



# A Guide to High Quality Outdoor Learning and Residential Experiences

## High quality outdoor learning

**Outdoor Learning** embraces an approach to learning that:

- involves being outdoors as a central part of the experience,
- is open to all,
- seeks to use the outdoor environment as a vehicle for transforming the experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours,
- frequently has a challenging, adventurous or residential component,
- often involves some physical activity,
- always respects the natural environment.

The **10 Key Outcomes** of High Quality Outdoor Learning:

- 1 Enjoyment
- 2 Confidence and Character
- 3 Social and Emotional Well-being
- 4 Environmental Awareness
- 5 Activity Skills
- 6 Personal Qualities
- 7 Skills for Life
- 8 Health and Well-being
- 9 Increased Motivation and Appetite for Learning
- 10 Broadened Horizons

### The vision

Having a clear vision of what you want to achieve when using the outdoors is the starting point in the delivery of high quality outdoor learning and early engagement of young people in this process is essential.



In organisations that provide high-quality learning outdoors, decision-makers, managers and delivery staff:

- recognise what learning in the outdoors can achieve for young people,
- set high expectations of what individual young people can achieve through learning in the outdoors,
- explain the impact and outcomes of learning in the outdoors on participation, progress and achievement in a way that everyone involved can understand,
- review the outcomes and celebrate young people's achievements,
- encourage independent participation into adolescence and beyond.



### The benefits

There is clear evidence that outdoor learning has a positive impact on young people, and when that learning is of high quality the impact can be life changing. For many, just being outdoors can have a huge benefit in terms of health and well-being, stimulating curiosity and developing an appreciation of the world around them. When such experiences are part of a progressive programme designed to support integrated learning in both the formal and informal youth settings, the impact is greatly enhanced.

Outdoor learning offers an environment where real world and progressive, practical learning skills can then be developed. It is synonymous with developing self-confidence and character. It provides an environment where young people can practically manage risk and through residential experiences provides those truly memorable moments in all our lives. For many it can be the beginning of a life long engagement in the outdoors and with outdoor pursuits and recreation.



### Outdoor learning should be a progressive learning experience

To maximise the positive impact that outdoor experiences have upon children and young people, they should have access to frequent, continuous and progressive outdoor learning.

From guidance and facilitation...



...to independence and developing essential skills for life

**A high quality outdoor learning experiences should demonstrate the following:**

	Indicators	✓
1	The session is designed to have clear learning outcomes that are discussed with the group from the beginning and regularly re-visited throughout the session.	
2	The session is inclusive and shows differentiation to meet the needs of all learners within the group.	
3	The session leader creates a safe and positive learning environment using an appropriate level of risk.	
4	The group are involved in the discussion on safe practice and risk management of the activity.	
5	The session is linked to wider curriculum outcomes and objectives through a clear transfer of learning.	
6	The activity is delivered in a way that maximises achievement of the learning outcomes.	
7	All participants play an active part and are engaged in learning throughout the activity.	
8	A positive, professional and consistent relationship is built between the session leader and the participants.	
9	The session is well paced and shows progression and clear development of skills, behaviour and knowledge from the participants.	
10	Participants have the opportunity to be creative and apply what they are learning.	
11	Participants can describe what they are learning as opposed to what they are doing and can understand how they can apply it in the future.	
12	Reflection and review time is built in to the session where application of learning is discussed and achievements are recognised.	

For guidance on the planning and organisation of outdoor learning, refer to the OEAP National Guidance at [www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info)

# The unique benefits of the residential experience

**It is generally recognised and accepted that a residential experience for young people is a powerful and positive learning experience. Here are just some reasons why:**

**1. Relationships.** One of the most significant impacts of Learning Away was on relationships, both peer relationships and those between staff and students (at the secondary and primary level).

**2. Resilience, self-confidence and well-being.** When asked to identify what difference the residential had made to students, they were most likely to identify an increase in confidence: within students themselves, in their learning, and in their relationships with others. Positive impacts on confidence were directly linked to consequent positive outcomes, such as improved relationships, better engagement with learning and the development of leadership skills.

**3. Impact on achievement.** Staff and students felt the residential had impacted on their levels of attainment. Improving their confidence and awareness of their strengths and weaknesses; highlighting what they needed to do to improve their learning.

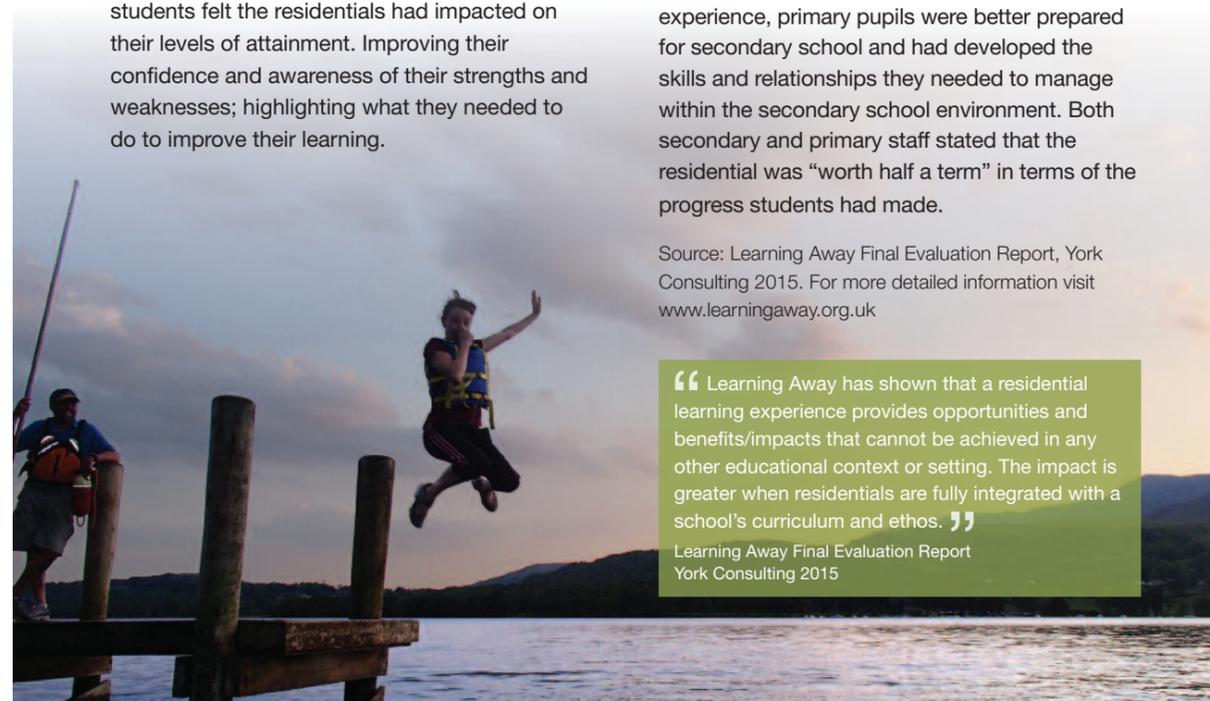
**4. Impact on knowledge, skills and understanding.** Impacts on students' knowledge and skills were also identified by participants including that students were becoming more independent learners; developing a deeper and better understanding of the subject; improving creativity; developing vocabulary and speaking and listening skills (particularly for primary pupils).

**5. Impact on Cohesion.** The sense of community developed on the residential and the memorability of the experiences helped to boost cohesion, interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging amongst participants.

**6. Impact on Transition.** The main impact identified was that, as a result of their residential experience, primary pupils were better prepared for secondary school and had developed the skills and relationships they needed to manage within the secondary school environment. Both secondary and primary staff stated that the residential was "worth half a term" in terms of the progress students had made.

Source: Learning Away Final Evaluation Report, York Consulting 2015. For more detailed information visit [www.learningaway.org.uk](http://www.learningaway.org.uk)

“ Learning Away has shown that a residential learning experience provides opportunities and benefits/impacts that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting. The impact is greater when residential are fully integrated with a school's curriculum and ethos. ”  
Learning Away Final Evaluation Report  
York Consulting 2015



**A high quality residential experience should demonstrate the following:**

	Indicators	✓
1	The residential programme should be planned and delivered to maximise the achievement of the specific learning objectives.	
2	Residential experiences are co-designed between the organisation and the provider with specific learning outcomes identified; a site visit meeting is desirable.	
3	The provider must have evidence to demonstrate that safety management processes are in place to effectively manage risk.	
4	The participants are actively involved in the pre-residential planning and post residential reflection.	
5	Residential experiences should be inclusive and offer options for everyone.	
6	Suitable and sufficient information must be made available to an organisation on how to manage groups while on a providers' site, such as a visiting staff-briefing sheet.	
7	The accommodation, venue, equipment and staffing on the residential should provide the best opportunity for achieving your desired learning outcomes safely.	
8	The food on the residential visit should provide a healthy and balanced menu with options to meet specific dietary needs.	
9	Social and 'un-structured' time on a residential should be viewed and facilitated as a learning opportunity e.g. meals and evenings.	
10	The residential provider should provide excellent customer service, before, during and after the visit.	
11	If multiple residential experiences are offered within an organisation, they should be progressive, coordinated, 'joined up' in their planning and link to wider learning.	
12	The choice of residential provider should be regularly reviewed and justified using national accreditation schemes wherever appropriate.	

For further details on high quality outdoor learning and residential experiences please visit: <http://ahoec.org/>, [www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/](http://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/), [www.lotc.org.uk/](http://www.lotc.org.uk/) and <http://learningaway.org.uk/>