How does learning outside the classroom contribute to Youth Matters and the 16 – 19 Agenda?

Learning experiences outside a traditional classroom setting can offer a broader variety of educational experiences affording individual learners more choice, facilitating interaction with members of the community in a variety of work settings and promoting a greater understanding of the local community, society more generally and the role of individuals within it.

Learning outside the classroom can be delivered in a variety of innovative and educationally valuable ways: this includes activities that can be undertaken on school sites, and work done with young people by voluntary and youth groups during school holidays and at weekends. External specialists are able to bring their skills, knowledge and expertise to schools to share with young people.

Learning outside the classroom can contribute to raising educational participation and achievement at post-16 level through engaging and challenging young people in new ways. It provides opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between potential post-16 providers and support agencies.

It may also provide an opportunity for local authorities reflecting on ‘Youth Matters’ to comply with statutory remits including the duty to provide access for young people to ‘positive leisure activities’; and it can contribute to many of the 198 indicators against which local authorities are measured.¹

Basic skills
Learning outside the classroom can rekindle interest in learning among the otherwise disaffected. As such it can be a platform for basic skills for those who left school at 16 without basic literacy, numeracy and ICT proficiency.

Work-based learning
Learning outside the classroom in the form of hands-on experience and work-based learning is integral to the three levels of the new 14—19 Diploma, NVQs and other learning routes, including many in the Further Education sector. Learning opportunities outside the classroom can help young people to develop their team-working and critical thinking skills.

“Students undertaking a diploma will not spend all of their time sitting at a desk in a classroom.”²

DCSF ‘14-19 Education and Skills — What is a Diploma?’

NEETs
Young people ‘not in education, employment or training’) can often benefit from intensive programmes involving outdoor adventure activities. Such programmes can be effective in re-engaging 16-to-18-year-

¹ DCSF ‘Youth Matters: A strategy for the 21st century’February 2007
² DCSF ‘14-19 Education and Skills — What is a Diploma?’
How does learning outside the classroom contribute to Youth Matters and the 16 – 19 Agenda?

olds who are not currently in education, training or employment, and promoting good physical and emotional health.

International Baccalaureate
Learning outside the classroom can be used to stretch the most able post-16 students. The International Baccalaureate, for example, encourages students to be involved in artistic pursuits, sports and community service work to nurture understanding of life outside the academic arena.3

Authenticity
Real-life experiences — residential, learning outdoors, work-based learning — are valued by young people for their authenticity.

Imagination and Empowerment
Learning outside the classroom activities have the power to capture the interest and imagination of young people post-16, both empowering and enabling them to take on responsibilities and develop team-working and communication skills in a way that is meaningful, rather than contrived.

Volunteering
Learning outside the classroom opportunities can act as a springboard to volunteering roles which can provide valuable experiences for young people and contribute to the local community.

‘The Active Citizens in Schools (ACiS) programme also directly affected the participating schools: physical improvements to the school environment; enhanced behaviour; engaging disaffected young people; enhanced relationships between staff and pupils; increased profile and reputation for the school; and, in some cases, a change in the ethos of the school.’

Further information on ACiS can be found via www.teachernet.gov.uk

1 Statutory remits for local authorities can be found in Sections 507A and 507B of the Education Act 1996 which was inserted by Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and can be found at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006 and the Education Act 1996 which can be found at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1996/ukpga_19960056_en_1
3 The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme for students aged 16 to 19 www.ibo.org/diploma/
How does learning outside the classroom contribute to Youth Matters and the 16 – 19 Agenda?

How to involve staff
Any school considering expanding its learning outside the classroom provision should begin by consulting staff. Such a consultation should have four aims.

1. To make the case for learning outside the classroom to all staff
2. To encourage all staff to plan and participate
3. To identify staff — teachers and support staff — willing to lead learning outside the classroom activities
4. To identify any professional development needs arising from learning outside the classroom implementation

How to involve young people
Any learning outside the classroom programme will need to engage the interest of the children and young people who take part. A starting point should be the young people's current experience of learning outside the classroom, but successful programmes are likely to develop from practice that involves young people in the planning and delivery of the whole experience.

How to involve parents
We cannot assume that all parents will be automatically enthusiastic about learning outside the classroom. Some will have concerns about safety and may also need to be reassured about activities where they may not immediately see the learning value. The best answer to these concerns is to involve parents from the very beginning.
Parents of children with disabilities, learning difficulties and other special needs should always be consulted and involved in the planning of learning outside the classroom. This gives them the opportunity to share essential information with staff, for example, knowledge they may have about how their child reacts to certain situations outside school.

How to involve governors
Effective governance provides strategic leadership and accountability. Governors have a key role in learning outside the classroom, but are not education professionals and rely on sound advice in order to fulfil their role.

There is more in People — Responsibilities and Involvement for Learning Outside the Classroom on involving the school community.

There is more in Developing a Learning Outside the Classroom Policy on policy writing.
Step 3: Evaluation

Evidence suggests that schools do not fully appreciate the contribution learning outside the classroom makes to raising achievement (Ofsted 2008). As the curriculum plan is being implemented it is important to regularly monitor the planned curriculum and the resulting outcomes for young people, at key points in time. No evaluation will be complete without asking for learners' views!

See Evaluation for more guidance.

Also in considering how far we are achieving our aims, see: www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk

There are 38 case studies of different approaches to secondary curriculum design on the SSAT website. Registration is required.