



National
Guidance

Rigorous Evaluation: meeting Ofsted expectations and assuring quality

The Ofsted report "**Learning Outside the Classroom – How Far Should You Go?**" (October 2008) makes statements in the strongest terms to support the value of Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC), including the fact that it raises achievement.

However, it also highlights the finding that *even where LOtC is highly valued and provided to a high standard, it is rarely evaluated with sufficient rigour* – i.e. in the way that classroom learning is evaluated.

This paper has been produced to help schools and other settings formulate a "rigorous evaluation process" applicable to outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC, that meets Ofsted requirements.

(a) The Starting Point – Prioritising Benefits and Learning Outcomes

Rigorous evaluation cannot take place unless the teachers/leaders of the activities have reached a clear understanding of the learning outcomes they hope to achieve. Given that most outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC activities have the potential to deliver a very wide range of benefits and outcomes, the first point is for staff to agree how the Learning Outcomes are to be **prioritised**. This can be achieved, in the early stages of the planning process, if all leaders participate in a brainstorming exercise to agree the learning outcome priorities.

Other issues that might be agreed at this time:

1. Will different staff be tasked to monitor different outcomes?
2. If the development of the outcomes is to be tracked to best advantage, what will be the time frame? e.g. in order to assess what can and is in fact achieved, you will probably want to assess the situation before, during and after the activity.
3. What indicators will be used to assess the effectiveness of the provision? (See "Indicators" below)
4. What methodology will be used to evaluate the indicators?
 - Observation?
 - Debrief and review?
 - Feedback from participants?
 - Participant feedback through discussion? written and/or picture diaries?

5. Will the leadership of the activity be subject to formal monitoring/ observation by:
 - peers?
 - EVC?
 - managers?
6. Will the young people be engaged before the visit in determining the planned outcomes?

(b) Key Factors that will impact on achieving quality

It is unlikely that high quality will be achieved with consistency unless the activity takes place within a clear educational philosophy, supported by appropriate management structures. Key factors that need to be in place include:

1. Heads/managers should create a clear vision of the role of Outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC in supporting the ethos of the establishment and recognise the value and potential of the benefits.
2. Leaders should have the capability of inspiring young people to learn and achieve.
3. Wherever appropriate, young people should be involved in the planning process.
4. Heads/Managers and Leaders should be fully aware of the extent to which the provision is open to participation of all young people.
5. Leaders should be clear about the availability of structured links between schools, youth provision, centres and clubs to reinforce the benefits and outcomes.

(c) What to look for

Learning is most likely to be effective where:

1. Young people participate fully in the classic "*plan-do-review-improve*" model.
2. There is "*debrief and review*" to ensure that outcomes are clearly identified, emphasised and reinforced. Providing activity without structured review has been likened to "trying to fill a bath without putting the plug in".
3. The evaluation checks that the activity enables young people to
 - Enjoy participating
 - Take a positive attitude to challenges
 - Gain in personal confidence and self-esteem
 - Achieve success
 - Develop self-awareness and social skills
 - Appreciate the contributions of self and others
 - Display an increased motivation and appetite for learning
 - Appreciate broader horizons

(d) Differentiation and progression

Educational quality requires that participants in activities be engaged at a level that matches their abilities and development.

Activities should therefore be adapted to present learning challenges at different levels appropriate to different group members, or permit group members to take on different roles.

It therefore follows that young people's progress should be monitored to ensure that they can be continually motivated by new challenges.

(e) Examples of learning outcomes and possible indicators

1. Enjoyment and/or fulfilment

Young people will enjoy the activity and/or take pride in their achievement/endeavour. They will:

- Enjoy the activity and smile often
- Opt into the activity and participate fully
- Be keen to seek new challenges
- Participate voluntarily
- Be keen to sign up to activities that are optional
- Talk about their experiences with enthusiasm
- Encourage their peers to take part
- Be keen to return or progress

2. Improved confidence and self-esteem

Young people will gain in confidence and self-esteem through achieving success and will:

- Overcome apprehension to take part
- Want a second go at something that challenged them first time
- Succeed where they first felt they would fail
- Feel proud of what they have achieved
- Want to move on to the next challenge
- Talk openly about both their success and their failure
- Feel positive about themselves
- Come out of their shell
- Feel they can make a positive contribution to their group
- Be able to recognise and modify behaviours that may restrict achievement

3. Improved social awareness

Young people will appreciate the contributions of self and others and will:

- Be learning to appreciate their own strengths and limitations
- Recognise where others can make a stronger contribution than themselves
- Trust and accept support
- Recognise when others need support and offer it

- Treat others with tolerance and respect
- Challenge intolerance and lack of respect
- Understand how their own actions impact on others
- Recognise and modify behaviour that adversely affects their group
- Encourage others to achieve
- Recognise the achievements of others
- Make new friends
- Help others
- Take on responsibilities
- Respect others' private space
- Accept their share of any duties

4. Improved personal qualities

Young people will demonstrate increased initiative and commitment and will:

- Be actively involved in planning what they do
- Arrive on time with the materials and equipment they need
- Undertake appropriate tasks with the minimum level of supervision
- Demonstrate initiative in dealing with problems
- Work towards self-reliance
- Try hard when challenged
- Set themselves realistic targets and remain focussed on the task
- Persevere when finding it difficult
- Take responsibility and not want to let their group down

5. Improved key skills

Young people will be developing communication, problem solving and teamwork and will:

- Listen to instructions and respond accordingly
- Come up with ideas and articulate them
- Understand the importance of listening to the ideas and opinions of others
- Be able to describe their experiences
- Work co-operatively
- Be willing to try out new ideas
- Vary and adapt a plan in response to changing circumstances
- Understand how members of a team take on different roles
- Be prepared to take a lead where appropriate
- Be prepared to step back and let others lead where appropriate
- Be able to help their group take a team decision

6. Improved knowledge and understanding of subject area

Young people will develop learning skills related to the subject/activity and will:

- Maximise learning through multiple intelligences
- Experience learning with real consequences
- Take opportunities to turn theory into practice
- Develop and acquire new skills and areas of understanding

- Expand their personal horizons
- Develop appreciation of people and places
- Talk about the subject area and the learning experience

7. Improved motivation and appetite for learning

Young people will display an improvement in their achievements in other areas and will:

- Aim to do better across their wider education
- Display the characteristics of self-motivated learners
- Show a desire for new challenges
- Have good or improving relationships with their teachers/leaders
- Display good or improving behaviour
- Talk positively about their learning experiences
- Have good or improving attendance
- Demonstrate raised levels of achievement
- Participate more fully in school/club life

8. Improved appreciation and understanding of broadened horizons

Young people will appreciate a wider range of future opportunities and will:

- Be more aware of different environments and different cultures
- Be more open-minded and less likely to express bigoted views
- Be happy to leave behind the comfort of familiar routines and environments
- Perceive a wider range of career options
- Appreciate the work place relevance of key skills such as teamwork
- Appreciate the attractiveness to employers of commitment and self-reliance
- Always aim higher and aspire to achieve their full potential

(f) Recognising quality in creating an appropriate vision and organisational structure for outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC

Where outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC are delivered to a high standard, the Head/Manager will:

1. Recognise the impact that they can have on the achievements of young people
2. Set high expectations of what can be achieved through outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC
3. Explain the impact of outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC in a way that everyone can understand
4. Review the outcomes and celebrate success
5. Be creative in providing a sustainable model, with the time and resources to enable outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC
6. Encourage and support staff involved and provide professional development opportunities

7. Listen to young people and take account of what they have to say
8. Involve parents and carers and the wider community in understanding outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC
9. Monitor the impact to ensure that the vision is met

Where outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC are delivered to a high standard, the teachers and leaders will:

1. Recognise a range of activities that can help raise the achievements of young people
2. Set high expectations of what each young person can achieve through participation
3. Explain the wider benefits of participation in a way that the young people can understand
4. Review the outcomes and celebrate success
5. Have a plan, creating a range of opportunities that are attractive to young people
6. Listen to young people and take account of what they say in setting goals
7. Inform and involve parents and carers
8. Monitor the impact of provision
9. Show commitment and enthusiasm
10. Provide positive role models
11. Show confidence in young people's ability to progress and achieve
12. Raise young people's aspirations
13. Take pride in young people's success
14. Establish links with other organisations where young people can further develop

