



National  
Guidance

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## Research Supporting Outdoor Learning

There is substantial research evidence to suggest that outdoor adventure programmes can impact positively on young people's:

- Attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions - examples of outcomes include independence, confidence, self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, personal effectiveness and coping strategies.
- Interpersonal and social skills - such as social effectiveness, communication skills, group cohesion and skills in working with others.
- Attainment – an outcome of enjoyment in learning leading to higher achievement and improved knowledge, skills and understanding.

### Review of Research Findings

The following is a summary of key findings from reviews of research and major studies in outdoor learning.

Learning Away – Brilliant Residentials	
Reference	Sally Kendall and John Roger, York Consulting: Learning Away: Final Report 7th May 2015. <a href="http://learningaway.org.uk/impact/independent-evaluation-learning/">http://learningaway.org.uk/impact/independent-evaluation-learning/</a>
Nature of research	An evaluation of four key Learning Away propositions, namely that high quality residential learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a strong, positive impact on academic achievement and provides a wide range of student level outcomes;</li> <li>• can transform the learning experience of students;</li> <li>• can help to transform schools;</li> <li>• does not need to be expensive.</li> </ul> Also to generate new insights and understanding about how and why residential learning can and does achieve these outcomes.
Summary of findings	<b>Impact on relationships</b> both between students, and between staff and students <b>Impact on resilience, self confidence and wellbeing</b> – 74% of parents said their children were more willing to try new things and

	<p>67% said their children were more confident.</p> <p><b>Impact on engagement with learning</b> – staff and students identified improvements in behaviour and attendance. Staff noted that the residential experience had helped re-engage students who were in danger of exclusion and that residential were particularly effective for students who had difficulty concentrating in the classroom.</p> <p><b>Impact on achievement</b> - 69% of students in one of the partnerships achieved a C grade in maths GCSE, when none of their peers who did not attend achieved a C grade. 61% of students who attended a higher drama residential achieved higher than their predicted grade, compared to 21% who did not attend.</p> <p><b>Impact on knowledge, skills and understanding</b> – post residential, 68% of students felt they knew more about their subject, 69% that they were better at problem solving and 69% that their subject was more interesting and important to them.</p> <p><b>Impact on cohesion</b> – improved relationships within and between schools and increased student confidence in developing new relationships, both with staff and other students.</p> <p><b>Impact on leadership, co-design and facilitation</b> – post-residential, 67% of secondary students felt that they could be a role model to others, compared to 40% pre-residential. 79% had enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in leading activities.</p> <p><b>Impact on transition</b> – 64% of students were happier about changing class or school after the residential.</p> <p><b>Impact on pedagogical skills</b> - staff surveys suggested that professionally, Learning Away was achieving its goals (72%) and staff expected it to impact on their own practice (62%).</p>
Quotation	<i>"You look at the curriculum and think 'that can be done on residential, that's what we do on residential'."</i>

<b>Natural Connections Demonstration Project, 2012-2016</b>	
Reference	<p>WAITE, S., PASSY, R., GILCHRIST, M., HUNT, A. &amp; BLACKWELL, I. 2016. <i>Natural Connections Demonstration Project, 2012-2016: Final Report</i>. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number215.</p> <p><a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6636651036540928">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6636651036540928</a></p>
Nature of research	<p>This report presents the key findings from the Natural Connections Demonstration Project, which identified positive outcomes for pupil development as well as raised attainment. The report also identified that the challenges to learning outside the classroom in the natural environment (LINE) in schools are lack of teacher confidence in teaching outside and fragmentation among service provision for schools. These underpinned the more traditionally cited challenges of curriculum pressures, concern about risks and cost.</p>
Summary	The following percentage of respondents to the 2015 school survey

of findings	<p>agreed with the statement that LINE had a positive impact on pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoyment of lessons (95 per cent)</li> <li>• Connection to nature (94 per cent)</li> <li>• Social skills (93 per cent)</li> <li>• Engagement with learning (92 per cent)</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing (92 per cent)</li> <li>• Behaviour (85 per cent)</li> <li>• Attainment (57 per cent)</li> </ul> <p>Evidence suggests that LINE can be a powerful vehicle for developing teachers' practice and increasing their satisfaction with their working life.</p> <p>The following percentage of responding schools agreed that LINE had a positive impact on their teachers':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching practice (79 per cent)</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing (72 per cent)</li> <li>• Professional development (69 per cent)</li> <li>• Job satisfaction (69 per cent)</li> <li>• Teaching performance (51 per cent).</li> </ul>
Quotation	<p><i>"it is fun when you are just sitting there doing a piece of work and you get this random bug on your clipboard ... or a butterfly comes and lands on you ... And it is just feels really special that we have got all the opportunity to do all this."</i></p>

<b>The OPENSspace Wild Adventure Space Project Review</b>	
Reference	Travlou, P. (2006) Wild Adventure Space, Literature Review. Edinburgh: OPENSspace Research Centre.
Nature of research	A literature review drawing on a large number of evaluations of different types of projects. It illustrates the range of benefits to young people, as well as illustrating some of the many forms that outdoor learning can take.
Summary of findings	<p><b>Personal development</b> in terms of raised self-confidence, independence, self-esteem, sense of achievement</p> <p><b>Skill development</b> including development of practical skills, social skills (getting along with others, team working), presentation skills, physical skills.</p> <p><b>Widening of horizons, developing aspirations, improving employment prospects</b></p> <p><b>Breathing space</b>, having 'fun' away from everyday pressures of family, peer groups, school</p> <p><b>Environmental awareness</b></p> <p><b>Social benefits</b> including diversity awareness between cultures, social</p>

	<p>inclusion for disadvantaged individuals, sense of belonging, opportunities to develop away from peer pressure.</p> <p><b>Improved physical and mental well-being</b></p> <p><b>Effecting changes in behaviour</b> including reduction in drink/drug dependence, reduction in truancy, reduction in probation periods, providing a new focus and interest.</p>
Quotation	<p><i>"Experience of the outdoors and wilderness has the potential to confer a multitude of benefits on young people's physical development, emotional and mental health and wellbeing and societal development. Mental health and wellbeing benefits from play in natural settings appear to be long-term, realised in the form of emotional stability in young adulthood."</i></p>

<b>A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning</b>	
Reference	Rickinson, M., Dillon, J., Teamey, K., Morris, M., Choi, M., Sanders, D. & Benefield, P. (2004). A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning. Shrewsbury: Field Studies Council.
Nature of research	This review by the National Foundation for Educational Research brought together the findings from 150 studies in the period 1993 to 2003 and included most kinds of outdoor learning.
Summary of findings	<p><b>The impact of fieldwork and visits</b></p> <p>Substantial evidence exists to indicate that fieldwork, properly conceived, adequately planned, well taught and effectively followed up, offers learners opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom.</p> <p>Specifically, fieldwork can have a positive impact on long-term memory owing to the memorable nature of the fieldwork setting. Effective fieldwork, and residential experience in particular, can lead to individual growth and improvements in social skills. More importantly, there can be reinforcement between the affective and the cognitive, with each influencing the other and providing a bridge to higher order learning.</p> <p><b>The impact of outdoor adventure activities</b></p> <p>There is substantial research evidence to suggest that outdoor adventure programmes can impact positively on young people's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions - examples of outcomes include independence, confidence, self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, personal effectiveness and coping strategies</li> <li>- interpersonal and social skills - such as social effectiveness, communication skills, group cohesion and teamwork</li> </ul> <p><b>The impact of school grounds/community projects</b></p> <p>School grounds/community projects have the capacity to link with most curriculum areas. Two specific examples of benefits stemming from this are positive gains in science process skills and improved</p>

	<p>understanding of design and technology-related issues.</p> <p>In the affective domain, the most important impacts of learning in school grounds/community settings include greater confidence, renewed pride in community, stronger motivation toward learning, and greater sense of belonging and responsibility</p>
Quotation	<p><i>"The findings of this review make clear that learners of all ages can benefit from effective outdoor education. However, despite such positive research evidence and the long tradition of Outdoor Learning in this country, there is growing evidence that opportunities for Outdoor Learning are in decline and under threat.</i></p> <p><i>There is an urgent need for policy makers at all levels and in many sectors to consider their role in:</i></p> <p><i>tackling barriers that stand in the way of the provision of effective outdoor education for all students</i></p> <p><i>encouraging good programmes and practices and capitalising on policy developments, for example, by linking initiatives in different sectors."</i></p>

#### **Directions - Youth Development Outcomes of the Camp Experience.**

Reference	Philliber Research Associates: Directions - Youth Development Outcomes of the Camp Experience. Martinsville, Indiana, USA: The American Camping Association (2005).
Nature of research	Between 2001 and 2004 the American Camp Association conducted research with over 5000 families from 80 camps to determine the outcomes of the camp experience as expressed by parents and children.
Summary of findings	<p>Parents, camp staff, and children reported significant growth in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem</li> <li>• Peer relationships</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Adventure and exploration</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Environmental awareness</li> <li>• Friendship skills</li> <li>• Values and decisions</li> <li>• Social comfort</li> <li>• Spirituality</li> </ul>
Quotation	<i>"The research suggests a convergence of opinion from campers, parents and staff that scientifically validates long-held beliefs about the positive value of camp experiences."</i>

#### **Why Adventure? The Role and Value of Outdoor Adventure in young people's personal and social development.**

Reference	Barrett J. & Greenaway R. (1995). Why Adventure? The Role and Value of Outdoor Adventure in Young People's Personal and Social Development: A Review of Research. The Foundation for Outdoor Adventure. <a href="http://reviewing.co.uk/wad.htm">http://reviewing.co.uk/wad.htm</a>
Nature of research	A literature review focusing on the more adventurous kinds of outdoor learning.
Summary of findings	<p><b>Personal Development</b></p> <p>Some kinds of outdoor adventure can cause short-term enhancement of aspects of self-concept (including gains in self-esteem and self-efficacy), and can cause short-term improvements in internalisation of locus of control. These gains appear to be more significant on longer adventure programmes.</p> <p>Various developmental benefits are associated with regular physical exercise (such as regular outdoor adventure experiences can provide), e.g. humour, patience, energy, optimism, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-assurance, emotional stability, improved body-image, etc.</p> <p>Direct experience of the natural environment, such as outdoor adventure may offer, can have significant mental and physical health benefits, can enhance self-esteem and self-confidence, and can provide opportunities for spiritual development.</p> <p><b>Social Development</b></p> <p>Strong anecdotal evidence indicates that outdoor adventure experiences can enhance interpersonal relationships and improve socialisation, and can facilitate group bonding and co-operation.</p> <p>Outdoor adventure can help to reduce formality in relationships and develop more human relationships and awareness between young people, and between young people and staff.</p>
Quotation	<i>"The beneficial outcomes of outdoor adventure appear to be most lasting when outdoor adventure experiences are regular and long-term and are linked to community-based follow-up. Research has demonstrated the value of outdoor adventure as an adjunct to community-based developmental and educational provision."</i>

### Raising Achievement through the Environment

Reference	Raising Achievement through the Environment: The Case for Field Work and Field Centres - 2001 - Stuart Nundy, NAFSO Publications. <a href="http://oeapng.info/downloads/download-info/2-4f-raising-achievement-through-the-environment/">http://oeapng.info/downloads/download-info/2-4f-raising-achievement-through-the-environment/</a>
Nature of research	A paper providing evidence of the academic impact of undertaking fieldwork.
Summary of findings	This paper presents a synopsis of the evidence to date, together with the results of recent research, which shows that work in field centres has the capacity to allow pupils to operate at levels of learning higher than those attainable within the classroom alone, thus significantly

	<p>enhancing achievement.</p> <p>The research targeted a Year 6 group from a local authority primary school. 40 pupils underwent a field study course at a centre, involving learning in groups in the field. 45 pupils remained at school as a control group, following the same curriculum topic - the geography of rivers at Key Stage 2. The control group mirrored the learning format but remained within the classroom. Pre- and post-activity tests and focussed interviews were used to compare the learning of the two groups.</p> <p>Both groups showed improved levels of knowledge, but, in understanding and skills, the centre-based pupils out-performed the control group by a factor of four.</p> <p>In-depth analysis of the data and interviews suggested that fieldwork improves memory ("it puts pictures into your mind"), improves understanding, improves depth of meaning, improves awareness of personal growth, and improves motivation to learn.</p> <p>Teachers reported that the students who took part in the field were more likely to ask questions in class afterwards, including in other subjects – "It filters through on everything they do".</p>
Quotations	<p><i>"I think it's the seeing of the real thing rather than just from a book. It makes more impressions on pupils at the time. It jogs their memory."</i> – Key Stage 2 teacher, Hampshire.</p> <p><i>"I learned more because we got out there."</i> - Year 6 pupil.</p>

