

The Outward Bound Trust Impact Report 2009



**THE
OUTWARD
BOUND TRUST**

Foreword

The Outward Bound Trust is synonymous with a long tradition of using the outdoors to promote personal growth through adventure. Over the past 40 years, research has shown how the benefits of such experiences are not only comparable with the most effective educational intervention, but that, more impressively, they increase over time. The evidence suggests a wide range of positive outcomes such as those on dimensions of leadership, academic attainment, independence, assertiveness, emotional stability, social comparison, time management and flexibility.

It is pleasing to see how The Outward Bound Trust has begun to look more deeply into the effects of what it does. This report exhibits both a curiosity into how and why Outward Bound® 'works' and an insistence on using evidence to continue to do even better. I recommend it to you warmly.

David Hopkins, Trustee of The Outward Bound Trust

► Professor David Hopkins has a distinguished career in education. Beginning as a teacher and an Outward Bound instructor, he has worked more recently as Chief Adviser on School Standards at the Department for Education and Skills. He is currently Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Education, University of London, and is the author of several books, including *Every School a Great School*. ◀

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As you read this report, we hope that it conveys three key messages:

1. Outward Bound influences the lives of young people on many different levels, and for this reason, measuring our achievements is incredibly complex.

2. There is growing evidence - from internal evaluation as well as external research - that our work has a positive and sustained impact.

3. This is the start of a long-term commitment to measuring and communicating our impact. Moving forwards, we have a good baseline level of evidence that will help us to focus our efforts in the future.

If you have any further questions that cannot be answered through our website www.outwardbound.org.uk please contact the author of this report by emailing emma.ferris@outwardbound.org.uk

Introduction

Welcome to the first Impact Report produced by The Outward Bound Trust.

We are relatively new to the complex area of impact evaluation and newer still to sharing this with the wider world in the form of a public document. However, I am convinced that we must get better at demonstrating the impact of our work if we are to gain support – either in the form of more people participating on our courses or receiving donations to develop our work. It is also vital if we are to challenge ourselves to keep on improving the quality of

our work with young people. This Impact Report therefore is our public declaration of our commitment to prove and improve our effectiveness as a charity.

Going ahead we will produce an Impact Report once a year in addition to our Annual Report. The Annual Report focuses on governance, strategy, objectives and the financial details of The Trust. The Impact Report aims to answer the best possible question that anyone can ever ask of a charity, namely “Does what you do actually work?”

We believe passionately that The Outward Bound Trust makes a difference for the better to the lives of young people. Faith alone is not enough and in the years ahead we will develop our capacity to demonstrate the impact of our work. In doing so, we will get better and better. This report is the first step on our journey to doing just this.

**Nick Barrett,
Chief Executive**

► Things seem clearer now with nothing to worry about here. Solutions seem more obvious. I was already clear about what I wanted to do with my life but before Outward Bound I was unhappy with the way I was living it. The course has helped change that and given me more focus for the future. ◀

Tara, Classic Course Participant



Key Achievements

The Outward Bound Trust is an educational charity that exists to give young people the opportunity to learn, grow and understand themselves better through discovery and adventure in the wild. Here is a snapshot of our work with young people last year.



Who we reached

- > **25,492** young people attended a course at one of our centres
- > **12,918** received financial support from us to help with the cost of their course*
- > We worked with **379** schools across the United Kingdom, the largest number we have ever worked with in a single year
- > Whilst we worked with young people aged 9–25, we worked primarily with those aged 11–16

How we reached them

Schools & Colleges

We aim to support schools and colleges in delivering an enhanced learning experience to young people.

- > **23,183** young people attended a course ranging from 3 to 7 days
- > We ran an increasingly significant number of large programmes within and across schools with a strong educational or curriculum focus
- > We ran 8 major programmes in collaboration with our corporate partners, each with a specific objective ranging from raising achievement to environmental engagement

Individuals

We aim to give young people opportunities to experience adventure in the outdoors outside of the school term.

- > **1,323** young people attended a course ranging from 5 to 21 days
- > **475** of these completed our 21 day Classic Course, the most intensive course we deliver

Apprentices

We aim to support young people in their development of the key skills needed to be more effective in the workplace.

- > **986** young people attended a course ranging from 3 to 5 days
- > We ran **40** programmes with apprentice clients

Our focus on learning

Last year we continued to focus our efforts on improving the quality of our course delivery and learning.

- > We ran 3 Schools Advisory Board sessions and developed a Scottish Schools Advisory Board. These are groups of senior teachers in schools who use The Outward Bound Trust regularly and who understand the value of our work. They help us remain relevant to the young people we serve.
- > We worked to deliver greater environmental learning objectives on our courses. We did this in two ways: we launched the first Green Outward Bound course, in collaboration with RWE npower, which had a significant focus on environmental learning and engagement; we also began to develop a formal and long-term strategic partnership with the John Muir Trust with a view to embedding environmental learning in our course delivery.
- > We began a review of the quality of learning we deliver. One outcome of this initiative was a partnership with The Institute of Outdoor Learning to ensure instructors hold a qualification that reflects their skills and commitment to delivering learning in the outdoors.** In addition, we formally reviewed our course quality at each of our centres, which resulted in a series of action plans for further improvements.

23,183 young people
Schools & Colleges

1,323 young people
Individual participants

986 young people
Apprentices

*The Trust fundraises to provide bursaries for schools and individuals who are unable to meet the full cost of their course, and is the UK's leading provider of bursary-assisted outdoor learning. Last year we gave £2.153m in bursaries to support financially disadvantaged young people.

**Every Outward Bound instructor is either a Registered Practitioner of the Institute of Outdoor Learning (RPIOL) or an Accredited Practitioner of the Institute of Outdoor Learning (APIOL).

Why Adventure?

We passionately believe that the outdoors is a uniquely powerful learning environment for young people and we are strongly guided by our mission and our belief.

Much has changed in the world since we began in 1941, when our purpose was to give young merchant seamen vital survival skills during the Second World War. The need to invest in the development of young people has not, and one boy's comment at the end of his course goes some way to illustrating this:

"I didn't think I could overcome my fear of heights, my fear of low temperatures, my fear of sleeping in another bed but my own, my fear of outdoor fun, but I had the best time of my life."

Hamdi, 12, John Kelly Boys' Technology College

Hamdi's words describe an experience that helped him to re-evaluate his abilities in a supportive environment. His situation is not unique: time after time participants tell us that their course helped them to tackle a particular fear or challenged them to the extent that they achieved far beyond their expectations. The pride and exhilaration they feel as a result is incredibly powerful, and for this reason Outward Bound presents an opportunity: an opportunity for young people to set their sights higher because they believe in themselves.

Our belief. We are all better than we know. If only we can be brought to realise this, we may never be prepared to settle for anything less.

Our mission. To unlock the potential in young people through discovery and adventure in the wild.

What the research tells us

Learning through adventure is a highly effective method for enabling young people to learn and progress, and is supported by a growing body of research evidence. One of the most significant pieces of research was a review conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 2004, which established a **sound evidence base of improvements in young people's attitudes, beliefs, self-perception, and social and interpersonal skills.**¹ More recently, Ofsted gave its endorsement in a report in 2008 where it stated how learning outside the classroom can contribute **significantly and directly to improvements in achievement, standards, motivation, personal, social and emotional development and behaviour:**

"When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development."²

Research shows that, very simply, a carefully managed adventure in the outdoors has a positive influence on a young person's self-concept – how they perceive themselves in relation to the world around them.³ When they are confronted with situations where there is no alternative other than to face their fears, work with others and push their boundaries, young people discover a stronger, more resilient and determined side to themselves.

Further Reading

Hopkins D. & Putnam R. (1993) *Personal Growth Through Adventure*. London: David Fulton

Hattie J. et al. *Adventure Education and Outward Bound: Out-of-Class Experiences That Make a Lasting Difference*. Review of Educational Research, Spring 1997, Vol. 67, No. 1 National Foundation for Educational Research (2004) *Review of Research on Outdoor Learning*.

Ofsted (2008) *Learning outside the classroom - How far should you go?*

What is Outward Bound learning?

Our approach to learning encourages change in young people.

Firstly, we create a supportive group dynamic built on trust and communication where they develop and utilise their skills, and experience team success.

Secondly, we take them into wild environments that test their boundaries and inspire them.

Thirdly, we guide them through a purposeful review of those situations through which they learn independence, responsibility and skills needed to cope with future challenges more effectively.

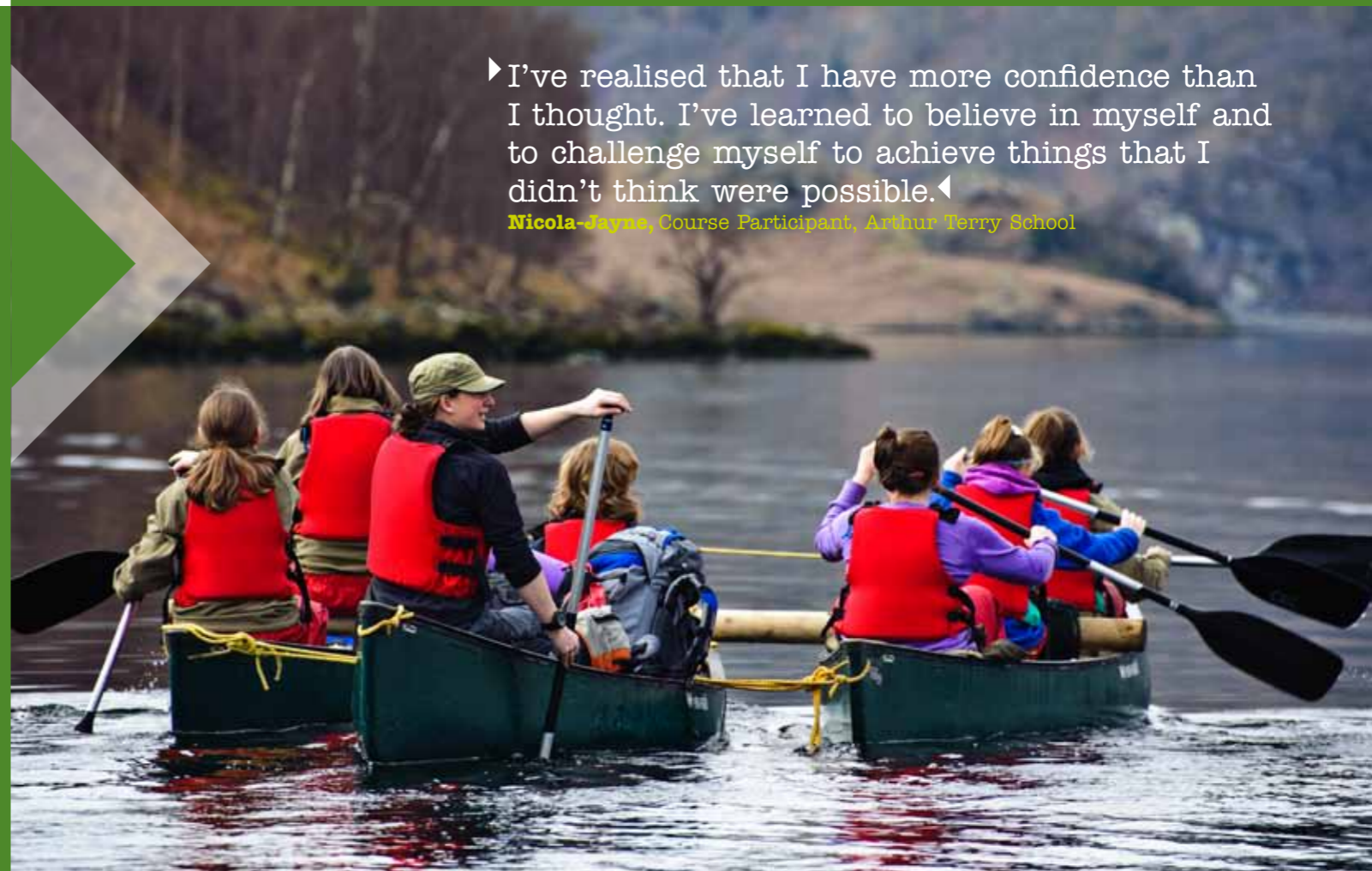
In short, when young people leave our centres they have greater awareness of their potential, through a better understanding of themselves, their relationship with others and the environment in which they live.

▶ **I have been amazed at how fast the students become independent learners – something I did not expect to happen so quickly – and how quickly they gelled together and took responsibility for each other.** ◀

Elaine Punchard, Teacher, Hillcrest School

▶ **I've realised that I have more confidence than I thought. I've learned to believe in myself and to challenge myself to achieve things that I didn't think were possible.** ◀

Nicola-Jayna, Course Participant, Arthur Terry School



Learning for Life

There are three key ingredients that make our courses powerful as well as effective in achieving positive change in young people:

Instructors

Our instructors are highly qualified to deliver adventures in the outdoors. Their enthusiasm and compassion in translating the lessons learnt on the hills and lakes into lessons for everyday life mean that young people are empowered throughout and beyond their course.

Research shows how the instructor plays a pivotal role in bringing about positive change in young people.⁴ Our understanding is that the instructor relationship enhances learning, particularly in developing more mature and respectful relationships with others.

Adventure

1. Journeying. As participants travel through wilderness areas, the opportunities for discovery are dramatic.

Research shows that the nature of the adventures – in particular when actions have real consequences – is key to creating a longer-term change in young people.⁵

2. Learning about the environment raises awareness of the impact of our behaviour on the natural world. By encouraging positive decision-making and independence of thought, we aim to instil greater responsibility and awareness in young people.

Last year we saw how, when a course focused on environmental learning, young people emerged with a considerably stronger sense of responsibility towards the environment and a real desire to make a difference through direct action.⁶

Learning

When a young person takes part in one of our courses they expand their comfort zones, experience challenge and re-think their boundaries. We aim to provide a framework so that their learning makes sense. By reflecting on and reviewing an experience they are better able to understand and process its meaning – not only for themselves but also for the people and the world around them.

Research shows how the opportunities for young people to give feedback and reflect on their experiences, and to discover and appreciate themselves result in some of the most significant learning.⁷



How does it transfer beyond the course experience?

We often use the term *transfer of learning* at The Outward Bound Trust. It refers to the process by which we help young people to understand that what they have learnt and gained during their course can continue to guide and influence them in their lives. We aim to ensure that the positive change experienced during a course is sustained in the future.*

The diagram opposite illustrates the dynamic intersection of these three key ingredients, and how our aim to deliver Learning for Life is integral to our approach.



*We are currently working to understand what actually transfers so that we can better describe the importance of this process and its impact.

Does it last?

Yes. A number of programme evaluations have demonstrated the long-term benefits of learning in the outdoors, and even suggest that the effects can increase over time.⁸ These findings support our anecdotal feedback that an Outward Bound course can, in some situations, be truly life-changing. However, other research raises areas for further consideration:

1. Whilst some benefits clearly transfer into wider school and everyday life, some transfer less readily.

2. Longer courses give young people the opportunity for a more powerful experience, which delivers greater learning and impact.⁹

If this is the case, and if the course is necessarily short, is there more that we could do to help ensure young people have the opportunities they need to reinforce their learning?

▶ Outdoor activities can provide intense and deeply meaningful experiences for pupils who continue to grow and develop some years after.¹⁰



Measuring and Demonstrating Impact

The impact of our work can be measured in a number of ways:

- > What young people learn during their experiences at The Outward Bound Trust
- > The difficulties young people overcome
- > How their experiences continue to guide and influence them – either immediately or in the future
- > How we support schools to fulfil their educational objectives and agendas

Measuring the value of the opportunities we give young people at The Outward Bound Trust is not an easy task. Firstly, our courses are relatively short, usually lasting no more than five days. And secondly, every individual takes something different from their experience. Not only that, but for many individuals, Outward Bound is just the beginning. Some have a profound experience during their course, and tell us about it straight away, but for others, the meaning of the experience only becomes apparent months – or even years – later. Often, what remains is the memory of achievement in a supportive environment, which has the power to influence for years to come.

The summary of our key achievements on page 6-7 of this report demonstrates that our courses are valued and sought after. It shows that, last year, we worked with more schools than ever before and that the majority of our work supports the wider school curriculum. But what do we know about how much young people learnt during their course and how it continues to influence their lives? What do we know about our impact?

There is significant evidence that learning in the outdoors is not only powerful but long-lasting, and the evidence is mounting. However, up until last year we measured the outcomes of our work fairly informally.

We used questionnaires to gather perspectives from participants and their teachers, and as a result we knew very simply that young people had positive experiences in the outdoors that gave them confidence, team skills and a better understanding of themselves. But what was the effect of those experiences? Do we have a wider impact than we think? And do some young people benefit more than others? These are just some of the questions we wanted to ask ourselves, and last year we set about answering some of them. We began to look at the different ways we could measure our impact, from piloting new surveys to making better use of the information we currently collect. The end result is this first Impact Report.

There is a wider recognition that more consistent evaluation of the quality of outdoor learning programmes will help to identify what works best and thereby ensure maximum impact on young people's achievement, personal development and well-being.¹¹ We couldn't agree more, and to this end we are pleased to have already made considerable progress in recognising our programmes that work. Over the next year, we intend to make even more progress.

What we mean by impact on young people

Learning

Young people learn and develop skills during their Outward Bound course

Transfer

Review sessions help them to transfer their learning into lessons for life

Impact

Young people continue to show positive change after their course

Outcomes and Impact

Outcome: Young people achieve beyond their expectations

Impact: This helps to improve their attitude towards learning, their motivation and to raise their aspirations

► This course has changed my views on things and even changed my life and the expectations I have. ◀

Kelly, Course Participant, Wexham School

We provide positive and enjoyable experiences which enable young people to achieve beyond their expectations. When participants are empowered to take responsibility for achieving individual and group tasks in a challenging environment, they develop greater independence and a more positive attitude towards their own learning. In short, the challenges they overcome inspire them to aim higher.

Ed Penny, a teacher from Firth Park Community Arts College, described the benefits of the course to his students: "The students have learnt what proper hard work really is and therefore might not have such a tendency to shy away from challenges at school. They now know what they can achieve if they put their mind to it."

A number of the schools we work with testify to the impact of a long-standing and fully integrated Outward Bound programme on raising aspirations and achievement amongst pupils. In particular, teachers at Rhodesway School describe how an integrated Outward Bound programme delivered over a number of years played a key part in enabling the school to come out of special measures.¹²

Key programmes

- > For over 10 years we have worked with Macmillan Academy to deliver a programme which currently forms a significant part of the school's outdoor learning curriculum.
- > Our programme with Northampton High School works with students in Year 10 to expand horizons and foster a spirit of adventure.
- > For over 10 years the Aiming Higher with Outward Bound programme has tackled underachievement across schools in North Lanarkshire, working with students in S4. See Case Study 2 on page 23 for more detail.
- > Our Reach Higher programme with Battersea Park School, in partnership with Deutsche Bank, focuses on raising achievement in pupils across the whole school. See Case Study 3 on page 24 for more detail.



Outcome: Young people understand themselves better - particularly their skills and abilities

Impact: This boosts their feelings of confidence, self-belief and self-worth

► I learnt to be confident in what I do, even presenting a speech in front of people I've never seen in my life. Now I know it's not hard to try something you've never tried before and now I'm going to move forward. ◀

Kirsty, Course Participant, Sheldon Heath Community Arts College

Young people challenge what they believe about their own abilities and realise that they are more capable than they think. When encouraged to overcome fears and push their boundaries, they gain an experience of tackling challenges more confidently. The result is that they are more willing to try new things and to not give up at the first hurdle. At the same time, they learn new skills – particularly in teamwork, problem solving and decision-making – which boosts their confidence. Philip Miller, a teacher at Northampton Academy described the benefits to his pupils when he said: "Our pupils need opportunities like this. They need to find ways to develop their self-belief and self-worth. This course 100% does that."

There is evidence to suggest that some of these skills transfer naturally into the classroom environment where pupils demonstrate improved ability to communicate with others, to present ideas and to participate in wider school activities.¹³

Key programmes

- > Our programme with Govan High School supports the school's skills-based curriculum.
- > Our Apprentice Development programme with Volkswagen Group UK Ltd had a proven impact on the apprentices' skills, particularly in teamwork, planning and preparation, and communication.¹⁴

Increased confidence is sustained in the long-term: 91% of teachers who responded to a survey said that their pupils' confidence had significantly improved since their Outward Bound course.¹⁵

Outcome: Young people develop better relationships with others

Impact: This supports the development of team skills and a positive attitude towards school

► Before, as soon as it hits 3:15 we were off home. Now we hang around together. It makes you feel good when you stay at school and you do work, it made a really big difference. ◀

Course Participant, Battersea Park School

Our approach to learning breaks down barriers between pupils. Research shows how a shared experience in the outdoors has a levelling effect, enabling young people to shed feelings of difference and to learn greater acceptance of themselves and of others. As the whole course takes place in a small group unit they also experience a sense of belonging because they are encouraged to share opinions as well as listen to other people's ideas. Back in school, they continue to benefit from the feelings of mutual support and enjoyment of shared success, which results in enhanced team and communication skills, and a more positive attitude towards school.

Jane Oakley, a teacher from Highbury Grove School, described how her school has since adopted much of The Trust's approach to learning: "We have been blown away by the experience and the impact on the students. But it has been of huge value to the teachers as well and we have learnt from Outward Bound and its ethos, which we will take back to school."

Key programmes

- > Our programme with Walsall Academy works with pupils across different year groups who are at risk of disengagement from school. It aims to re-engage with learners through an understanding of others and working cooperatively.
- > We have worked with Springburn Academy for five years to deliver a programme that supports vulnerable pupils in their transition from primary to secondary school. Through our Metro and Loch Eil centres we train S4 mentors to build relationships with younger pupils.



Outcome: Young people develop a sense of social responsibility

Impact: They feel empowered to lead others and to make a contribution to wider society

► The course has made me a more environmentally aware person and I wish that every young person living in London would be able to do it, so that they too can see what an amazing world we live in and therefore have the drive that I do to protect it! ◀

Jenni, Green Outward Bound Course Participant

Some of our programmes focused specifically on inspiring young people to take on responsibility within their school or in their local communities. Depending on the focus of the programme, the development of leadership skills equipped them with the ability and the motivation to fulfil a particular role.

Our evaluation shows that, after an Outward Bound course, young people were considerably more likely to take up positions of responsibility in their schools or local community if they were available to them. For example, last year we ran our first course with a focus on environmental learning and engagement, which saw very positive outcomes as part of a longer programme to develop pupils into environmental champions. The skills and motivation they gained enhanced their ability and desire to take action to reduce their impact on the environment.¹⁶ In fact, several schools used The Trust as a stepping stone onto other initiatives, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or school mentoring, and research demonstrates that taking part in these activities serves to reinforce and further develop what they have learnt at Outward Bound. Jenny was 15 when she attended the first Green Outward Bound course, funded by RWE npower. The course had a significant influence on her values and her attitudes, as she describes below:

One of my best memories of the Outward Bound course was when we went for a walk in the forest in the dark. Being surrounded by nature really helped me to appreciate the amazing environment we live in, and to realise how my lifestyle is damaging it. I went from thinking that in such a huge world I could not possibly make a difference, to realising that every action I make affects the environment. The course also helped me to see little ways that I can make a difference in preventing damage to such an amazing world.

When I came back to London, I was worried that I would lose enthusiasm as the city life took me up again. Luckily this was not true; my experience on Outward Bound was so brilliant that I am now a greener citizen. I recycle in the house and rarely use the car. I also reduce the amount of paper I use and try to buy clothes from more sustainable sources.

Key programmes

- > The **RWE npower programme** invests in young people's environmental engagement and leadership in 10 schools across the UK.
- > The **Leadership for Life** programme in Glasgow builds leadership skills in young people across 65 schools and supports community development.
- > Our programme in partnership with **Wakefield and District Housing** aims to develop students as local community leaders across 18 schools.

► It was most definitely a worthwhile experience. Working alongside the instructors and students has empowered us and has helped improve my professional relationship with the students. ◀

Faical Rajbi, Teacher, Preston Manor High School



A Deeper Understanding

Last year we started to identify the wider impact of our courses but are only just beginning to understand some of the findings. We thought it was worth including some of them here.

Influencing young people's subjective well-being

Well-being describes a wide range of factors affecting young people's lives. There is growing understanding that with a high level of well-being, a child is more likely to go on to live a healthy, happy and successful life.¹⁷

Through a pilot initiative with New Philanthropy Capital,¹⁸ we learnt that we have a significant impact on young people's:

- > Emotional well-being: their experience of depressive emotions, worries and other stressful feelings
- > Resilience: their ability to cope with stress and difficulties
- > Self-esteem: their overall feelings of self-worth

This year we will continue to identify the extent of our impact in this area.

Influencing attitudes towards healthy living

86% of teachers who responded to a survey said that their pupils had shown a partial to significant improvement in physical ability since their Outward Bound course.¹⁹

Although our courses do not explicitly seek to improve attitudes towards healthy eating and physical exercise, we have seen that young people do develop a more balanced approach to leading a healthy lifestyle. This year we will begin a Healthy Living Programme with two schools in Glasgow, in partnership with Sodexo, and we are looking forward to understanding more about our impact in this area.

Benefits to teachers and other visiting staff members

We are beginning to recognise the benefits to teachers and other visiting staff of sharing an experience in the outdoors with their pupils. Some research has shown that teachers benefit hugely from the opportunity to see their pupils in a different light, meaning that they are better able to respond to individual learning needs. On the programme we ran with RWE npower, teachers consistently told us how the course had helped them to understand, engage and motivate their pupils more.



A Wider Impact

Outward Bound has a significant influence on young people's educational, social and personal development. By indentifying the context of our work, we can determine our extended impact and demonstrate the wider significance of our work.

Our link with mainstream educational objectives

The focus of mainstream education has shifted in recent years. Its primary aim is to enable young people to meet the challenges of life and to flourish in doing so. This requires the development of a full range of attributes, knowledge and skills. Outward Bound complements and supports what schools seek to achieve through:

The National Curriculum in England
Aims to develop young people into successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

Last year we worked with 186 secondary schools in England & Wales

The Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland
Aims to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

Last year we worked with 77 primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

Primary Curriculum in England and Wales
Aims to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, and to enable them to learn and to achieve.

Last year we worked with 39 primary schools in England.

This year we will map our learning outcomes and impact to these national curricula frameworks so that we can measure and demonstrate further the impact of our work. For more information on this, please visit www.theoutwardboundtrust.org.uk.

In November 2006 Learning Outside the Classroom was recognised as a highly effective method for achieving powerful learning for young people. A report commissioned by Farming and Countryside Education for the Department for Children, School and Families highlighted how: "Experiences outside the formal classroom help provide the blueprint on which young people continue to build throughout their schooling."²⁰ Our programme evaluations in this report reinforce this finding that the impact of learning outside the classroom can be long-lasting.

Key Impact – Flixton Girls' High School

For over 10 years we have worked with Flixton Girls' High School on a relatively small scale, but since recognising the significant impact of the Outward Bound courses on the students' aspirations, they chose to integrate Outward Bound into the curriculum and make it available to the whole school in a bid to achieve whole-school change. The programme started in November 2008.

- > 186 Secondary schools in England and Wales
- > 77 Primary and secondary schools in Scotland
- > 39 Primary schools in England

*The numbers above include only state secondary and primary, however we also worked with a number of independent schools, academies and universities.

► Our aim for the future is to expand the scope of the Outward Bound residential experience to make it a compulsory part of the curriculum at Flixton Girls' High School, meaning that all students must attend the scheme on a year on year basis... In extending the experience to all students as a compulsory residential, Flixton Girls' High School would be pioneering learning methods for students across the North West. ◀

Julie Hazeldine, Head Teacher, Flixton Girls' High School



HSBC

Supporting the development of disadvantaged young people in East London: HSBC and The Outward Bound Trust

This project invested in 750 pupils from 5 disadvantaged schools in East London*, over 5 years, and came to an end in August 2008. The main aim of the project was to support the educational, social and personal development of the pupils. The project was 2-phased, involving a 7-day Outward Bound Adventure and Challenge course for all pupils, followed by a 3-week Outward Bound Classic course for a selection of pupils.

A project evaluation identified the outcomes of the programme and the impact on the students' academic achievement, behaviour and attendance, as well as their perceived levels of self-esteem and confidence.²¹

It highlighted how the majority of students displayed improvements in all of these areas for at least one year. It also showed how those who progressed onto the final part of the programme – the 3-week Classic Course – made the most significant and lasting progress. Moreover, the majority of these students took up either positions of responsibility in their schools, such as members of the School Council, or other rewarding activities, such as The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In fact, it recognised how the opportunities for utilising skills need to be available in order to maximise the benefits of the programme itself.

“Those individuals who have opportunities to transfer the skills learnt through the project to other areas of their lives go on to experience greater personal development than those who don't.”²²

Adding value to the programme

HSBC employees were also trained to work alongside the Outward Bound instructors to mentor the students, supporting them throughout their experience and developing a strong relationship built on trust, compassion and understanding. The evaluation demonstrated how this brought significant additional value to the programme by:

- > Enhancing the learning experiences of the young people
- > Breaking down barriers in the wider community between older and younger generations
- > Improving community cohesion

Several of our programmes take a similar approach, involving staff from sponsoring companies to work closely with pupils in a mentoring capacity. Last year we worked with DHL, RWE npower, Wakefield and District Housing and HSBC in a parallel Birmingham project to offer over 650 young people these valuable opportunities.

▶ The majority of pupils who participated in the HSBC/Outward Bound project showed positive improvements [...] and over 50% of pupils maintained this progress to the point of leaving school.²³

Quick Facts

Programme structure: 7-day courses followed by 3-week courses for selected students; involvement of HSBC staff mentors to add value to the programme

Young people reached: 750

Aims: to encourage and re-engage with pupils; to aid the educational, personal and social development of pupils; to aid community development

Outcomes and impact:

- > Positive and enjoyable experiences
- > Some re-engagement with school
- > Decreased disaffected behaviour for some pupils
- > Expansion of friendship groups
- > Broader understanding of different cultures
- > Students challenged stereotypes of own abilities
- > Greater likelihood of taking up positions of authority and/or other activities within the school

Evaluation methodology used:

- > Pupil profiles & analysis of “hard” school data
- > In-depth individual pupil case studies
- > Discussions & focus groups
- > Lead evaluator – Loughborough University

North Lanarkshire Aiming Higher

Raising Achievement in North Lanarkshire: Aiming Higher with Outward Bound

The Aiming Higher with Outward Bound programme is a partnership between The Outward Bound Trust and North Lanarkshire Council and plays a central role in the Education Department's Raising Achievement for All policy. The programme has been running since 1996 and serves between 850 and 900 pupils aged 14 - 15 every year – approximately 25% of the Secondary 4 year group. Since it started, we have reached over 10,000 pupils.

An evaluation conducted in 2004 established support for the programme in line with the Scottish curriculum which, at that time, sought to develop young people through five key competencies: a sense of belonging; respect and care for self; respect and care for others; commitment to learning and a sense of social responsibility.²⁴

The research determined that the Outward Bound programme enabled the pupils to develop in each of these areas, and that the programme acted as an effective complement to the established education system in Scotland. It described how:

“Every situation they find themselves in presents another form of learning, whether it be learning more about others, their own motivation or about social skills and attitudes.”²⁵

It also determined how the pupils retained specific elements of their learning more than others, in particular confidence and determination. These helped them to speak out more in class, to audition for school plays and with general presentation skills. Overall, they demonstrated enhanced self-awareness, which meant that they were more capable of using their skills, of developing new ones, and were more accepting of failure.

A recent internal evaluation of the programme confirmed that this continues to be the case: the pupils continue to achieve beyond their expectations, to experience increased confidence and to benefit enormously from the personal relationships developed and retained after their experience.

▶ Many of the schools we work with use The Outward Bound Trust with the ultimate aim of raising achievement. Whilst it is difficult to attribute improvements in academic achievement to Outward Bound without significant research, we do know that learning through adventure dramatically improves attitudes towards learning which may in turn influence achievement in school.▶

Quick Facts

Programme structure: 5-day course; use of Student Learning Journals to aid learning; Students can gain accreditation through SQA in Working With Others Core Skill at Intermediate 1.

Young people reached: Over 10,000

Aims: to raise achievement, to re-engage learners

Outcomes and impact:

- > Improved social skills
- > Increased confidence
- > Some improved attitude to school work
- > Increased self-awareness & self-understanding

Evaluation methodology used:

- > Interviews, observations, questionnaires
- > Lead evaluator – University of Edinburgh

*These were St. Paul's Way Community School, St. Michael's School, Stepney Green School, St. Ursula's R C School and Royal Docks Community School.

Deutsche Bank Reach Higher

Investing in Retention, Achievement and Progression in a disadvantaged school: Reach Higher in Battersea Park School

Reach Higher is a 5-year Outward Bound project that started in September 2007, investing in the retention, achievement and progression of students in Battersea Park School, a deprived inner-London school. The project is unique, focusing on the structured integration of Outward Bound residential courses into the school's curriculum and ethos.

The focus of the research is not only on the learning but also on the wider impact of an outdoor learning programme on student attendance in school, academic achievement and sense of school community.

Whilst the programme is still only in its early stages, research²⁶ so far indicates that Outward Bound has the potential to create "lasting change" within Battersea Park School by:

- ▶ **Creating a positive and supportive environment in which students can thrive.** The research identifies how established barriers have broken down, strengthening relationships amongst students. They feel more accepted by their peers, they trust them more, and they experience a new sense of mutual support. Teachers have also developed a greater understanding of their students and are better able to identify their strengths and qualities. The result is that the students are more positive about taking part in wider school life.
- ▶ **Building confidence in students** based on achievement. Having pushed themselves beyond their comfort zones, it is clear that the students have a better understanding of their own abilities. Some have also found the courage to step beyond set roles or limitations, allowing them to shine in new ways.

What stands out the most of all is the students' continued enthusiasm for the programme, which illustrates its power to influence long beyond the courses themselves. Last year we also began to link the programme to other areas of the curriculum, such as Geography and Media Studies, which we hope will further aid the integration of Outward Bound learning into the wider school ethos.

▶ Achievements made during the Outward Bound trips created a lasting feeling of confidence which is reflected in family life, such as relationships with parents and siblings.²⁷

Quick Facts

Programme structure: 5-day courses

Young people reached: 590

Aims: to raise achievement; to raise aspirations

Interim outcomes and impact:

- > Breaks down barriers between students and teachers
- > Creates a positive and supportive environment
- > Builds confidence
- > Improves perceptions of academic ability

Evaluation methodology used:

- > Structured interviews with students, focus groups with parents and teachers, questionnaires completed by students before and after their course
- > Control group provided by surveying all students in participating year groups
- > Lead evaluator - nfpSynergy

▶ I learnt that I needed the support of my friends and myself, and that I needed to help people who needed my help - don't think about yourself, think about others. It made me realise that there is a big beautiful world out there but I ain't gonna get anywhere unless I always stay positive, trust others and believe in myself.²⁸

Brian, 14, Battersea Park School

Moving Forwards

There is no doubt that whilst at Outward Bound, young people have a powerful learning experience. The opportunity to learn is vital and with the right support, they continue to make considerable progress.

However, we are less sure of the extent to which all the benefits are captured and reinforced. A recurring theme from the evaluation of our work is that there is a greater need to ensure that the learning does not get lost or forgotten.

There will be many ways to accomplish this. Ofsted highlights one of them, by citing how a programme that is integrated into long-term curriculum planning can make the most of learning outside the classroom.²⁸

Learning through adventure has only recently been fully recognised as a significant educational experience, and with that comes the responsibility of making sure that it meets today's demand for high quality. We stated that the purposes of this first Impact Report were to highlight the value of our work and equally to acknowledge the gaps in our knowledge. This report has given us areas for further thought and reflection, some of which we have included here.

- > The longer the time spent in the outdoors, the more powerful the learning. The bulk of our work takes place during five days, but we also serve a significant number of people through the 21 day Classic Course. We could do more to emphasise the value of this longer programme.
- > What can we do to aid teachers in continuing the work that we have started? For example, a number of our programmes use the Student Learning Journal* to great effect. What additional value do these learning aids contribute to the long-term impact of Outward Bound learning?
- > We can do more to identify the wider impact of our programmes in schools and to share examples of good practice with them.

*This is a journal that students complete before, during and after their course that helps them to record and understand their learning.

Over the next year, we will:

- > Finalise an Outcomes and Impact Evaluation Framework that will guide our research and evaluation, and that will enable us to demonstrate the value of our work more effectively.
- > Work to improve the evaluation of immediate course outcomes, but more particularly to evaluate the longer-term impact of our courses.
- > Map our learning to mainstream educational objectives.
- > Continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure we remain relevant to the young people we serve, and in particular to maximise opportunities for young people to transfer their learning so as to deepen and lengthen the impact of our programmes.
- > Continue to work with a number of agencies – such as universities and research consultancies – to understand the wider implications of our work. This will help us to ensure we deliver only the very best, to describe our successes better, and to demonstrate the value of our work.
- > Produce a second Impact Report, building further on all we have learnt to date.

For more information about this report and the work of The Outward Bound Trust, please visit our website www.theoutwardboundtrust.org.uk/obt.html

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All our supporters who enable us to continue our work with young people

Notes

► We are all better than we know;
if only we can be brought to
realise this, we may never
again be prepared to settle for
anything less. ◀

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