

▶▶▶ The Outward Bound Trust - a case study:
Widening Horizons for Kids in Glasgow



**THE
OUTWARD
BOUND TRUST**
Adventures for life

Case Study

Widening Horizons for Kids in Glasgow

The overall plan was to target the most vulnerable quartile of the S3 cohort in the six pilot schools [40 pupils from each school] and for The Outward Bound Trust to work with Glasgow's Education Services Department and the secondary schools to devise and deliver, as an integral part of their S3 curriculum, an educational programme built around a residential week of adventure activities at The Trust's Loch Eil centre. The schools would incorporate a programme of preparation activities into their PSE programmes and a briefing and preparation day, run by Outward Bound Metro, would be held in advance of each of the four residential activity weeks.

The whole programme was to be designed to promote:

- Improved personal self-esteem and self-confidence in unfamiliar situations
- The development of team working skills
- More positive attitudes towards education as a continuing and lifelong process
- A clearer focus on the kinds of attributes needed of successful employees
- Positive attitudes to counter sectarianism and racism
- A glimpse of new and exciting horizons

The Educational Context

Working with the schools' most vulnerable and sometimes challenging 14 year-olds, the Outward Bound programme sought to work on ideas like teamwork, taking personal responsibility, the concept of planning and reviewing and moving beyond one's personal comfort zone. These were highlighted as areas this cohort would find potentially challenging, yet beneficial to them in the future.

One Head Teacher pointed out that these concepts are integral to the current education agendas, "It fits very snugly into the Curriculum for Excellence and the authority's priority of taking forward the 'Be All You Can Be' agenda."

The Environmental Context

"I'd like to point out the value of this initiative in bringing together young people from different parts of this city of ours. It surely must offer the opportunity to at least make a start in addressing the blight of territorialism."

Head Teacher

Schools were chosen from across Glasgow with the idea of breaking down barriers, which normally divide pupils in the chosen areas. Initially there had been concerns over how the pupils would mix. Tribalism, territorialism, sectarianism and even racism were seen as potentially difficult issues. However, from the outset, youngsters from all six schools and from every creed and background came together and openly tackled the challenges their instructors set. Whether they were behaving well or badly, they behaved together as if they had been with each other for all of their lives.

One teacher attributed the Outward Bound experience with the success of widening their students' attitudes to the environment.

"Glimpse of new horizons? I would certainly hope so! I cannot see how the surroundings at Loch Eil, the challenges of the week both in teamwork and personal courage wouldn't have an impact and inspire."

The Programme

Out of the 240 students that embarked on the programme 215 completed the experience successfully. One teacher commented that those who managed to 'hack it' came back to school raving about the experience and walking that bit taller. A significant number said that they now felt more confident and better equipped to work in team situations.

A Head Teacher from one of the schools went on to say, "I enjoy the advantage of knowing these young people. They do not wax lyrical very often or very much about what the school delivers to them. For them to be as open and positive as they were is cheering and refreshing."

A celebration event was held at Celtic Park for all those involved. There was a large turnout of parents and family and the four football celebrities, who spoke and presented the certificates, set a very positive tone. Every one of the six Head Teachers was present as were almost all the teachers involved. For many of these children and their parents, this was the first time they had ever been called up to get a prize and to have their achievements recognised in public. The 'feel good factor' was tangible.

Impact: Teachers and Pupils

The profile of the teachers involved was surprisingly diverse. Some of them were very experienced with many years of being on or running school trips; for others [including a small number of newly qualified teachers] this was the first experience of being away with young people. It is significant that:

- A number of the more experienced spoke of how it had recharged their batteries and helped to renew their sense of mission
- Many said that the experience had afforded them a very significant professional development opportunity
- None of them reported that they would not do it again.

Although the impact for the students will continue to seep in over time, some initial comments highlight the value to those involved.

Chelsea Marshall from Lochend said, "The Loch Eil experience will help me immensely in the future, showing me that I can achieve anything in life."

Another girl from Lochend, commented, "The greatest thing about Outward Bound was meeting new people from different schools across Glasgow. I got the chance to do things that most people will never be able to do and saw a different side to teachers!"

Finally, Grant Wright, from Lochend said, "It will help me to think about things before I do them and treat people with respect."

The Future

The Widening Horizons project was seen as a pilot programme that might be extended and rolled out to a larger number of schools. This would be dependent on securing funding for an extended time frame. The willingness of the initial funders to support something new and innovative in education, has been the backbone of this highly successful initiative. We owe a lot to them for believing in what this multi-agency approach can achieve! The recipe for success has definitely been written, with the quantities of the component parts to be played with as the project develops. But some of the essential basic ingredients involved enthusiasm, openness to new experiences, a belief that all young people want to learn, support for these young people so that we can make the most out of this opportunity and a willingness to work with different agencies to create the best project for this group of young people.

The future of the Widening Horizons project should be considered within the context of the centrality of A Curriculum for Excellence

and of the growing appreciation of the importance of Out of School Hours Learning. It could prove to be a promising tool when it comes to addressing the challenge of the NEET statistics for Glasgow.

The real strength of this project was the multi-agency approach to a young person's development and education. The specific programme's aims were greatly helped by the collaboration of all those named below. The outcomes of the Outward Bound course were certainly reinforced by the support of the sponsors and the teachers' work on pupil preparation & post course work.

Funded by: Glasgow City Council, Scottish Outward Bound Association, The Robertson Trust, The Outward Bound Trust, First Group plc and BBC Children in Need.

Supporting: All Saints Secondary, Bellahouston Academy, Clevedon Secondary, John Paul Academy, Lochend Community High and Smithycroft Secondary.



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