

# Kirkcudbright Academy: Using the Outdoors for Thematic Learning



## Key Facts

**Where:** Sits on the western edge of Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Galloway and the east coast of Kirkcudbright Bay.

**School Roll:** 540 approx.

**What:** Variety of outdoor spaces developed for curricular use, both in the school grounds and beyond

**Summary:**

The Beechgrove Garden project provided a catalyst for the Academy's approach to using the school grounds for learning. In the 14 years since this project, the school has gradually claimed different spaces around the school as spaces for learning used by all curricular areas (planted beds, Remembrance Garden, courtyards, greenhouse, outdoor classroom/gathering space with seating on a raised platform, woodland walk amongst others).

The garden project coincided with a review of the schools syllabus. The aim of the review was to maximise the curricular options available to all pupils at a small secondary school. The school adopted a thematic approach to learning and Outdoor Learning became embedded. Pupils are used to seeing staff and pupils outdoors and groups working outside are not a distraction to pupils in overlooking classrooms, as outdoor learning is now a routine experience.

The Academy has worked with a number of partners to achieve the best opportunities and outcomes for its pupils. It has used ASDAN Key Skills schemes of work to support learning in different curricular areas, a local artist has helped pupils create beach art, and the school has worked with charities and businesses (Forestry Commission, the Royal National Lifeboats Institution and West Coast Sea Products) to reflect its setting and the community it serves.

**Education Benefit:**

- Learning about and experiencing the local environment so that pupils can make the most of the facilities on their doorstep, and recognise the contribution it can make to maintaining their own health and wellbeing
- Pupils learn how to access the environment safely and responsibly
- Thematic approach allows for curricular coverage and the development of progression pathways

**Key Messages**

- **Make the most of local context and connections for relevant learning opportunities**
- **General consents or block consents kept for blocks of work, and a bank of risk assessments kept on file. Pupils can be involved in creating risk assessments as part of lesson plans, and covered within the Health and Wellbeing curriculum.**
- **Double period lessons frees up the timetable for outdoor learning**
- **Collaboration between departments maximises opportunities for learning, but time must be available to develop relationships and work out shared programmes of work.**