

## Speyside High School: Developing School and Grounds as a Learning Opportunity



### Key Facts

**Where:** Located in the small town of Aberlour, the school has the largest catchment area in Britain and falls within the Cairngorm National Park. The town sits along the River Spey.

**School Roll:** 480 approx.

**What:** The school has a strong background in outdoor learning, but with support of a dedicated outdoor learning staff member the school are further exploring the opportunities for learning within the school grounds, and beyond.

**Summary:**

The senior management team strongly supports the promotion of outdoor learning and the delivery of the curriculum outside of the classroom. This has been developed with the support of a teacher tasked with further developing outdoor learning and leadership.

The school was already doing considerable outdoor adventure activities – mountain biking, kayaking, orienteering – all of which could be done locally, or at a nearby outdoor centre. However, more has been done to develop other curricular opportunities. A number of trees were felled in order to build an extension for the school, but before they were cut pupils from an art class began a project to study trees. The trees themselves were recorded in drawings and paintings, pupils were asked to consider the age of trees, what they would have seen in their life span and the stories they might have told. Faces were created from clay and attached to the trees. Now the trees have been cut, timber has been saved and a chainsaw artist will work with the school to create sculptures and seating for social spaces.

Other spaces are being exploited for learning, sometimes in areas which don't initially appear promising. For example, a sloped and previously overgrown wooded area is being used as a school garden where raised beds will be built and vegetable plots created. Pupils have been clearing the area, and are involved in fundraising for the project.

Links with external partners and businesses have been established, and this enhances the pupil experiences, and provides real life contexts for learner.

**Education Benefit:**

- Developing partnerships and relationships with community groups and organisations offer real life contexts for learning
- Enriched learning experiences by utilising space within and outwith the school, and seeing opportunities for learning in the process of developing outdoor space
- Involving pupils in decision making

**Key Messages**

- **Look for the opportunities afforded by spaces however small or awkward, and develop what you have**
- **Create time for collaboration between staff and between subject areas so that teachers can share and extend their practice**
- **Consider double periods to allow more lessons in the grounds and beyond**