary School
volunteer*



Step 9

Links to other outdoor and environmental programmes

Why reinvent the wheel? There are lots of fabulous existing outdoor learning programmes ready for you to get involved with.

Useful tools:

Dedicated links to other environmental and outdoor learning initiatives.

*Photo: St . Patrick's Primary School,
New Lodge, North Belfast*



Step 10

Accreditation

Gain recognition for your school or nursery and become an official NIFSA Forest School. Achieve greater things by working through the three accreditation categories – elder, birch and oak.

Useful tools:

Dedicated accreditation section in your MIS that automatically updates when you complete each of the steps.

Downloadable certificates and images.

Photo: Teachers at North Coast Integrated College receive their Level 3 and NIFSA Official Forest School plaque

