This learning experience is an example of how one service supports one of the learning goals in Aistear’s theme of Well-being.

The trip to the woods was organised because of the interest the children had shown when a child brought a snail into pre-school in a saucepan. This spurred a great interest in nature and one child asked if we could go on an adventure to the woods to get more snails.

This took a bit of planning and a number of parents came on board to travel with us to Glengara Wood which is about 10 miles from the service. That morning it took a while to get going between trips to the toilet, checking seat-belts and making sure we had our picnic and spare clothes!

Eventually we started our journey only to get caught in a traffic jam, Tipperary style – stuck behind a herd of cows on the road! This created a lot of discussion: Where were the cows going? How were we going to get past? What kind of cows were they?
One of the children, who lives on a farm, quickly informed us that they were ‘freshian cows!’ Some of the children were really interested in finding out more about cows and the discussion continued until we reached our destination.

We got off the bus and made sure everyone was wearing the appropriate clothing. We hoped the trip would extend the children’s learning and respect for animals, insects, trees and plants in the wood. We had brought containers and encouraged children to collect natural items like leaves, twigs, stones and mud. We named the items, counted some of them, encouraged discussion about sizes and textures. Some children collected worms and snails, others were not so keen to get their hands dirty!

However, the children’s interest in this quickly died and they handed over their collections to parents and staff and went climbing over and under tree roots, splashing in the stream, bouncing on the branches and climbing trees. Their independence and bravery knew no bounds.
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Plan trips with small groups of children to the local playground and organise obstacle courses and climbing challenges in the outdoor area.
- Organise small group art activities using natural items, for example, painting stones and twigs.
- Find some books on dairy farming and look at pictures of different breeds of cows on the internet.

This experience also links to:

Well-being, Aim 2, Learning goals 1, 3 and 5
Exploring and Thinking, Aim 1, Learning goals 1 and 4
The play leader’s reflections

We had intended to extend the learning about nature and we did, but the real joy and learning from the day was the fun the children had running, climbing, jumping and exploring.

One of our quieter children really came out of her shell and joined in much more than she does in the service.