

## PROGRAMME TAKING SCHOOLS OUT OF DOORS



**Rock on:** Trying the rock-climbing wall is six-year-old Megan Kerswell, from Esh Winning Primary School, watched by outdoor education officer David Etheridge

Picture: BRIAN CLOUGH

PUPILS at Esh Winning Primary School are to pilot a new scheme to get youngsters out of the classroom.

The Get Out More award is being introduced by Durham County Council to encourage schools to use the outdoors more in lessons and for leisure and recreation.

Similar schemes have been tried in Hampshire and Nottingham.

The council hopes to extend its pilot across the county.

It has been prompted by concerns for the health of children who do not get enough exercise, and a declining use of the outdoors in school life.

The scheme will encourage schools and pupils to hold lessons in the fresh air, visit residential centres and go on field trips, carry out conservation and habitat reclamation and take part in adventurous activities.

Awards will be given to pupils who participate and, at secondary school level, pupils could achieve the title of Countryside Guardian.

To launch the scheme, pupils had the chance to scale a Rock-it climbing wall.

David Etheridge, the council's head of outdoor learning support, said: "It is about encouraging youngsters to go out and enjoy and appreciate the countryside in all of its forms, to learn in the countryside, explore the countryside and reclaim the countryside and conserve it.

"Over the last five to ten years, school use of the outdoors has declined, not only because of safety concerns, but because of time constraints and the pressure of the curriculum.

"This is a pilot scheme, but eight to ten schools have expressed interest in it and will come on to it over the next six months."