



Examiners' Report/
Lead Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

BTEC Level 3 Nationals in CPLD
Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early
Years Practice (31599)



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Grade Boundaries

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each test, because then it would not take into account that a test might be slightly easier or more difficult than any other.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

Unit 4 – Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice (31599)

Grade	Unclassified	Level 3		
		P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	23	35	47

Introduction

This was the first series of the new specification, and as such, the first time that this unit has been externally assessed. Centres and learners are to be congratulated on their preparation for the first external assessment for this unit.

The question paper follows the format identified in the sample assessment materials. The paper is split into four activities. Each activity requires learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of different aspects of research. This includes research methods, their advantages and disadvantages, the implications of the research for individuals, early years' settings and the wider society. Marks for each activity are allocated in accordance with the specification design.

Each of the questions has been marked using a 'levels based' approach to assessment where the overall quality of the response is considered rather than the specific number of facts stated from the indicative content, although this does have a bearing on the quality of the response. More detail can be found below in the individual question section of the report.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

- Learner performance varied throughout the paper. Learners need to show knowledge and understanding of research methods and their application in early years' practice. Both depth and breadth of information is needed in order to fully address the demands of the paper.
- The first activity requires learners to review the stimulus material (a research paper) and extract information from this and from research materials that they have sourced themselves. Marks are available for work related to both sources, with additional credit being awarded for learners able to provide comparisons and conclusions.
- Activity 2 requires learners to develop their ideas by relating research to practice. This is further expanded on in activities 3 and 4 where learners need to suggest ideas for developing their own research practice and to demonstrate an understanding of the implications of doing so. Activity 4 focuses on the impact of research on practice in early year's settings.
- Throughout the paper, where learners were able to show application of their knowledge they were able to access the higher mark bands for the activities. Where basic knowledge was evident, but little application was demonstrated within the responses, learners were not able to do this. However, it should be note that responses overall were of a good standard, and centres are to be congratulated on the preparation of their learners and on the quality of responses seen in the learner work.

Individual Questions

Activity 1

Most learners were able to identify some or all of the research methods used in the stimulus material. They were able to comment appropriately on the validity of the research methods used. Participants in the study had responded to an online survey and to interviews, and most learners were able to provide information about the positive and negative implications of both of these research techniques.

Stronger responses contained about the reliability and validity of the methods used and presented this in conclusions supported by appropriate evidence. They also contained reference to research papers and articles that learners had sourced themselves, and were able to provide comparisons and conclusions about the appropriateness of the methods used in these papers also. Learners who accessed the higher mark bands were often able to compare the research methods used in the research that they had sourced with those used in the stimulus material provided.

Weaker responses made little reference to additional material, or did not show any realistic conclusions in response to the requirement to comment on the suitability of the research technique(s) for its intended purpose.

The work shown below demonstrates a comprehensive approach to this question.

Activity 1

What types of research methods have been used to produce the findings of this article and other articles you have researched about this issue?

Your answer should include:

- other methods of research used to explore the issue
- the reliability of the research methods used.

(15)

To research the issues into the changing relationships with nature across generations the article has used qualitative and quantitative research. This includes online surveys and interviews for 1150 adults and 502 children aged between 7-11 years. 648 adults without children responded and the age groups of the adults consisted of 50 year olds and 51 year olds.

One research method that was used was an online survey. Online surveys were beneficial in finding the issues of changing relationships with nature as it saves a lot of time for both researchers and participants. This because researchers do not have to wait a long period of time for participants to give an answer. As well as online surveys are effective for participants as it is online which means they will be able to complete it at a time which best suits them. This becomes a reliable source of information as participants will be able to provide honest answers as they will not be under so much pressure to provide an immediate answer. Online surveys are also beneficial for researchers as it allows to collect and analyse the data easily as they will be analysed at a time which is beneficial for them. On the other hand a limitation to online surveys is that it can become time consuming for the younger and much older generation as they may not understand what is being asked of them as so may not provide the answers that are required (National Trust.org.uk, 2015)

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Another research method that was conducted was interviews. The interviews were designed for primary school children aged between 7-11 years. Interviews were beneficial in order to support the issue as researchers were able to ask the children follow up questions on what they felt about the outdoors. This was beneficial as a much deeper understanding of the views and opinions were collected. However interviews may have become time consuming for the children as their mindset may have wandered off if they were easily bored, this hinders the findings of the research as the children may not have provided honest answers on their thoughts on outdoor play.

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The article shows no evidence of secondary research being carried out, this has an effect on research as it becomes less reliable as there is no evidence to backup the findings that have been gathered and so we will not know whether the information collected is valid.

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To further support the issues of the changing relationship with nature across generations I have conducted my own secondary research. One source of secondary research that I looked into was a documentary which aired on a commercial TV network - ITV News (ITV News, 2015). The documentary was conducted on 7th August 2014. This is a reliable source as it was carried out within the last 10 years. In addition to this the documentary consisted of a mother talking about how her child has never left the house without her. To support her view the documentary surveyed 2000 parents. The findings show that more than half the parents think that their children are at a greater risk than they were (ITV News, 2015). Surveys were beneficial in supporting the issues conducted in the documentary as data was collected



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Turn over ▶

from a wider number of people, this becomes beneficial as a broad range of attitudes, opinions and beliefs were able to be carried out in order to further support the issues. This documentary links to the findings in part A as it states that 'The majority of children (over 70%) say that they are supervised whenever they play'.

Another secondary research that I carried out were from two similar articles from Daily Mail and the Huffpost. Both tabloids were on the 'anxieties of parents keep children indoors' (Daily Mail, 2015). The articles carried out questionnaires on 3000 parents and children on their views and opinions on what keep them indoors.

Questionnaires were therefore beneficial in collecting information as large amounts of information was collected and was not time consuming. However a limitation to questionnaires is that it does not give an insight into the feelings and behaviours of the participant as well as this the answers provided ^{may} not always tell the truth, which hinders the research. The findings that were concluded were that 21% children want to play outdoors but parents are too scared. 53% blame traffic whereas 40% blame. The remaining 1/4 people blame neighbours as they feel that they will complain over the noise (Huffpost UK, 2015). Another limitation to this secondary information is that it is a tabloid, which can be seen as propaganda piece of information, which can come across as unreliable and biased to some people as it focuses on the researcher's viewpoint rather than statistical data (Daily Mail, 2015).

In order to continue support the issues in part A I looked up an article on 'young people's conception of and relationship with nature' (Anon, 2015). The article was conducted on the 13th Sep 2017, which becomes or can be seen



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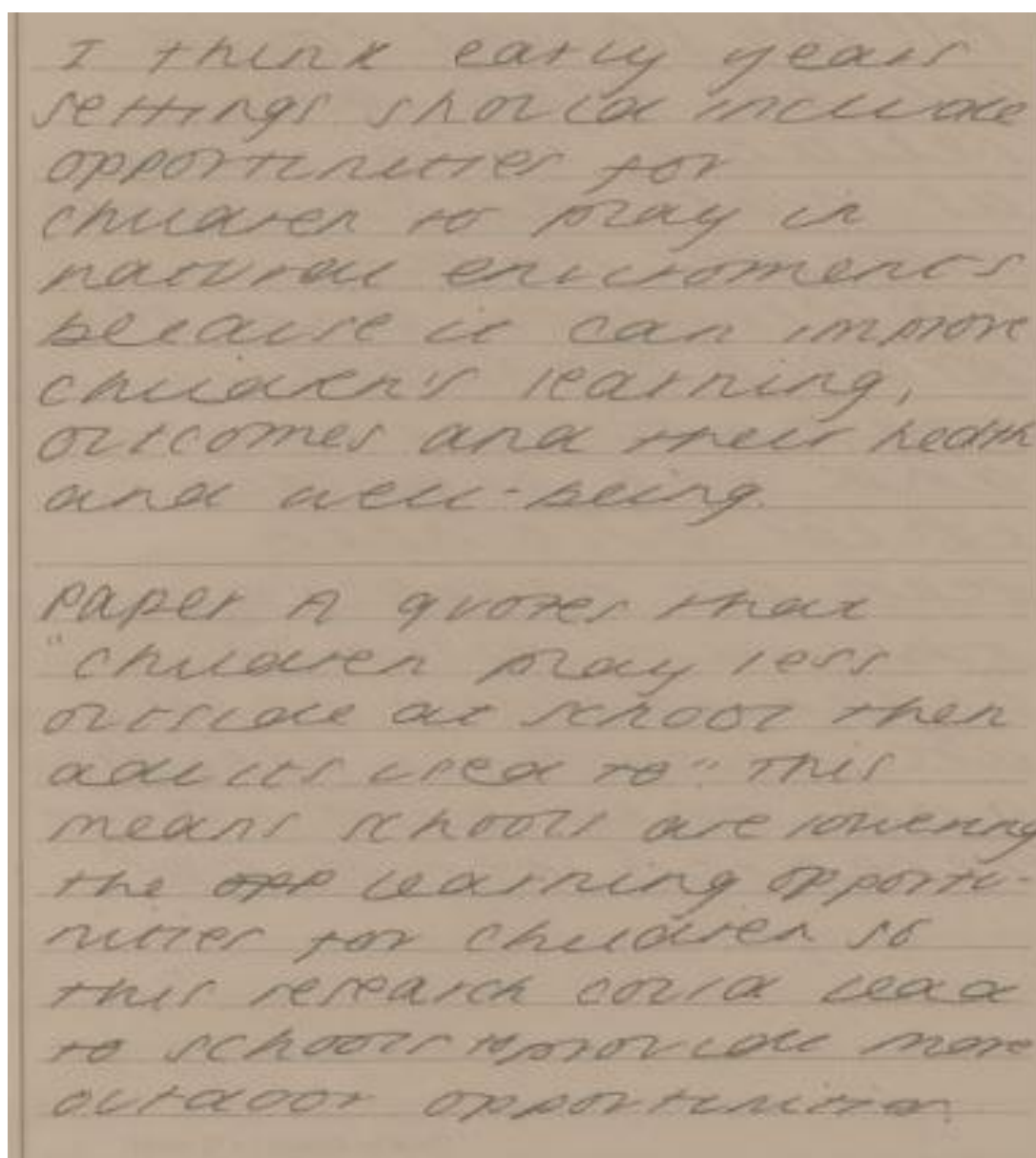
as a reliable piece of information as it was carried out within the last 10 years. The article asked 354 13-14 year olds to provide ^{responses to} written open ended questions. The findings show that most of the teenagers agree to having a relationship with nature whereas the rest say they know they do not have a strong relationship with nature (Anon, 2018). Open ended questions were beneficial in providing information as a much deeper understanding of the topic was addressed, this is because opinions and feelings were able to be addressed when answering the questions. However open ended questions could become limiting as it takes a long time to extract the answers that have been provided, this may lead to biased information as researchers may pick answers which support their issues. This links to the findings in Part A as the findings show that the favourite places to play have changed overtime for children (Anon, 2018).

To conclude there were a wide range of research methods that were conducted in order to support the issues in Part A. This shows that the majority of the population in the UK believe that there is a less stronger relationship with nature within their children.

Activity 2

This activity requires learners to suggest reasons for encouraging children to participate in outdoor play, and link this to the research findings that they have reviewed for this unit assessment. Learners should include examples that relate to individuals and to the wider society in their responses, supported where possible with evidence from their own secondary research. Work for this activity gained marks across the range of the mark bands, although the majority of work achieved in mark band 2.

Weaker learners were able to present accurate information, although this was limited in relation to the context. Learners were able to make good reference to the benefit of outdoor play on individuals, and some brief references to the implications for this within the wider society. Weaker scripts contained little or no justification for the suggestions made. The work below illustrates this point:



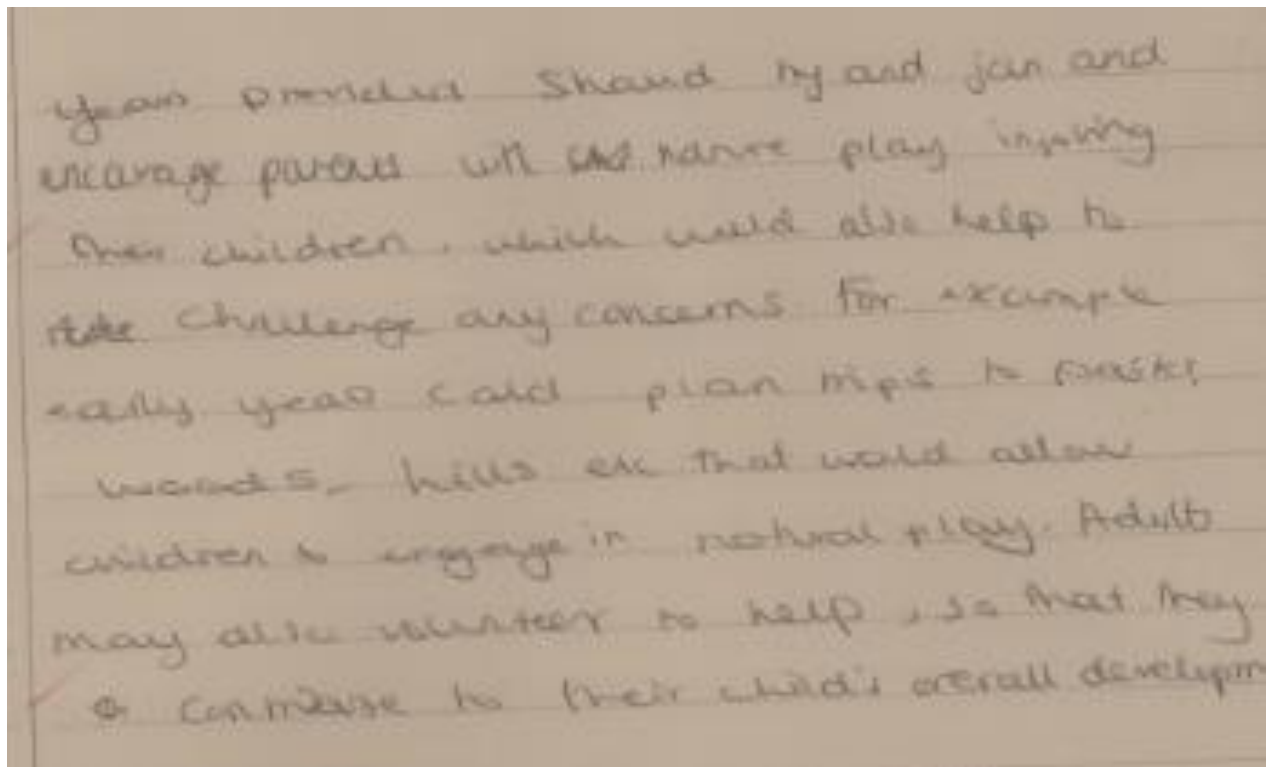
one way that it could
one reason why children
should be allowed
outdoor opportunities
in the setting is
because it helps with
their outcomes. Some
3 quotes that "The less
children to play outdoors,
the less likely they
learn to cope with
the risks and challenge
as they will go on
to face as adults. No
nothing can replace
what children gain
from the freedom and
independence of thought
they have when trying
new things out in the open."

Work that achieved in the higher mark bands linked the issue of outside play to the benefits for individuals and for society. There were good links to the Early Years Foundation Stage, and these were sustained and supported throughout the response. The secondary research findings were also linked effectively to the implications for practice.

The excerpts below illustrate the links between the source material, benefits for children and implications for practice:

According to recent research ~~from the research~~
in a guardian article, "4 out of 5 UK
children are not connected to nature", (Vaughan
2013), Reference 5), which shows the
significant change in connection with
nature of children compared to their
parent's generation. This ~~shows that~~ also
parents views on outdoor play and nature
have changed due to various concerns

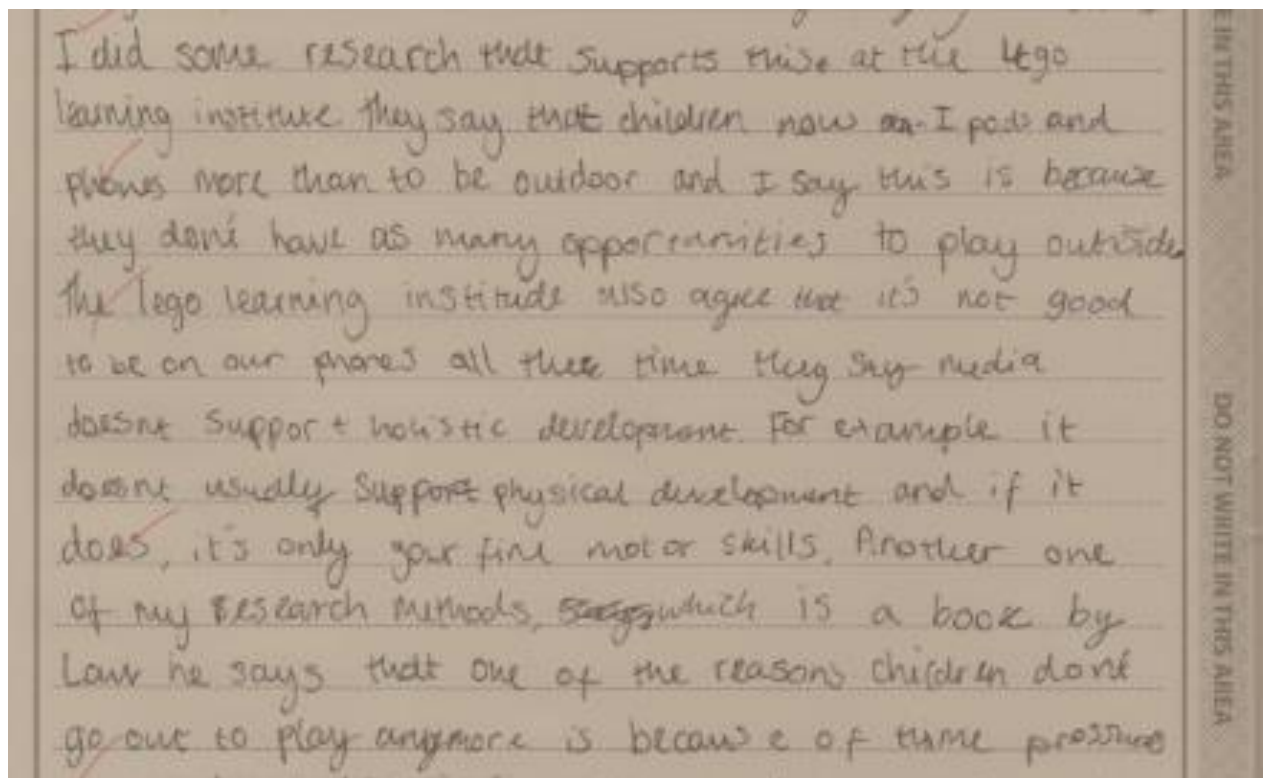
of "strangers and road safety" (Rite page 6,
Natural England 2009), limiting children's
freedom to go play as in the natural
environment. If early years settings help provide
opportunities for children to play in natural outdoor
environments, then they it won't impact the
the ~~the~~ affect as much, of children's freedom,
even if their parents have strong concerns as
at least the child had had the opportunity
to engage in the natural environment before
going back to the home setting.



Activity 3

This activity produced widely differing responses. Weaker learners provided minimal descriptions of possible research methods supported by planning considerations that are very limited in content and in demonstrating a sound understanding of the research rationale. Not all aspects are included, with areas such as ethics and consent frequently missing from the plan. Judgements, where offered are weak and not supported by reference to the materials used by the learner within this paper.

The work below provides an examples of work that fails to address key areas of the question:



Where learners achieved higher marks for this question, better research plans are seen, and make reference to the secondary research used by the learner. The style of the proposed research is explained, and includes all relevant considerations, including ethics and the advantages for the early years' practitioner. Reliability, consent and validity are all well addressed and an understanding of the legal obligations of managing data is shown. There is also reference to skills needed, analysis and how conclusions should be drawn appropriately.

The work below illustrates an understanding of some of the key concepts needed in this activity:

Based on the article I would research into the way in which literacy can be incorporated into outdoor play. I have based this interest on the findings of the article suggesting boys spend more time outside than girls and my own secondary research suggesting girls are more successful at literacy (studies of children in fourth class). This information supports my idea of incorporating literacy outdoors due to boys spending more time outdoors in order to help them with their academic abilities in the future.

When carrying out my research the methods I would use are participant and non-participant observations, interviews of children and staff working in settings and focus groups. Participant observations require the participant observer to be involved. This makes recording hard and may influence the results. Non-participant observations mean the observer is not involved. This allows you to record a lot of information, see things

When using interviews I would make sure I gained an understanding of what children like to play with outdoors by asking them open questions. I would use ~~open~~ interviews to ask how they feel about the outdoor environment. This would allow me to identify if training of staff is required to make them more confident to teach the children outdoors. I would also use focus groups to gain understanding of how practitioners feel, however this may not be reliable due to them wanting to conform so they will fit in. Therefore, the use of triangulation is apparent as I will use different research methods to counterbalance the disadvantages of each method.

When carrying out my research I will need to be aware of ethical principles/issues to maintain a reliable ^{piece of} research. These principles I will maintain these principles/issues by gaining

consent from all participants, this includes the consent needed from parents of young children as they are not able to make informed decisions. The participants / parents of children involved will be made aware of their right to withdraw at anytime and will be informed what research is being carried out and why. I will maintain confidentiality under the data protection act 1998 and will ~~keep~~^{respect} the participants human rights under the Human Rights Act 1998. To help make sure my research is ethical I will follow the guidance given by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood, 6. This is a guidance framework involved in early childhood research and the publication of its results. It states 'researchers must ensure participants are provided with full honest information about the content, purpose and process of the research.'

Activity 4

The majority of work for this activity meets the requirements for mark band 2. Weaker learners were able to describe the implications for research findings within the early years' sector, and some learners were able to link these to the issues raised in the source material. Occasionally links to wider research were also referenced. The rationales for these implications were limited and did not always provide supporting evidence for the suggestions made.

The work below is a completed answer for this activity. The work is not wrong but it demonstrates limited understanding of the depth and breadth of requirements of the activity, and thus cannot exceed mark band 1:

Research findings help early years practitioners to provide suitable opportunities for outdoor play as it gives us a clear idea on where children enjoy playing and what they like to do in those environments. Implications this may have for early years settings involve a lack of resources which can limit the childrens play and exploration. Another aspect is the environment, if it is unsafe, the children will not benefit from the environment, meaning the children ~~are~~ are not being provided with enough opportunities when playing outdoors.

Stronger papers achieved in mark bands 3 and 4. Work demonstrated links between research and its implications for the role of the early years' practitioners and for wider society. Links to social issues included the increase in childhood obesity, and there were suggestions of how aspects of early years practice are influenced by, and impact on wider social issues. Early years practice, and how it could be developed in the light of research was a feature of stronger work, and learners were able to include reference to parents, funding and local environments, and make links to the source material.

The excerpts below provide an example of how more marks can be accessed when learners bring together elements from the paper to inform their understanding of research and its' implications for early years' practice and for the wider society:

The EYFJ emphasises the importance of play during learning activities (Passoni et al page 21), and 'children are playing more indoors compared to adults to a much greater extent' (Report to Natural England, 2009), which is what my research confirmed and the main conclusion drawn in the article.

This research can help practitioners understand the shift in attitudes between today's generation of children to play unstructured in natural places compared to that of their parents' generation. This is further supported by the conclusions in the article, where the statistical evidence shows that over 70% of children have the perception that they are supervised wherever they play. These findings could impact early years practice at early years settings, now have a set 5 line to take children to the outdoor area. This is also a requirement from the EYFJ.

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This can have an immense negative impact on children's learning and development as if children are playing indoors and using technology they are actively being denied the opportunity to grow and develop in a rich environment whereby not only do children develop physically, they also develop socially, emotionally and cognitively.

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By reviewing current practice and reviewing research findings, this could influence changes to the way parents and practitioners can provide suitable opportunities for our own play in natural environments.

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Many Early Years Settings still have '15 minutes' of outdoor play for children in a day which is not effective and can have a negative impact on children's learning and development as children typically learn through play (Tassoni, 2013). This is because many outdoor environments in Early Years Settings are limited and controlled and do not allow children to explore new things and try out new things. Practitioners can provide opportunities for children to play outdoors in a natural

environment through the use of research findings by providing more trips for children. These trips can be regular park trips or trips to Forest Schools. This allows children the opportunity to explore and develop through natural resources and their own creativity and imagination. The 'Daily Mail' article from my own secondary research states that 'children can be so stressed if they have no access to the natural environment'. Places like Forest Schools allow children to grow and develop as Forest Schools typically allow children to challenge themselves and take risks which all aid in their development.

Through research findings, practitioners can also be more up to date with their training as many practitioners become so used to doing things a certain way, they then deny children the opportunity to grow and develop in new, exciting ways. Some Early Years Settings can also train ~~children~~ practitioners to become Forest School leaders so that they may provide challenging and creative activities for children that will aid in their learning and development. However this can be expensive

4 In conclusion, through research findings, there are many ways teachers can provide opportunities for children to play outdoors in the natural environment. Article A states that 62% of children played in pre school playground compared to 40% of children now and over 44% of children used to play in the woods in the earlier generation compared to 9% now. If practitioners provide opportunities for children and parents to see the benefits of being in natural environments, they may be more likely to spend time outdoors outside of an early years setting.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, learners should:

- Have a sound understanding of research methodology.
- Be able to suggest particular research methods in relation to the information being sought.
- Show a clear understanding of key issues such as validity, ethics and consent when planning or reviewing research findings.
- Be able to evaluate research findings and draw realistic conclusions.
- Be able to make links between research findings and the implications for early years practice.
- Be able to show an understanding of the links between research findings and wider society.
- Understand that research has implications that are sometimes not intended.
- Be able to communicate their ideas and understanding in a logical way.
- Be able to address specific points within the appropriate activity.

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