

## Book corner

**Brave Charlotte and the Wolves** by Anu Stohner and Henrik Wilson

Bold little sheep Charlotte stands out from the rest of the herd.



**The Brave Little Owl** by Gill Davies and Dick Twinney

A baby owl is afraid of the dark, but what will happen when it's time for him to learn how to fly?



**Scaredy Squirrel** by Melanie Watt

The first in a series of books about a squirrel who overcomes his many fears to take risks.

**The Owl's Lesson (Percy the Park Keeper)** by Nick Butterworth

Percy and his animal friends find a little bird who needs some help and encouragement to learn how to fly.



**As well as the zip wire (right), the children at Lathallan often take part in bouldering and mountain sledging**

# Flying high

From a zip wire to sledging, one setting in Scotland is uniquely adventurous. By *Marianne Sargent*

**F**lying across a ravine on a 100m zip wire, bouldering in the garden and mountain sledging are part of everyday life for the children at Lathallan Nursery in Angus, Scotland.

Manager Janice Jarvie says children in the nursery have their first experience of adventure sports at the age of two. 'We cater from birth right up to five in the nursery and the only class that does not join in are the birth to two-year-olds, because they are just a little bit too tiny. But the two- to three-year-olds have just started using the zip wire. So it's fantastic; the whole nursery go out and have a ball.'

Mrs Jarvie says she appreciates how lucky the children are to have wonderful surroundings that make it possible for the youngest to take part in adventure sports from such an early age.

'We've got a large area of land round about us. We're quite rural and the school has its own beach as well. It is lovely, we've got so many opportunities to go out and do whatever we want really,' she says.

The nursery is part of Lathallan School, an independent co-educational day and boarding school, housed inside Brotherton Castle and situated within 62 acres of beautiful countryside on Scotland's east coast.

The zip wire, which was installed on the school grounds by a member of the parent body two years ago, spans a large area of woodland and a small ravine named Narnia Gorge. Mrs Jarvie says this does not appear to phase the children too much.

'We do have wee ones who can be shy and lack confidence in trying to do some of the things that we do, but they join in anyway. Eventually we'll get them on the zip wire. If they're not comfortable and confident enough to go on their own then we'll do a piggy-back with them so they can go across and see what it's like, but they've also got one of us attached to them.'

### PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

As well as the zip wire, the school has a bouldering wall that the older nursery children have regular access to. Nursery admin manager Colin Christie says it is the children's size rather than their age that limits their use of this equipment. 'It's the reach that's the issue. It's better suited to slightly bigger children. They can use it but it's just a little bit more difficult for them.'

The nursery's close proximity to Glenshee ski resort also makes it possible for the children at Lathallan to go sledging on a grander scale than most.

Last winter was mild, with little





snow, so the older children were taken up to Glenshee in a school minibus because, says Mrs Jarvie, 'We had promised to take them sledging.'

Mr Christie says adventure sports help the children to evaluate and take risks. 'It helps to build their confidence because if they're allowed to push their boundaries themselves they'll all take part to whatever degree they're comfortable with.'

'So, if there are some more adventurous than others then they're able to go that little bit further and we accompany those who are not so comfortable, on the zip wire for example, so they've got that reassurance of having somebody with them.'

'The parents are really positive and supportive,' Mrs Jarvie adds. 'I think coming from around here, there are a lot of parents who are outdoors people anyway. You know

their children will have been doing this with them for a long time, walking and climbing and so on.

'There are some who don't have this kind of background though, and the children won't have experienced these activities outside the nursery setting, but it's what we promote at the school from nursery upwards and that's why parents really like it, because they're given the opportunity to do things like that.'

'So they support us one hundred per cent really, and when we say that we want to do this, they are quick to give us permission and they are quick to come down and help with it as well.' ■

*Marianne Sargent is a writer specialising in early years education and a former Foundation Stage teacher and primary and early years lecturer*

### BIG ADVENTURES

What if your setting is situated somewhere less amenable to adventure sports? There are venues across the UK where young children can participate in a wide variety of challenging activities. Here are some examples:

- National Trust property Lyme in Stockport, Cheshire ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lyme](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lyme)) has a large adventure playground with a big slide, bouldering areas and tall pyramid towers and walkways.
- The Climbing Works in Sheffield ([www.climbingworks.com](http://www.climbingworks.com)) has a Mini Works sister site nearby for young climbers. Here Rock Tots sessions run every Tuesday and Thursday mornings during term time, involving games and climbing activities designed for children aged 18 months to three years.
- The Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire ([www.thesnowcentre.com](http://www.thesnowcentre.com)) offers skiing and snowboarding lessons for children aged four years up.
- Zip World sites in Blaenau Ffestiniog, Bethesda and Betws y Coed, Wales ([www.zipworld.co.uk](http://www.zipworld.co.uk)) have a Junior Tree Trail for children aged four to eight years.
- Glasgow Climbing Centre in Scotland ([www.glasgowclimbingcentre.com](http://www.glasgowclimbingcentre.com)) offers Meerkatz Young Climbers courses for children aged four to seven years.
- Queen's Sport in Belfast, Northern Ireland ([www.queenssport.com](http://www.queenssport.com)) offers Squirrels climbing courses for children aged four to five years.
- Jump Nation ([www.jumpnation.com](http://www.jumpnation.com)) has trampoline parks across the UK, which offer Toddler Time sessions.

### More ideas

- Many local playgrounds now have zip-wires, high slides and challenging climbing areas. See what is on offer in your neighbourhood.
- Many leisure centres now offer adventure water sports such as battery-powered jet skis for young children as young as four. Find out what your local swimming pool has to offer.
- Look out for providers in your local area that introduce gymnastics to babies, toddlers and pre-school children, such as Tumble Tots ([www.tumbletots.com/index.php](http://www.tumbletots.com/index.php)) and The Little Gym ([www.thelittlegym.co.uk](http://www.thelittlegym.co.uk)).
- Set up an obstacle course in your outdoor area. Include upturned benches for the children to practise balancing, incorporate the climbing frame to encourage them to climb and lay out some camouflage netting for them to crawl under.

