



Hillpark Secondary School: Building Confidence through a Structured Curriculum Programme

Key Facts

Where: Hillpark Secondary School is on the South Side of Glasgow, and is a 20-30 minute walk from the entrance to Pollok Country Park.

School Roll: 980 approx.

What: Using the John Muir Award scheme to drive the extension and development of Outdoor Learning at the school.

Summary:

The John Muir Award scheme has been a catalyst for developing outdoor learning at the school. It provided short term cross curricular targets, with an obvious need to work outdoors. It was also a way of allowing staff who had less confidence to work with the support of colleagues. Condensing the work into one week, and having a shared goal across curricular areas made the task a less daunting one.

A Learning Support teacher, with strong support from the Senior Management team used the Award scheme to stimulate both pupil and staff engagement. For a week during summer term, all S1 pupils were put forward for the John Muir Award at Discover Level. Keeping to the existing timetable, teachers were asked to deliver lessons in support of the Award and were required to teach at least one period outside. The Learning Support teacher supported staff with suggested lesson plans linking the learning to the curriculum.

The week was a success in engaging both staff and pupils. There was an overwhelmingly positive reaction from staff who were surprised by the improved pupil engagement and positive change in interactions between pupils, and between adults and pupils.

As part of the Award, the school contacted the Rangers at Pollok Park, and arranged a trip to support their conservation work. Before going to the park, there were concerns about the behaviour of such a large group walking from the school – however, staff reported that behaviour was good, and allowed an opportunity for staff and pupils to have conversations with each other. Furthermore, pupils were enthusiastic about exploring their local area (some had never visited the park before).

It has sparked further interest in renovating outdoor spaces, having taken ideas from working with local Early Years groups. They have cleared and renovated the overgrown woodland garden, reinstated paths and walls, and made bug hotels. Pupils have brought a space for learning back into use, and are clearly proud of the contribution they have made to the life of the school.

Education Benefit:

- Pupils can demonstrate new skills and strengths which are not obvious in a classroom setting. Outdoor Learning also promotes a sense of self-worth and confidence
- The physical evidence of work accomplished helps instil a sense of pride in the school and their local area
- Working with different outside agencies provides structure, support and resources. It also allows pupils to meet professionals in different fields

Key Messages

- **Develop staff confidence by initiating a short term project with cross curricular targets. Working with the support of colleagues and having shared goals is helpful**
- **Building trust between staff and students is important to have confidence in leaving the school grounds. And have a bank of risk assessments, which reduces the need for each new project or task**
- **Not to underestimate the experience of visiting and exploring the local environment – for some pupils it may be their first opportunity**