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

Normally we spend approximately only one third of each day outside. So when we get a beautiful sunny day we try to maximize the value of our outside space and spend longer there.

On this particular day, first thing in the morning, we asked the children if they would like to move the playroom outside. We told them that they could help us move things outside by bringing what they would like to play with. We set up a quiet area with soft cushions and books, a writing area with table, chairs and a variety of crayons, colouring pencils, paint and paper. We brought the tables and chairs out and put an umbrella up to provide shade. The children brought a variety of things like Lego, cars, tractors, dolls, kitchen toys and blankets. We moved the rubbish bins outside also so the children were able to clear away their lunches as normal.
The water table was under the tap and the children were using the tap to fill containers. The water was making a river and another child came along to hoover up the mess! One girl asked if she could take off her shoes and socks and then all the children followed. The children jumped and splashed in the water. They filled up old washing-up bottles and squirted water in the puddles. They made bubbles using washing-up liquid. The children loved looking at their reflection in the water and watched how the sun created different colours on it when it shined.

The adults were asked to take off their shoes too. Really it would have been impossible to resist the urge on a hot summer's day not to splash around in water to cool down too. There was lots of laughing, squealing, talking and most important of all lots of fun!

The children loved the freedom of being outside for the day and having familiar things around them but seeing them in a different light. The writing table was used to draw pictures to hang in the playhouse as it had very bare walls. Children who would never choose to sit and draw inside did so because the environment was different.
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Organise some small group activities where children focus on two or three of the photos taken on the day and talk about how they felt outside and what they liked doing. Support discussion to include some of the differences between summer and winter.
- Add some props to the pretend play area to encourage the topic of holidays: a suit case, flip flops, holiday brochures. Add materials to make passports and tickets.
- Add some piping and s-bends to the outside area so that children can experiment with the flow of water.

This experience also links to

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

Children love to play with water and they loved it even more when we got involved with them. When they asked us to take off our shoes we valued their request and got involved. We had such good fun and it is a great memory for all of us to have.

The children really led this experience. They had autonomy over how they used the water, how wet they got and how long they played with it.

Moving the playroom material outside gave the children a chance to see that change is often a good thing and that there is no reason to fear it.