

# Outdoor learning: Scottish primary teachers' perceptions of training and professional development

Leanne Mattu, PhD Researcher, University of Glasgow

Supervised by:

Dr Bethan Wood & Mr Carlo Rinaldi, University of Glasgow

Dr Dave Roberts, SRUC



Funded by the Mains of Loirston Charitable Trust  
(Registered Charity Number SC038006)  
[www.mainsofloirston.org/](http://www.mainsofloirston.org/)



## The need for further training

“Part of the problem for existing teachers appears to have been the lack of opportunities for them to learn about outdoor opportunities as part of their own training.”

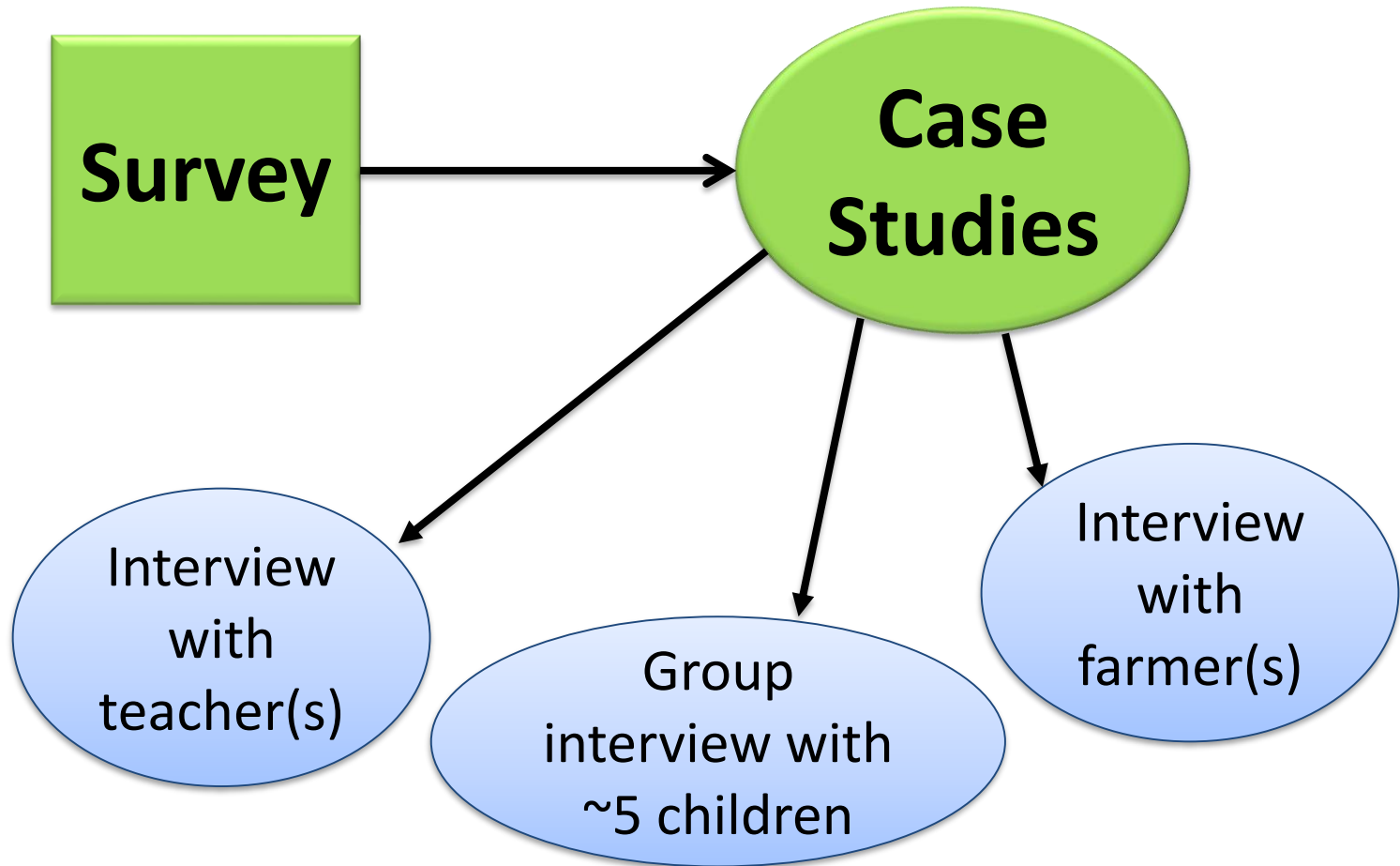
(Nicol *et al.*, 2007, p.13)

- Lesson ideas
- How to encourage and empower staff
- Sharing resources
- Practical skills
- How to access to funding / financial support (Primary)

(from Christie *et al.*, 2014, p.60)



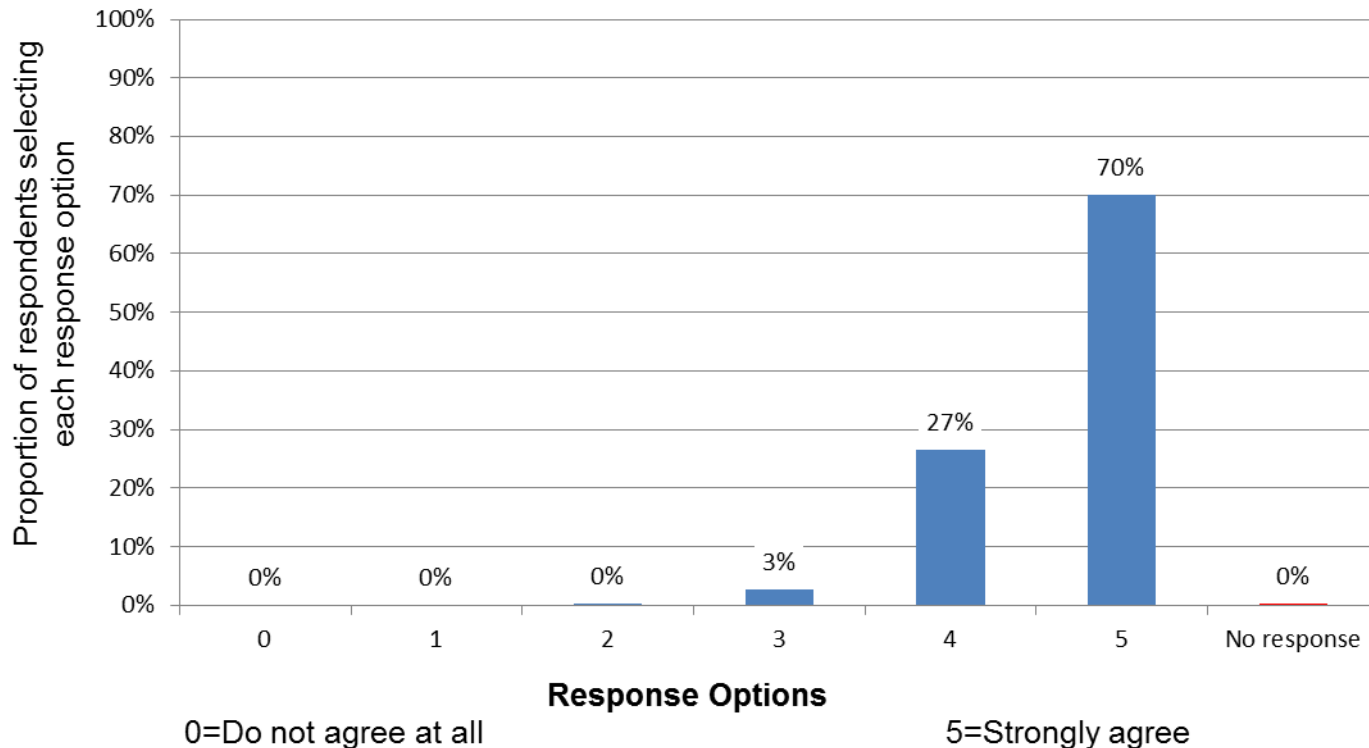
## Methods





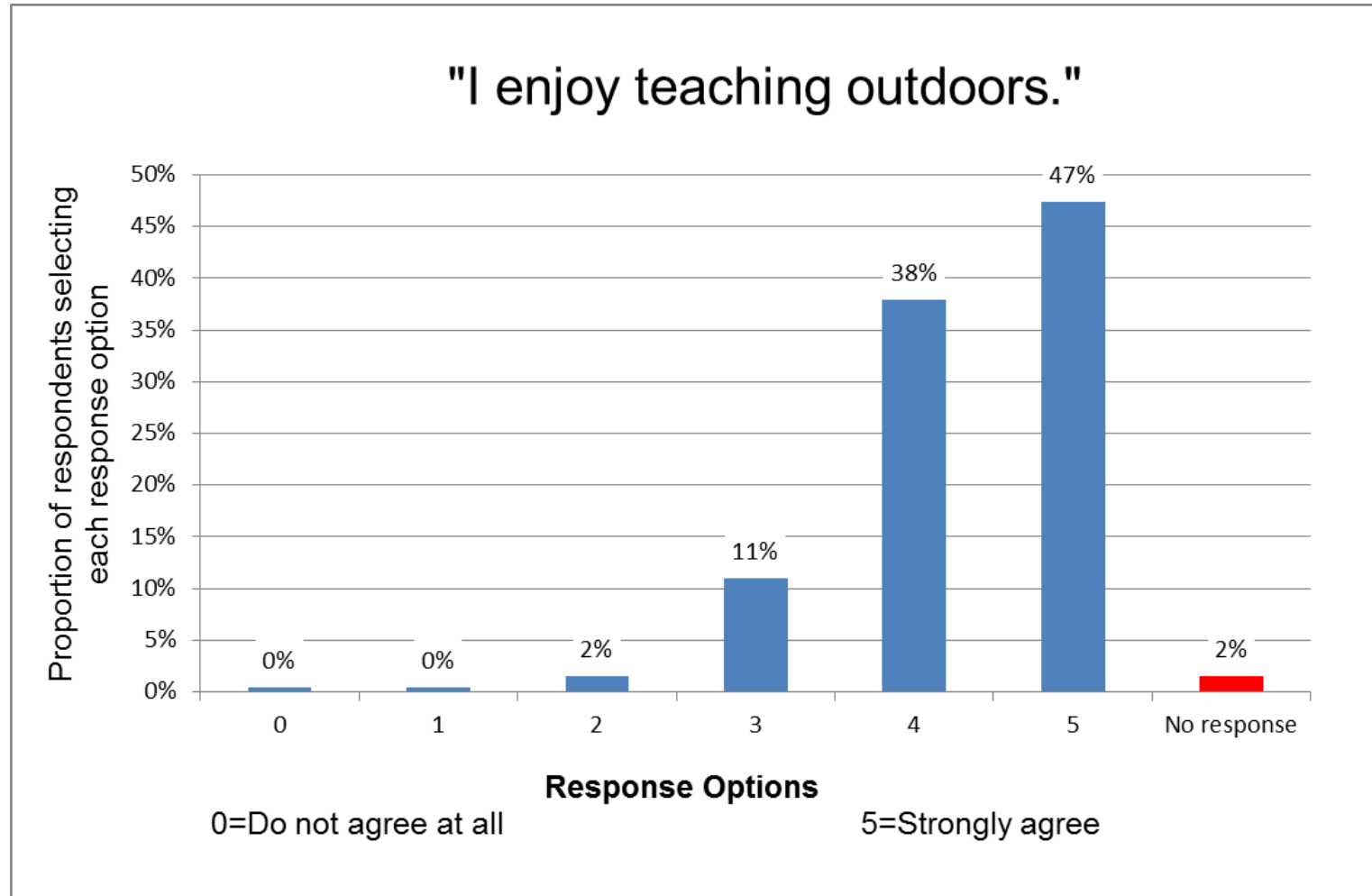
## Survey respondents (1)

"I think it's an important part of my role as a teacher, to give children opportunities to learn outdoors ."



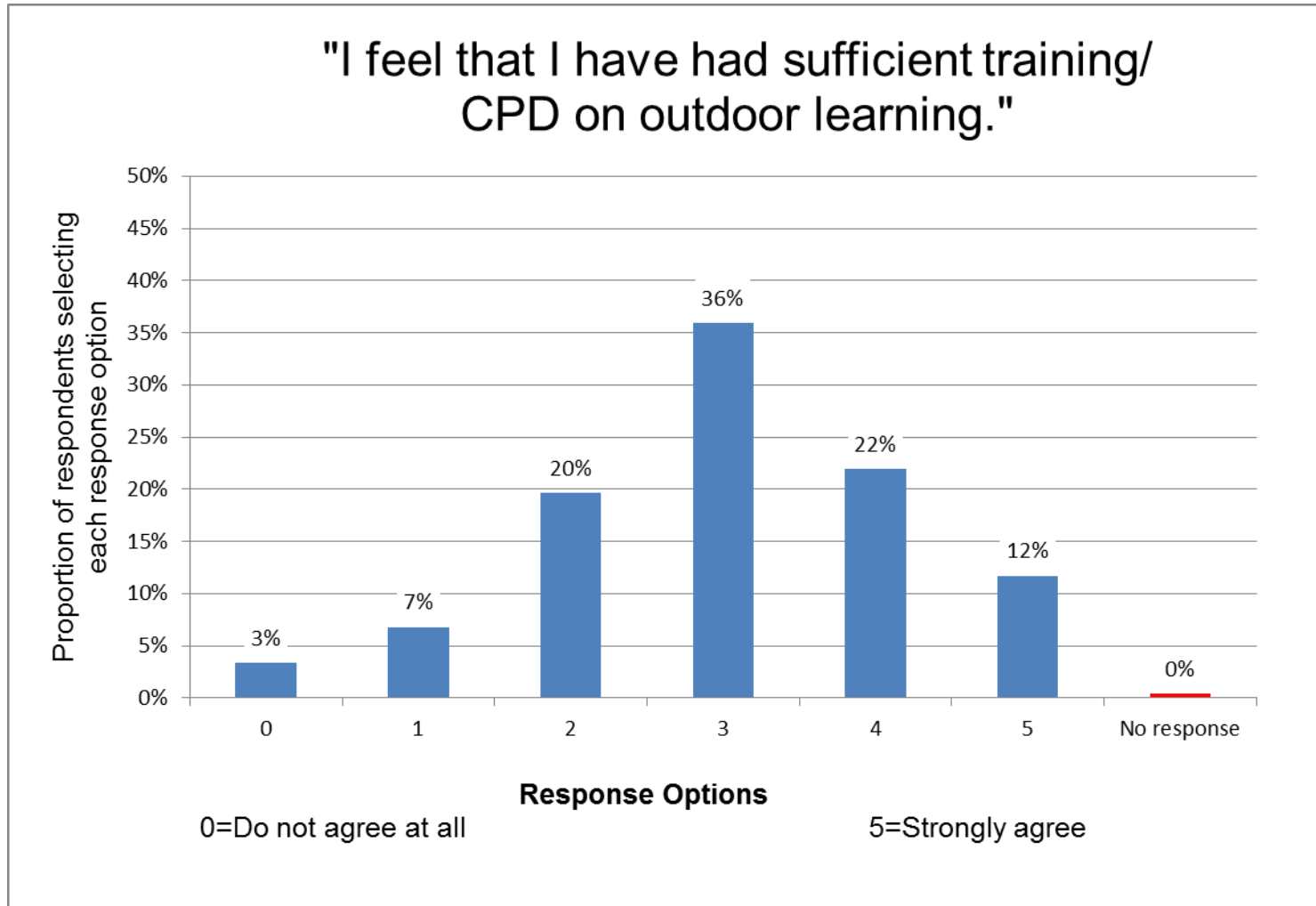


## Survey respondents (2)



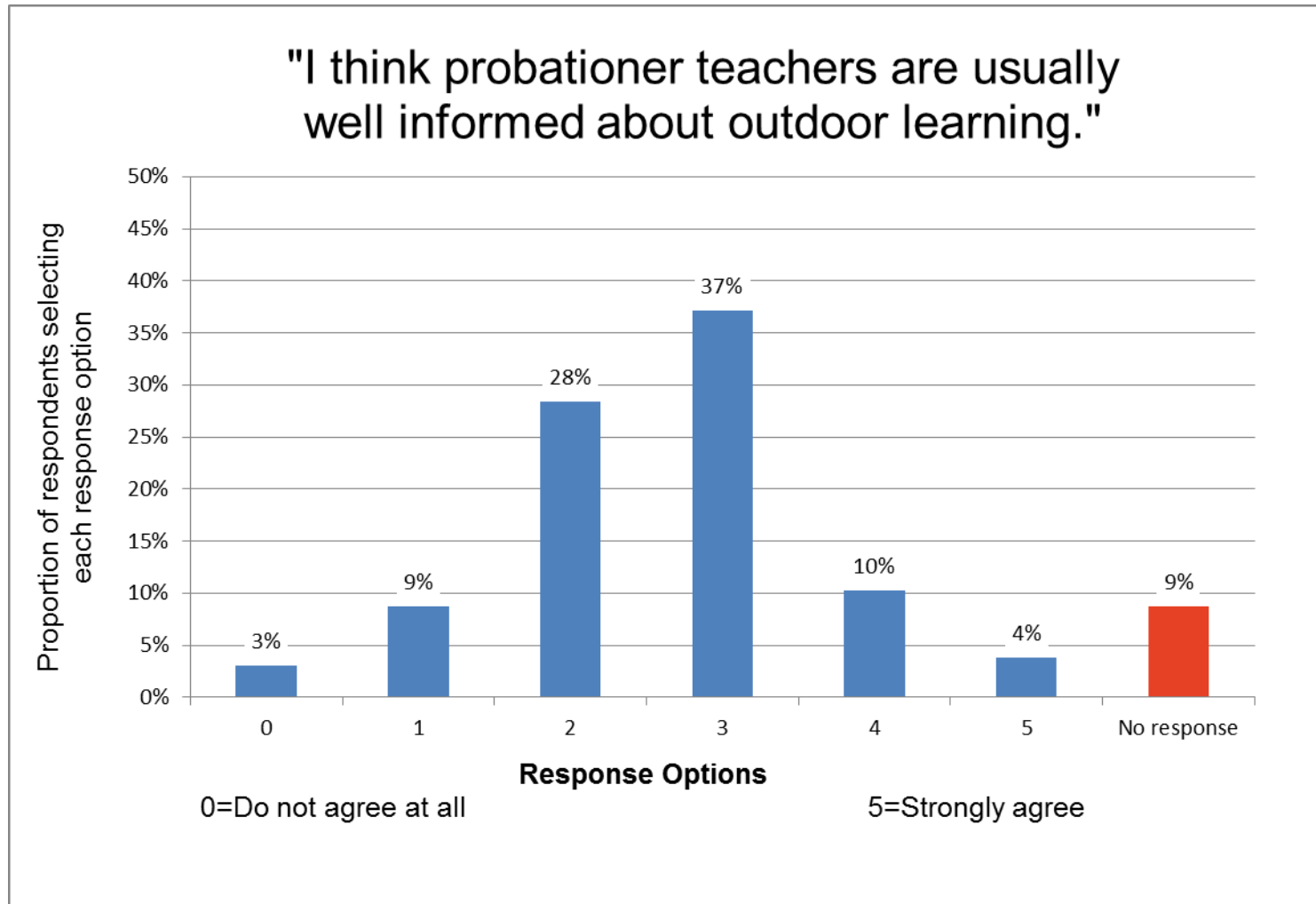


## Survey responses (1)





## Survey responses (2)





## Teachers' learning

“...a lot of it is just what you teach yourself. There are CPD opportunities out there...but a lot of it is just what you learn on your own, or asking colleagues...” (Teacher, Case Study 3)

“It is that idea of cascading, people might go out with maybe one person from the school and then pass the knowledge on to everyone else” (Teacher, Case Study 1)





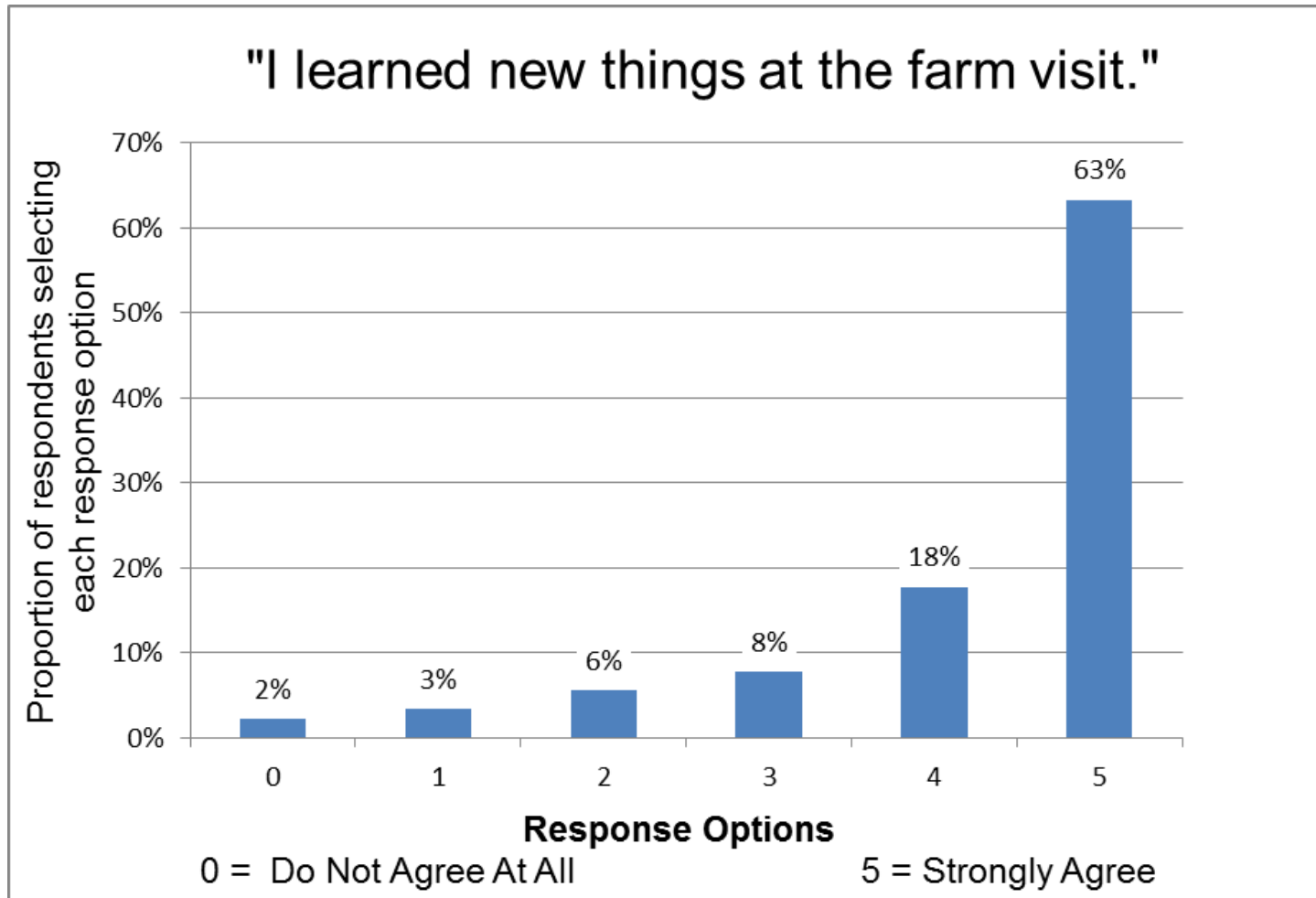
## Learning about farm visits

“...last year we went to [that farm] because it had been recommended by a member of staff who had been before” (Teacher, Case Study 8)

“... we came across the RHET website and then, ‘cause one of the teachers is a farmer’s wife...and they basically guided us to there and we just saw it on the website to organise visits” (Teacher, Case Study 4)



## Teachers' learning at the farm





## Farming Expertise

“I have got teachers coming out and taken aback by how little they know”

(Farmer, Case Study 5)

“They need to have actual farm days for teachers only”

(Farmer, Case Study 3)

CA: She’s not a farmer so she might not know everything, she’s not maybe an expert of it so she wants...

CB: She wants to know some stuff as well

CA: Uh-uh, it’s not just for us, she might want to know things

(P4 boys, 7-8 years old, Case Study 3)



## What guidance would teachers find useful?

“CPD sessions - actually at a farm to show the potential.”

(Survey Respondent #150)

“...get them onto the farm for CPD courses.”

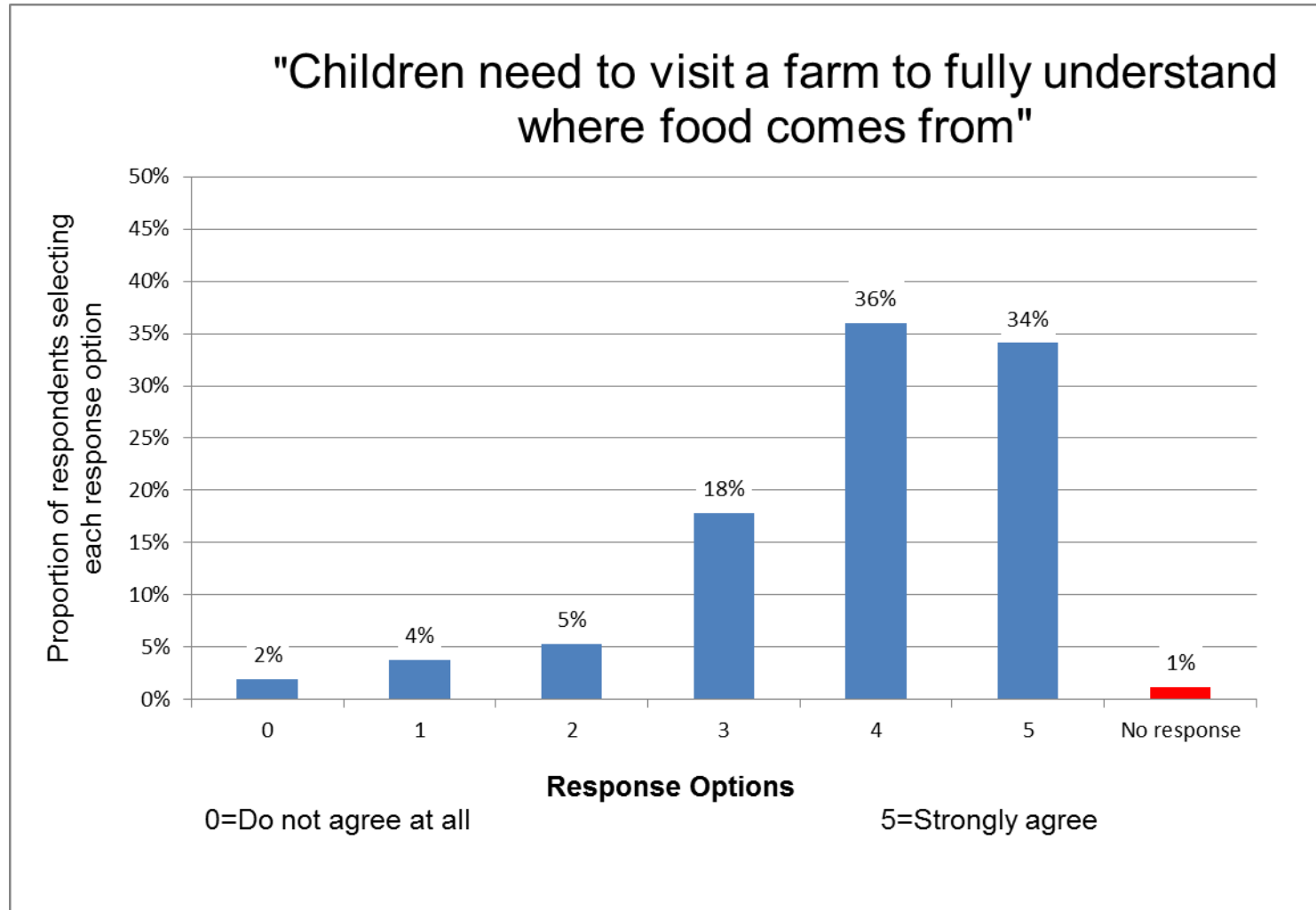
(Survey Respondent #191)

“A 'hands on' CPD session for staff would be valuable. It would help to alleviate any concerns around hygiene or safety.”

(Survey Respondent #15)

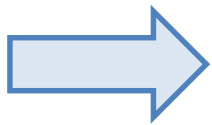


## The importance of farm visits



## Conclusion

- The 'outdoors' in *Curriculum for Excellence*
- Teachers' perceptions of their training and professional development needs - still more to do
- The importance of farm visits
- 'Hit and miss' in teacher learning about farm visits



**Student teachers should have an opportunity to visit a farm as part of ITE/ initial training.**

# Thank you.

## References:

Christie, B., Beames, S., Higgins, P., Nicol, R., & Ross, H. (2014) 'Outdoor learning provisions in Scottish schools.' *Scottish Educational Review*, 46(1), pp. 48-64.

Nicol, R., Higgins, P., Ross, H., Mannion, G. (2007) *Outdoor education in Scotland: A summary of recent research*. Perth: Scottish Natural Heritage.

Project website: [www.farmvisitsstudy.co.uk](http://www.farmvisitsstudy.co.uk)

Or email: [l.mattu.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:l.mattu.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Content © Leanne Mattu 2014, except where otherwise indicated.



Funded by the Mains of Loirston Charitable Trust  
(Registered Charity Number SC038006)  
[www.mainsofloirston.org/](http://www.mainsofloirston.org/)

