

Inspiring Learning Spaces Projects —

In August 2014, the Scottish Government made £5 million available to encourage local authorities to imagine teaching and learning spaces differently. Inspiring Learning Spaces (ILS), administered by the Scottish Futures Trust, did not set down a list of criteria. Applicants were encouraged to think creatively, to find low-cost interventions which made high impacts.

In collaboration with SFT, Architecture & Design Scotland captured learning on the early impacts and benefits of ILS projects based on interviews with 20 project leads. The projects were very different in size and scale, ambition and intended educational outcomes. From those projects able to report early results, there were both expected and unexpected benefits. In some cases, the ILS proved transformative for pupils, teachers, and the wider school community.

The majority of the projects fell into three broad categories: flexible learning spaces in which to explore

new learning styles; vocational training facilities; and digital and virtual classrooms which expand the use of technology in learning.

Reflecting on the early impacts of ILS and drawing on experience and research, a group of educationalists helped identify nine themes to support others interested in making changes:

- Leading change
- Test learning approaches
- Collect evidence
- Support teachers
- Listen to pupils
- Encourage problem-solving
- Nurture parity of esteem
- Use technology
- Where to begin

More on the themes and the early impacts and benefits can be found in the associated **Inspiring Learning Spaces** publication.

Many of those who took part in ILS are keen to share their ideas more widely. This leaflet summarises learning from the individual projects.



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Project 1: A multi-functional learning space

Aim: Experimenting with different approaches to learning and teaching within a flexible space.

Provider and Partners:

Aberdeenshire Council, Peterhead Academy, NE Scotland College

Key message: Learning plazas encourage collaborative learning with remarkable results for pupils and teachers.

The story: The opportunity was taken to trial a new learning plaza to help inform the design of new schools in the area. Four classrooms were remodeled into a modern, flexible environment so teachers could explore different approaches to learning and teaching, and trial new kinds of furniture and technology. New ways of teaching, working collaboratively and facilitating learning have resulted. Pupils find the space modern and inviting and feel valued and invested in. The new space helps them stay focussed and engaged.

Project 2: A construction training skills centre

Aim: Extending STEM provision and complementing existing training in the area.

Provider and Partners: Angus Council, Dundee & Angus College, Forster Roofing Company

Key message: Good facilities mirroring a workplace environment can offer training in key skills to a wide range of pupils.

The story: A state-of-the-art training facility within the new Brechin Community Campus replicates aspects of a real work environment, offering training in practical skills such as joinery, roofing and bricklaying. It caters to a wide range of pupils from those interested in the trades to those pursuing careers such as quantity surveying and architecture. The initiative has encouraged partnership with business, with a local contractor contributing equipment and training.

Project 3: A professional kitchen and bistro for vocational training

Aim: Creating pathways to careers in hospitality in an area where tourism is a major part of the economy.

Provider and Partners: Dumfries & Galloway Council, Dumfries & Galloway College

Key message: High quality facilities enable training in vocational skills and life skills.

The story: A former Home Economics lab was upgraded to create a state-of-the-art restaurant kitchen and fine-dining space. Teachers, pupils, local businesses and the local college were involved in the development. The high quality facilities mean pupils feel invested in; engagement has improved. The facility has encouraged new ways of teaching, and has also impacted school life more widely, for example, showing how maths and biology apply in a real-world context.



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Project 4: An engineering academy

Aim: Providing increased training options for senior pupils.

Provider and Partners: City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh College

Key message: Underused spaces can be transformed into hubs for vocational learning.

The story: Equipped with a multi-functional workshop and design studio, the space offers training within the Modern Apprenticeship framework. The courses are offered in partnership with Edinburgh College and are open to pupils from two high schools. The project facilitates new ways of teaching and learning in a purpose-built environment. The school saw this as an innovative project on a scale which they could deliver successfully and which others could replicate.



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Project 5: Hospitality Training Suite

Aim: To deliver qualifications and work experience to enable careers in hospitality.

Provider and Partners: East Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire College, local business partner

Key message: The innovative space has brought increased pupil engagement, teaching life skills and creating pathways into further education and work.

The story: A former common room was developed into a hospitality training suite and is now run successfully as a cafe for senior pupils and teachers. College lecturers come to school to deliver a range of qualifications. Pupils are learning business skills and presenting themselves more professionally. A local business partner advises on training, acts as a mentor and offers work placements. Relationships have improved between staff and senior pupils as they use the cafe together.

Project 6: A construction skills academy

Aim: To offer pupils a range of vocational training across the construction sector.

Provider and Partners: East Lothian Council, Edinburgh College

Key message: Integrated spaces for vocational learning can bridge the gap between school and college and equip young people for the workplace.

The story: Good construction workers are required across East Lothian to enable the extensive growth plans for the area. A former day centre was developed into a flexible training space offering construction SVQs and foundation apprenticeships. Pupils are engaged and enjoy learning in the new environment. Local business partners provide workshops in interviews and CV-writing. Promotion of the centre and careers in construction-related trades to pupils, teachers and parents led to take-up of places increasing more than five-fold.



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Project 7: Shared space at the heart of a new Faith Schools Joint Campus

Aim: To design a space which facilitates shared learning, teaching and social interaction.

Provider: East Renfrewshire Council

Key message: Good design can facilitate inter-faith interaction while fostering respect, collaboration and understanding.

The story: The new Faith Schools Joint Campus brings together Jewish and Catholic primary schools on the same site, the first project of its kind in Scotland. ILS funding was used to design the central atrium space which is shared between the two as a social and teaching space. Workshops were held involving pupils, teachers, faith leaders and community representatives. Pupils from both faith schools worked collaboratively in workshops to help develop their joint environment.



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Project 8: A creative industry learning space and two STEM learning spaces across three secondary schools

Aim: Developing new facilities for learning in creative industry and STEM subjects.

Providers and Partners: Falkirk Council, Forth Valley College, University of the West of Scotland

Key message: Imaginative spaces can facilitate new learning approaches and engage learners.

The story: A Creative Industries Hub in Grangemouth has significantly expanded learning opportunities within creative subjects. Partnership with the local college is helping to create pathways into further education or work in the creative industries. A combined STEM space in Larbert has increased collaborative teaching and learning and is inspiring pupils in STEM subjects. In Falkirk, pupils helped to design a STEM unit which has had significant impacts on engagement, attendance and behaviour.



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Project 9: An engineering skills workshop

Aim: To offer vocational subjects in the STEM agenda which pupils wouldn't otherwise have access to.

Provider and Partners: Fife Council, Fife College

Key message: Good facilities for vocational training can change the school experience for those who enjoy hands-on learning, and create pathways into further education or work.

The story: A derelict school annex was converted into a training workshop focussing on engineering skills. The school works in partnership with lecturers from Fife College to provide training, tailoring this to meet the skills needs of local employers. The facility is available to pupils from all the local high schools and will provide them with the skills needed for further education and the workplace.



Project 10: Learning Spaces of the Future

Aim: To adapt old spaces into innovative environments to explore new approaches to teaching and learning.

Provider: Glasgow City Council

Key message: Engaging pupils in the development of the learning spaces builds confidence and ensures the spaces reflect their learning needs.

The story: Three projects were chosen for development at Quarry Brae, John Paul II and Pollokshields primary schools, including a health and well-being zone in the shape of the Loch Ness Monster. Pupils and teachers were proactive from the start, generating ideas. Pupils made presentations to a Council committee and worked with architects on designs. This involvement resulted in a significant increase in confidence and a sense of ownership for pupils.



Project 11: Extending the use of digital technology in teaching and learning

Aim: Extending a range of ICT activities to support the curriculum.

Provider: Highland Council

Key message: Digital technology has the potential to support teaching and learning in a wide range of areas and promote equity of access.

The story: Highland Council used this opportunity to build on its ICT In Learning strategy. The Chromebook pilot was extended, with over 1,000 devices now in use in over 200 schools. These have been well received. Pupils are well motivated and are developing confidence and skills, bringing suggestions to staff about how the technology can be used. The virtual school pilot has been extended to offer equal access to a wider range of subjects.

Project 12: A learning Space of the Future

Aim: To explore the impacts of innovative, flexible spaces on teaching and learning.

Provider: Midlothian Council

Key message: Innovative spaces can have transformative effects on learning and engagement.

The story: Primary pupils across the authority were involved in the design, development and decision-making processes to adapt their current learning spaces, making this project an important exercise in pupil empowerment. The new spaces are agile and adaptable so they can be changed for different tasks, enabling each child to take more control of their learning. Both teachers and pupils have commented on the remarkable changes that have happened in the way learning takes place, with teachers feeling more energized and relaxed and pupils feeling more confident and valued.



Project 13: Professional Learning Academy for teachers

Aim: To offer high quality training and development for teachers in a purpose-built environment.

Provider: North Ayrshire Council

Key message: Teachers benefit from continuous training and sharing good practice in an attractive and flexible environment.

The story: A vacant school annex has been turned into an innovative purpose-built facility to offer CPD for teachers. Two teaching rooms mimic a modern teaching environment, one based around collaborative work, the other for individual work. The aim is to create a pleasant environment with high-quality facilities which teachers feel good about being in, offer research-based training and pilot new approaches. Teachers have welcomed opportunities to work collaboratively, share good practice and develop professional networks. Early evaluations show positive impacts on staff, resulting in benefits for pupils.



Project 14: Vocational skills academy

Aim: Developing four multi-purpose learning spaces to deliver training in a range of vocational skills and qualifications.

Provider: North Lanarkshire Council

Key message: Integrated spaces for vocational learning can bridge the gap between school and college and help provide skills for further education and work.

The story: Four multi-purpose learning spaces have been created, including a garage workshop, a kitchen, a polytunnel area and a digital lab. A working group of pupils, teachers, commercial trainers and colleges informed the project. Training is delivered by teachers, college lecturers and specialists from industry in a mini-college environment which replicates aspects of the workplace and focusses on skills in short supply locally. Prior to opening, demand for places was already outstripping supply.

Project 15: An engineering hub

Aim: Developing vocational pathways in STEM and engineering for young people across Perth & Kinross.

Providers and Partners: Perth & Kinross Council, Perth College UHI

Key message: Integrated spaces for vocational learning can bridge the gap between school and college and help provide key skills for the workplace.

The story: Facilities for training in engineering subjects have been developed in secondary schools across Perth City. Pupils will be able to visit other schools and the local college to access training and equipment to meet their individual learning choices. Principal teachers from the participating schools worked together to develop the programme, which aims to create skills and develop pathways into further education or work.



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Project 16: A Vocational Training Centre

Aim: Offering high quality training for pupils of all age groups in a range of practical skills.

Providers and Partners: Stirling Council, Forth Valley College, local employers

Key message: Changing mindsets that vocational skills are good for everyone. Developing vocational skills in all pupils through the mainstream curriculum provides young people with practical skills and experience of the workplace and opens up new pathways.

The story: The centre, at St Modan's High School, teaches a wide range of practical skills and qualifications, from plumbing to childcare, across all year groups. Forth Valley College and local tradespeople deliver some of the training. The centre is a modern flexible space which young people are motivated to attend and which offers them insights into the workplace environment and beyond.

Project 17: Mobile, re-usable classrooms

Aim: Providing classroom space for a predicted temporary increase in pupil numbers, without the need to build permanent structures.

Provider: South Lanarkshire Council

Key message: A new re-usable mobile classroom is a cost-effective way of meeting temporary spikes in pupil numbers.

The story: The authority needed an efficient and effective solution for increasing accommodation to cater for temporary spikes in pupil numbers. The solution was a new design for a mobile classroom which could be redeployed easily as needed across the local authority. Pupils were involved in designing the exterior to help them take ownership of the classrooms. The units are an easy and economical way of providing short-term additional capacity when needed.

Project 18: Creation of a STEM learning centre in a primary school

Aim: Changing the approach to STEM teaching and learning in primary schools.

Provider and Partners: West Dunbartonshire Council, Glasgow Science Centre

Key message: An innovative and flexible learning space can facilitate new approaches to teaching and learning.

The story: A STEM hub was created in St Patrick's Primary School in collaboration with experts from Glasgow Science Centre. There are three distinct areas within a flexible space, with the design helping to signal how each area is used for learning and teaching. Pupils are learning through exploration and discovery, working individually, in pairs or in groups. Teachers facilitate rather than direct the learning. The school reports significant improvements in pupil engagement, motivation and concentration.



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Project 19: Inspiring learning space

Aim: To explore the impact of new spaces and digital technology on learning and teaching.

Provider: West Lothian Council

Key message: Innovative spaces and creative use of technology can facilitate new ways of teaching and learning.

The story: At West Calder High School, three traditional classrooms were combined to create a digital plaza to explore the best use of digital technology and open learning spaces. Pupils and teachers helped design the space. The new environment has encouraged more collaboration between pupils and teachers. Pupil engagement is high. A virtual campus project was launched to offer greater equality of access to a wide range of subjects across a group of schools.



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Project 20: Western Isles E-School

Aim: Using digital technology to increase the range of subjects offered to pupils in remote areas.

Provider: Western Isles Council

Key message: Well facilitated e-learning is an effective tool which could be used in any area, promoting equity of learning to all.

The story: The e-school project started as an innovative solution to teacher recruitment challenges in the Islands. The technology used is similar to that used in video-conferencing and allows lessons to be delivered remotely. It is not a substitute for face-to-face teaching but allows pupils equality of access to the subjects they want to study regardless of where they live, as well as enhancing their digital skills. It also enables schools to work together and collaborate in new ways.

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