



wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE



Curriculum for Excellence and the John Muir Award

Curriculum for Excellence places an emphasis on the development of children to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. It focuses on developing skills for learning, life and work and recognising the breadth of young people’s achievement.

It encourages an active, healthy and environmentally sustainable lifestyle and aims to support children and young people to learn beyond the classroom. It embraces schemes that support outdoor learning, such as the John Muir Award.

The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It supports experiential learning, acknowledging and celebrating the achievement of young people beyond formal qualifications.

Image © Keith Brame

“The John Muir Award encourages active learning which is real, first hand and impacts positively on young people.”

Linda Watson, Deputy Head Teacher, Pitlochry High School



How can the John Muir Award contribute to your Curriculum for Excellence?

Use this document to find out more about the John Muir Award and how it can be used:

- to meet a range of educational needs
- to help deliver Experiences and Outcomes with themes across learning
- to recognise achievement
- with themes across learning



FOR
wild LAND &
wild PLACES

Introducing the John Muir Award

 The John Muir Award - an educational initiative of the John Muir Trust - aims to encourage people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. It does this through a structured yet adaptable scheme and through partnerships with schools, colleges, youth organisations, clubs, local authorities and outdoor centres.

The John Muir Award is appropriate for *upper primary and secondary level* and can be used with whole year groups, class groups, small groups of learners, individuals and families.

To achieve a John Muir Award each individual participant engages in a range of activities that encompass the following Four Challenges:

- **Discover a wild place – this can range from school grounds to mountain tops**
- **Explore it - in an active way**
- **Conserve a wild place – take personal responsibility**
- **Share your experiences**

The John Muir Award is a unique experience for each individual taking part and every partner organisation delivering the Award.

Engaging with the Curriculum

The John Muir Award offers an ideal structure to support pupils and teachers in their engagement with the Curriculum. It can be set up in relation to a specific subject area, or be used as a framework to assist interdisciplinary learning.

Click on web links in online document for further information.

You can use it

- On a one-off basis, or as a progressive scheme over a year or more. There are 3 Levels each based on the Challenges described above
- In experiential studies of a specific subject area such as geography, science, social studies, art, music, English, maths and IT (see page 4 and 5)
- To help 'join up' interdisciplinary activity
- To give focus and structure to a residential course, field trip, or excursions to local areas, and help provide links between remote and school-based activity
- To support themes across learning - such as outdoor learning, personal and health education, global citizenship - by providing an experiential context (see page 6 and 7)
- As a framework for exploring people and place. John Muir makes an excellent national hero! Who are our modern environmental role models?
- To recognise achievement
- To develop and support links between pupils, families and the wider community

Benefits

- Helps deliver the Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning approaches (see page 7)
- Simple structure, minimum bureaucracy
- Individual certificate recognising achievement of pupils
- Ideal for bringing together a range of activities and subject areas
- Flexible framework embraces different learning styles and abilities
- Encourages ownership of planning and activity
- Different levels of the John Muir Award can encourage progressive involvement
- Catalyst for delivery through partnerships
- Effective with pupils who have additional support needs
- Continuing Professional Development opportunities
- Combines well with other award schemes e.g. Eco-Schools, Forest School, Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- It's free to use.

For a more substantial introduction, download an Information Handbook at www.johnmuiraward.org.

Meeting educational needs



The flexibility of the John Muir Award framework means that it can be used in many contexts both within and outwith the school.

School grounds

The immediate vicinity of many schools offer opportunities for engaging with nature and creating a sense of 'place'.

"Many pupils spend more time playing in their school grounds than in any other outdoor environment. Using your grounds as a context for the John Muir Award is such a powerful way of helping them to connect with and care for nature on their doorstep on a daily basis and through the seasons."

Alastair Seaman, Grounds for Learning Programme Manager

Interdisciplinary benefits

Teachers and educators embed the John Muir Award within curriculum areas to deliver Experiences and Outcomes and to promote interdisciplinary learning. Provision can be made within the school timetable for Award activity and connections with themes across learning.

"I really like its simplicity, its four Challenges allow you to cover so many subjects, yet it still has a structure, a purpose."

Kate Towsey, Orkney Primary Teacher

Effective with pupils who have additional support needs

Providing Award Criteria are met, programmes can be designed to engage and challenge pupils with support needs at a level suitable to them, yet remain achievable and meaningful to learners.

"In terms of personal development, taking part in the John Muir Award has been great for building the confidence and self-esteem of pupils who don't always feel that they shine

or succeed particularly well within a classroom situation, yet who have come into their own in the outdoors environment with the different challenges."

Ms Levi, Cockburnspath Primary School

Residential experiences

Sense of place and responsibility can be enhanced by integration with residential trips. It can also help bridge remote experiences and the home/school environment.

"The John Muir Award has made me feel that there is a lot more for us to discover with the wild places around us. There are a lot more places that are so near but we have never realised them, but now they have become more inviting."

Outdoor residential pupil, George Watson's College

Extra Curricular activities and combining with other Awards

After-school clubs, extra-curricular activity such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Forest Schools can all be utilised as part of completing a John Muir Award. Many schools involved with the John Muir Award also make connections with Eco-Schools Activity.

"Many children and young people are involved in a range of formal and informal activities with the school community and beyond which offer opportunities to recognise a range of achievements."

Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning

Youth work

Curriculum for Excellence is increasingly delivered using youth work partnerships, as well as through formal education within schools. The John Muir Award framework can help to 'package' this broad range of activity and approaches. This is recognised in *Bridging the Gap: Improving*

Outcomes for Scotland's Young People through School and Youth Work Partnerships.

<http://tinyurl.com/c3bkoes>

Amazing Things - a guide to youth awards in Scotland, features the John Muir Award alongside a number of others; it is the only award scheme with a primary focus on the natural environment.

www.awardsnetwork.org

"We were invited by the school to work intensively with a group of pupils with self-esteem and confidence issues. The school felt that the young people benefited from a more informal way of learning, volunteering in their local community and opting into taking part in the John Muir Award."

Dave Smith, Youth Worker, The Edge Youth Project

Recognising achievement

The John Muir Award is recognised in *Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning* as one of a number of 'useful and frequently used ways of recognising and celebrating success.' Pupils (and leaders/teachers) achieve a nationally recognised award, acknowledged by a certificate at Discovery, Explorer, or Conserver level. Experiences can be included in a student's Record of Achievement or learning profile.

"Curriculum for Excellence is all about looking at wider achievement. The John Muir Award is a great way of quantifying it."

Alan Shields, Head Teacher, John Logie Baird Primary School, Abernethy Trust Ardeonaig

"Getting the certificate has made me feel good and it will help when applying for a job. My Mum's really proud too."

Pupil, Auchmuty High School

Embedding the John Muir Award – Activities, Experiences and Outcomes

Examples of activities and topics that have contributed to meeting John Muir Award Challenges of Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share.

Activities have:

- taken learning outdoors
- made connections across subject areas
- promoted themes across learning, such as Sustainability, Global Citizenship, Enterprise
- connected areas that are Responsibility for All such as Literacy, Numeracy, Health & Wellbeing

Modern Languages

- learning environmental and emotional vocabulary
- translating work into a poster
- writing newspaper reports
- creating a PowerPoint presentation
- creating a leaflet to attract tourists

Sciences

- sensory exploration of nature
- surveying wildlife, school grounds' nature
- pond dipping
- nature walks
- food chains
- biodiversity
- soil science
- food miles
- personal impacts and lifestyle choices
- pollution surveys
- litter campaigns
- working with experts eg. ranger services
- energy audits

Health and Wellbeing

Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing

- participating in risk assessments
- solo time, personal reflection – contributions to mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing
- green gym – as above
- group working – planning, sense of participation and control
- practical conservation projects, taking responsibility
- scavenger hunts
- walking
- personal and peer reviews – self awareness
- cross country running
- adventurous activities
- sustainable transport/ journey options
- orienteering
- school grounds improvements

Literacy and English

- creative writing
- newspaper reports and newsletter articles
- producing a guide to local wild place
- presentations
- writing a campaign letter
- poetry
- leading guided walks or tours
- writing in record books
- debates on environmental issues
- nature in literature
- class discussions

“This is Curriculum for Excellence in action.”

*Murdo MacDonald, Geography Teacher
Bellahouston Academy*

Religious and Moral Education

Developing respect for others; exploring values and making a positive difference

- local, national, international wild places
 - volunteering in environmental and community projects
- natural resource debate
 - campaigning on an environmental issues
- Scottish Outdoor Access Code, rights and responsibilities
 - climate change
 - spirituality
- fair trade, organic

Mathematics

- mapping skills (references and bearings)
- route planning
- presentation of data eg. wildlife surveys
- estimating and measuring height and age of trees
- estimating and measuring area, angles and distances
- sorting and categorising litter, including time spans and biodegradability
- analysing wildlife data

Technologies

- making bird seed cakes
- personal impacts and lifestyle choices
- film making, photography and animations
- recycling
- fair trade and organic foods, sharing picnics
- design and placement of homes for wildlife (bird, bats and minibeests)
- Glow and web based learning and sharing
- composting at school
- planters in school grounds
- journey sticks
- creating displays and presentations using PowerPoint
- researching ecological footprints
- litter picks, understanding litter sources (crisp packets)
- consideration of alternative (large or small scale) energy sources
- needlework inspired by gathered natural objects, felt making, natural colouring
- food miles, local and seasonal food

JOHN MUIR AWARD

wild places:
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Expressive Arts

- sound mapping
- outdoor plays and performances
- making / listening to environmental music
- painting and drawing outdoors
- photography
 - celebration events
- school assemblies
- John Muir's sketches and drawings, John 'Muirals'
- environmental film making
- guided walks with peers and families
- creating exhibitions and displays
- art in nature
- Scottish landscape paintings

Social Studies

- social impact of pollution
- environmental quality surveys
- learning about John Muir
- map reading, and investigating scale, distance and direction
- learning about conservation values
- experiencing the seasons
- comparing and contrasting different wild places
- history of local greenspaces
- environmental politics
- volunteering with local environmental group
- land use maps, understanding competing needs
- carrying out a practical conservation project
- school grounds improvements

Themes Across Learning



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Literacy and Numeracy

Writing activities such as poetry, personal reflections in journals, contributions to school websites and sharing on Glow can all contribute to achieving a John Muir Award. Celebration events, guided tours of wild places, presentations at schools assemblies or community events can help to develop vocabulary and confidence. Opportunities can be created for learners to analyse survey data, measure areas and angles, or calculate bearings and journey times.

“The processes of Discovering, Exploring, Conserving and Sharing have given them much to talk and write about. Pupils who previously were reluctant to put pen to paper now confidently write about their work.”

*Mrs. Dumma, Class Teacher,
Cockburnspath Primary School*



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Health and Wellbeing

Research suggests that direct, frequent experience of being outside, particularly in contact

with nature, produces positive physical, mental and emotional benefits that positively affect the overall development of children and young people. The John Muir Award encourages active participation in outdoor activities. This can also incorporate planning, risk assessment and management, working as part of a group, and facing new challenges. Contributory activities can be physical and energetic, or sedentary, relaxing and reflective.

For more information see *The Health Impacts of the John Muir Award* research by Glasgow University Public Health and Health Policy Unit, funded by Glasgow Centre for Population Health at <http://tinyurl.com/d8zzalo>

“Fresh air comes into your body and all the bad stuff goes out, the stuff that make people not well like angriness and stressed out.”

*John Muir Award participant,
aged 11*



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Sustainability and Global Citizenship

Sustainability can be seen as an umbrella theme that embraces many other issues relating to the natural environment, for example climate change, energy use and renewables, outdoor access and impact, waste management, transport, pollution, biodiversity, health & wellbeing. Rather than

looking at these issues in isolation the John Muir Award offers a real context for exploring sustainability through direct experiences of nature.

The Conserve Challenge of the John Muir Award promotes simple concepts of personal responsibility - ‘making a difference’ - which helps pupils understand the impact of actions, both local and global, and engages them in developing solutions to the challenges they face as global citizens.

The John Muir Award is recognised in *Developing Global Citizens within Curriculum for Excellence* as an opportunity for personal achievement in Global Citizenship programmes <http://tinyurl.com/cz8qyc3>.

Enterprise & Employability

Participation in environmentally themed projects enables learners to develop core employability skills such as problem solving, decision making and evaluating risk, and can bring pupils into contact with a range of outdoor- and countryside-based jobs.

“The John Muir Award activities were carried out with different roles allocated and developed. Pupils had the opportunity to take the initiative, they shared ideas with peers and a range of adults, and were encouraged to think creatively to solve problems and cope with new situations.”

*Jake Perry, Head of Music
Department, Beeslack Community
High School*

“This is my very first certificate. I really liked doing the John Muir Award because I got to work outdoors and meet people whose job it is to look after special protected places. Once I leave school I would really love to work in the countryside.”

*Pupil,
Auchmuty High School*

Outdoor Learning

 The outdoors has huge potential for learning. Using the outdoor classroom can be fun, adventurous, exhilarating, challenging and creative. It can offer formative experiences that inspire confidence, awareness and appreciation, values and responsibility.

The John Muir Award is a tool that can contribute to Education Scotland's vision for outdoor learning to provide 'progressive and creative outdoor learning experiences' that are 'regular, frequent, enjoyable and challenging', and that teachers 'embed outdoor learning in the curriculum'. The Education Scotland website www.educationscotland.gov.uk has an outdoor learning section that supports schools to provide the best opportunities for creative and inspiring learning. This includes information on places to learn, health and safety, and support materials for outdoor learning.



© The Outward Bound Trust

Resources

- Education Scotland has coded Experiences and Outcomes for each curriculum area to identify where learning outdoors is most appropriate and valuable.
<http://tinyurl.com/cvba4by>
- *Building your Curriculum: Outside and In* supports a strategic approach to developing outdoor learning and has 'a flexible checklist for improving learning and teaching approaches through the use of the outdoors'.
<http://tinyurl.com/cswno14>

See also:

- Guidance document *Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning*
<http://tinyurl.com/cnr5dlr>
- *Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland*
<http://tinyurl.com/bm2e9qc>

"Working within the framework of the John Muir Award has seen learners actively engaging with their immediate environment, viewing it through fresh eyes and with a new understanding. Taking learning outdoors has given an opportunity to learn in a different context and find strengths not demonstrated in the classroom."

Jake Perry, Head of Music Department, Beeslack Community High School

"Children and young people's contact with nature has halved in a generation. This has profound implications for their knowledge of nature and, more importantly, the development of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours in adulthood that are strongly shaped by these powerful childhood experiences."

Alastair Seaman, Grounds for Learning Programme Manager

Next steps

Visit www.johnmuiraward.org or contact John Muir Award Scotland Education Manager for information and advice (details below). The website includes resources and forms, as well as case studies of schools and colleges using the Award.

Plan your Activity

Involve staff and pupils in planning and make sure they are keen to get involved. Integrate what you already do with the Four Award Challenges, or use these as a framework for planning. Outline your activity using the John Muir Award proposal form and email or post a copy to the address below. You can treat this as a draft which Award staff will develop, agree and register with you by phone, email or in person.

Training Opportunities

Training is not required to deliver the John Muir Award (reading the Information Handbook is often sufficient), however it enables leaders to find out more about the practicalities of delivering the John Muir Award, network with others, and develop skills and confidence in relation to outdoor learning. Open enrolment 2 day training courses run in Spring and Autumn. For more information on John Muir Award training opportunities contact Award staff or visit: www.johnmuiraward.org

Continuing Professional Development opportunities are available for education staff. These can be tailored to meet your school's needs and offered as a day or half day training session to fit with in-service dates. For further details on course content and costs contact Scotland Education Manager (details below).

"A high point of the training was realising how I could enhance certain lessons that I already teach. I enjoyed the practical sessions outdoors and this really helped generate subject based ideas for outdoor learning."

Chris Clark, Teacher, McLaren High School



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Contact

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The John Muir Trust is the leading wild land conservation charity in the UK. We love wild places and are dedicated to protecting and improving them for people and wildlife. Over 10,000 members support us in our work. Find out more at www.johnmuirtrust.org

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