

First Challenge – a case study

St. Benet's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham



- The Outward Bound Trust offers a genuine outdoor, educational experience with real choice, real challenge and real teamwork – in 20 years of teaching I've not experienced anything that comes close to it or is this impactful. ◀

Damian Groark, Headteacher

Fact box

School	St Benet's RC Voluntary Aided (Primary School)	Location	Durham
School size	219	Student year groups	Y5 & 6
Course objectives	Develop collective responsibility and understand the importance of looking after each other Develop a sense of personal responsibility Increase confidence and independence Understand more about the natural environment Enjoy and experience new adventures		

School background

St Benet's school is a small Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Joseph's Birtley in County Durham. The school has a strong link to the church and the community, building on the values of individuality, respect and spirituality within the educational framework.

The School switched to The Outward Bound Trust one year ago, breaking a long standing connection to another centre. The results after the first year were so powerful in terms of the delivery of the course and the educational benefits, that they are making Outward Bound their first choice provider.



Reasons for selecting this Outward Bound course

In the first year of the change to The Outward Bound Trust the school wanted to progress the idea of real adventure, the development of teamwork and genuine experiences of the wild outdoors. With the move to secondary education being the next major step for the students, it was also important to focus on the social and personal skills needed to make that transition a smooth one. The First Challenge course was the natural choice and this was enhanced by the flexibility of both the programme and the instructors in meeting the needs of each group.

The Outward Bound Trust's charitable status, and the ability to offer significant means tested Outward Bound bursaries to all students, was a major benefit – ensuring that the course could be offered to all students, irrespective of their financial circumstances.

Finally, the whole course fits in well with the school's curriculum and ethos. St Benet's is a "thinking" school and encourages thinking skills, teamwork and philosophy. The course at The Outward Bound Trust not only develops these skills but fits in with the wider school curriculum.

Key outcomes identified by the school

Significant personal development. It's hard to pin down the huge benefits of the Outward Bound experience as it impacts on the students in so many ways. It builds teamwork, confidence, flexibility, responsiveness to challenges and an appreciation of nature and the wider world.

Developing student teacher relations. Stepping out of the school environment allows teachers to build on their pastoral role with the students, increasing trust, understanding and promoting communication.

Parental approval. As with all schools St. Benet's needs to attract students and show parents that they are committed to providing the highest possible standard of education for their children. The inclusion of an Outward Bound residential in the school's calendar is seen as a real positive by parents.

Improved attainment. Whilst it is difficult to measure the impact on pupil attainment, it is clear that attendance at Outward Bound definitely improves the way students perform and learn when they return to the classroom.

"I remember a lot of good things about my week at Outward Bound, like building a shelter with my friend Alice, and cooking bread sticks over a fire with Emma, our instructor. But I especially remember the big mountain that I climbed - I've not done that before and was scared of heights. When I stood at the bottom of the mountain and looked up it felt so high. But when I got to the top and looked down it no longer felt so high. I was very proud and happy to have climbed it."

Claire, 10