



SecEd

Introducing Skills4Life

Our brand new programme dedicated to getting secondary pupils ready for their next life adventure

Our new Skills4Life programme builds and measures the resilience of young people to move beyond pre-conceptions of their own ability. Through progressive exposure to challenges which have meaningful, real-life applications, the positive impact upon a young person's adaptability and growth view of themselves becomes truly tangible.

Building a foundation of resilience, and developing the four 21st century skills; creativity, collaboration, communication and creativity, our 5 day programme includes unique modules like Food for Thought and The Epic Challenge.



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Residential trips in key stages 3 and 4

Key content

- The power of residential trips for secondary students
- Using trips to embed key skills and boost wellbeing
- Tips for planning and running trips
- How to follow-up trip experiences in school
- Cost-effective ideas for using outdoor learning
- Case study: Academic study and outdoor learning

In association with



GUIDE TO... Residential trips in key stages 3 and 4

Underpinning academic success

While the Welsh and Scottish governments have put in place legislation stipulating that outdoor education should form a part of the curriculum in secondary schools, there is no such requirement in England.

And yet, it should be seen as an integral part of a young person's education. At key stage 3, it seems as though fewer children than ever before are participating in the kind of memorable residential and outdoor experiences that pupils first receive in the primary phase, as school and family budgets are being squeezed and curriculum pressures are brought to bear on timetables.

It is a pivotal time in young people's lives. Transition from one school to another can be disruptive and unsettling, as pupils used to learning in one classroom with one teacher suddenly have to navigate around a large school, with multiple

subjects and teachers, not to mention the prospect of forging new friendships.

"It's important for them to be confident about making that leap because children go through peaks and troughs of resilience and self-worth," explained Dr John Allan, the head of learning and impact at the award-winning company Inspiring Learning, of which Kingswood is a part.

"We also want them to retain the creativity they learned in primary school, because as soon as they arrive in the more uniform structure of secondary school all of that can get lost in the rigid classroom-based environment. The fun's over – but it shouldn't be."

Delivering effective transitional programmes should be a partnership between providers and schools, Dr Allan believes. "It needs to be seen as an integral part of a child's education, for the holistic

development of the young person as much as anything. We also know from studies and evaluations that it underpins academic success.

"There is a need for more open and less regimented education that encourages freedom of choice and autonomy to allow children and young people to flourish and thrive – and even more so after the Covid lockdowns forced students to spend a protracted period of time away from their peers."

Dr Allan has delivered transitional activities in the past and believes Kingswood should offer more that are linked to academic outcomes. Not least, because NHS research as well as the anecdotal evidence we hear from schools and health agencies suggest that mental health problems among teenagers have reached crisis point (Newlove-Delgado et al, 2022).

"It's all part of the building blocks of a young person's development," added Sarah Farrell, Kingswood's marketing director. "If children don't have those foundations in place in terms of feeling confident and being resilient, they will find it more difficult to do the academic study."

"If we can provide these personal skills in the outdoors then it puts teenagers in the driving seat to take better charge of their own learning."

“Every year prior to examinations, year 11 students go to the local Kingswood centre to do a combination of academic work and fun activities”

Integrating and linking real-life experiences with subject matter brings learning to life in primary, and there is no reason why this shouldn't be the case in secondary, too. The uncertainty and unpredictability of an outdoor residential experience can offer answers to questions that cannot be found in a book.

"Many schools mention outdoor experiences in their mission statements and values, but they often

INTRODUCING KINGSWOOD

For more than 40 years, Kingswood has been running transformative trips, encouraging both adults and young people to build confidence and resilience. It runs activity centres across the UK and beyond. Kingswood is part of the Inspiring Learning family of outdoor learning and residential organisations. Visit www.kingswood.co.uk and www.inspiring-learning.com

just don't have the time and wherewithal to make it work," Dr Allan continued. "We want to develop a relationship with schools where we don't just provide the facilities and experiences but we share our know-how with the schools too so that they can take these ideas and techniques away with them."

One of the areas in which Kingswood believes more could be done is in key stage 4, ahead of GCSE and in preparation for revision and exams. The idea is to combine traditional study with outdoor activities.

"We have delivered this kind of provision in the past, but it needs to be tailored to specific and crucial points in the school year, for example around March when students start thinking about focusing on revision," Dr Allan explained.

Indeed, residential trips form a vital part of GCSE preparations at The Kingswood Academy in Hull. Every year prior to examinations, year 11 students go to the local Kingswood centre to do a combination of academic work and fun activities (see later for a full case study).

The problem with study skills, Dr Allan says, is that sometimes the focus is on content and not on processes that support the retention of information, such as concentration.

Residentials and outdoor learning can teach other crucial skills as well, giving students the confidence to tackle problems or to ask for help, for example, or to work collaboratively – these are skills that "underpin their academic work".

However, schools can be reticent about making time for activities that take students away from the classroom at such key times.

Kingswood has been working closely with the



ALL IMAGES INSPIRING LEARNING

National Citizenship Service (NCS) on its residential programmes, and embedding life-skills in a scheme called Skills for Life: “These are the 21st century skills of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication and curiosity,” Ms Farrell explained. “Inquisitiveness is probably the most important of these, because the best knowledge comes from asking questions.”

There is also the transition from secondary to further education, apprenticeships and university to consider: “A lot of young people come out at the other end of the school system and don’t know what they’re doing and where they’re going,” Dr Allan said. “You get a lot of teenagers in the wrong place in their lives at this time. Some end up going to university when they shouldn’t be there but feel like they have no other options because they don’t know what else to do. It is another big pivotal moment in their lives.”

As such, residential courses could even form a part of a school’s careers education provision: “Putting them in an unfamiliar environment, such as on a residential course can help them with their decision-making and to consider other options,” Dr Allan continued. “Residential activities are also an ideal opportunity to get away from the pressures of school, where time for these conversations might be limited.

“Some of the best decisions are made sitting around a campfire at night chatting away over a hot chocolate. You can really get to the nub of the matter when you strip away the distractions.”

Kingswood has been working in partnership with the NCS for a number of years and 20,000 young people participated in its programmes last summer. Different activities around life-skills have been trialled, including one called Food for Thought, in which teenagers are put in a team, given a budget, and asked to buy food and cook a meal.

Another, called Your Voice Matters, involves young people crystallising their views and perspectives to their peers, building up confidence, while interspersing this with outdoor activities.

Dr Allan explained: “It’s not all about having a great time and going down a zip-wire. And participating as a teenager is very different from a year 6 end-of-year reward outing. There has to be



an outcome – which is embedding the skills they need to become well-rounded adults.

“We want to be able to tailor provision so that if a school says they want to focus on resilience, for example, then we can ensure that a higher proportion of these activities focus on this aspect.”

Having worked extensively with secondary schools and colleges, Dr Allan is now leading a research project in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University, which has been commissioned by the NCS to evaluate the efficacy of the provision and to show what impact there has been. The findings will be used to shape future provision.

Further information

- ▶ *Allan et al: Getting the right fit: Tailoring outdoor adventure residential experiences for the transition of schoolchildren, Physical Education Matters (8), 2014.*
- ▶ *Newlove-Delgado et al: Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022, NHS Digital, November 2022: <http://bit.ly/3AX0zTC>*
- ▶ *Slee & Allan: Purposeful outdoor learning empowers children to deal with school transitions, Sports (7), 2019.*

Cost-effective outdoor learning

The cost of residential courses around the country is slowly coming down, but it can still be a stumbling block for many families. With already crippling budgetary constraints, schools can’t always be relied upon to make up the shortfalls as much as they might try to – often using Pupil Premium or other funding sources.

Dr Allan explained: “It is often the children who need these activities the most who are at risk of missing out. As such, some schools use Pupil Premium funding to supplement activities for those who are unable to afford them, to ensure that no-one misses out. Or there might be another pot of money for this purpose.”

However, organising activities and taking part doesn’t need to cost a lot of money. And it is something Kingswood wants to support schools to do on their own as well.

Dr Allan continued: “When we organise residential activities, we usually get a geography or PE teacher, or a head of year, coming along with the pupils but not taking part.

“However, I believe we need to be moving towards a situation where they actually take part in the experiences too. We can then give them materials to take away with them, in the form of lesson plans or ideas, so they can take back these experiences and use them in their lessons or during a particular stage of teaching and learning.”

What is needed, Dr Allan says, is to “reimagine” PE and sports and how they are taught: “There is often an assumption by schools that it’s about throwing or kicking a ball around. But what if you’re not into competitive team sports or traditional PE activities? Those students end up disengaged and will probably end up doing even less physical activity.

“We really need to think again about how to incorporate outdoor activities into the curriculum and in a more creative way.

“Schools need to consider realistically what activities they could put on, using their own grounds or nearby woodland or parks, that would not involve any financial outlay or the recruitment

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Transition is a key time to try something new because it kick-starts a new beginning in a child’s school life. Some autumn residential courses, for example, offer sports such as archery or climbing.

Ms Farrell added: “Young people can quickly find they have skills or aptitudes they didn’t know they had, or can develop a new-found confidence to try something new. They would not have known about this if they hadn’t come out of the classroom.”

Kingswood partners with the Youth Sport Trust, which has free resources on its website for teachers. Dr Allan urges secondary school staff to take advantage of the ideas and lesson plans available.

“Of course, as a commercial organisation, we want schools to come back time and again. But they then need to embed what they’ve learned into the curriculum. We’re currently building a digital resource pack based on our research and development that will be accessible and can be used across the curriculum.

“Residentials are seen as a short intense activity and then it’s gone, but we can’t view it like that anymore – it needs to have extended value.”

Further information

- ▶ www.youthsporttrust.org



‘It is absolutely worth it!’

The core values and mission at The Kingswood Academy in Hull are embodied by the 50 prefects who are entrusted to promote and enforce them.

Among them are the principles of high expectations, offering no excuses, and never giving up – which is where residential experiences are crucial, as Emily Towers explained.

“Every year we take around 50 prefects to the Dearne Valley Kingswood centre for a two-day course aimed at building leadership skills. The most recent one focused on communication because we noticed from our cohort of prefects that this was something we needed to work on.

“These young people really are the cream of the crop in our school and we want them to be the best leaders they can be.”

Ms Towers, who is a senior leader with responsibility for geography, RE and the Duke of Edinburgh Award, said new prefects were chosen for their adherence to the academy’s values, and had to apply to be considered. Their roles include participating in the recruitment process for new staff, assisting at parents’ evenings and being key players in the student voice aspect of school life, including regular meetings with the headteacher.

“While they are all worthy to be chosen to represent the student community, they sometimes

need advice and guidance on how to fulfil those roles effectively, which is where the residential courses come in,” Ms Towers explained.

“Some students will be lacking in confidence, or just won’t yet have those soft skills that are so important. So, for example, at the residential they might learn about the importance of positive body language when they meet someone for the first time. They will do some classroom work on this before using the Kingswood facilities to try an activity that will hone these skills, such as climbing.

“Our academy serves a very mixed area with some levels of social deprivation, so the pupils don’t always learn some of these skills at home. We consider it our responsibility to teach them.”

Staff have noticed how students behave differently upon returning to school from these residential experiences. Pupils who might not normally speak to each other, because they are in different year or friendship groups, will greet each other respectfully as they move around school, and even share a reminiscence about their shared experience.

“It really is a magical transformation. We are building a fraternity that might not have been possible otherwise,” Ms Towers added.

Residential trips also form a vital part of GCSE

preparations at The Kingswood Academy. Every year, in May or June and just prior to an important examination, year 11 students go to Dearne Valley to do a combination of academic work and fun activities.

“If the pupils have a maths exam on the Monday, we might take them away the weekend before to Kingswood, where maths teachers will do some revision sessions and then the pupils will do activities, such as abseiling or zip-wires to relax. It’s a mix of working hard ahead of the exam and channelling any stress they might be feeling, as well as gaining support through their friendships.”

The outcome of this approach has seen The Kingswood Academy rise from being one of the

poorest performing schools in the country to the 16th best improver in academic scores. “We put this down to the residential in year 11 and being able to offer that experience,” Ms Towers added.

And the cost? Ms Towers estimates that the prefect programme costs the school between £5,000 and £10,000 a year, as it includes paying for an external character education lead to accompany the group.

“We are in the fortunate position of being able to fund these experiences for our pupils,” she added. “As a school we see it as a priority because of the impact it has on those soft skills. We always say to the children: ‘The results will get you the interview, but character gets you the job.’

“It is absolutely worth it!”

Six top trip tips: Planning a residential for your school

Planning ahead will ensure every child gets the most out of the residential trip experience. Here are six things to consider for your students:

Ensure young people have the time, space and intensity to be fully immersed in learning:

Combining academic and adventure/fun activities gives students time to reflect on and process what they have learned, with physical and challenging activities breaking up their learning and allowing them to hone their skills.

Make sure that activities are a leveller and that no child feels left out:

Participants should have equitable access to facilities and resources, so that existing barriers can be broken down regardless of academic ability or wider needs. Consider, for example, how you might meet clothing needs for the trip. Does the centre provide waterproofs? Can Pupil Premium funding help?

Consider how existing pupil-pupil and teacher-pupil relationships may be impacted:

Participating in shared activities can make staff and pupils see one another in a new light. The sense of community intrinsic to a residential

means that new friendships are forged – but sometimes old ones may wither. Be prepared to support students who need it.

Choose the right programme:

Why are you taking students away? A reward for good work? To mark a milestone in their education? To boost their academic performance? To build skills? Discuss with the centre the most appropriate activities to suit your students’ needs so they get the most from the trip.

Post-trip, reflect on new ways of engaging pupils with learning:

A residential trip can be a ‘lightbulb moment’ for some students, as they suddenly find something they excel at. How will you ensure this new-found confidence pays dividends in the classroom? What lessons can you bring back to school to build on this engagement and motivation?

Make residential and outdoor learning an integral part of your curriculum:

Consider how outdoor learning can support students’ academic study and remember the likely impact on your exam results and the calibre of young people your school will produce.