

TACKLING THE ATTAINMENT GAP

CASE STUDY: NORTHERN SAINTS C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Head Teacher **Steve Williamson** shares the benefits of Pupil Premium spend on an Outward Bound® experience.



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Northern Saints is a non-selective Church of England Primary, recently formed from two predecessor schools who had a variable history of results. One of the schools had been in Special Measures for a number of years, the second ranked within the worst 200 performing primaries nationwide.

With 517 pupils currently on roll and expanding to 3 form entry due to its popularity, Northern Saints serves the immediate community, which Steve describes as an area of social and economic deprivation. Half of our pupils are eligible for the pupil premium grant, with many others being classed as 'working poor'.

BUILDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS

Head Teacher of the school since 2009, Steve ensures that the school stays focussed on raising pupil aspirations with adventurous activities and character education taking high priority.

At Northern Saints we say that we are Building on Firm Foundations; six themes that encapsulate our broad values and ethos. Health and happiness is one critical foundation that leads to educational success. That's why we offer such a wide range of adventurous activities including residential expeditions.



However, we are firm believers, as Winston Churchill stated, that 'With opportunities comes responsibility' and we believe that as our children achieve their potential they also have a community responsibility to work and learn together and get the very best out of life.

WHY WE CHOSE THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST

Northern Saints offers a number of adventurous residential activities with different providers as part of a curriculum planned by the children from Year 4 upwards.



IN OUR VIEW THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST IS UNIQUE IN ENSURING THAT EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES AND THAT THEY ARE FACED WITH SOME BIG CHALLENGES IN OUTSTANDING ADVENTUROUS SETTINGS.



Their experienced instructors are particularly adept in equipping our students with the right attitudes and skills to face the unknown head on, developing growth mindsets as they do so.



**THE
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WHAT DOES THE EXPERIENCE INVOLVE?

After an initial 'tame' residential with another provider, our school uses Pupil Premium funding to ensure that any child can access a 3 day First Challenge Course at The Trust's Ullswater centre in the Lake District, and then progress to a full 5-day Adventure and Challenge course at their Loch Eil centre in the Scottish Highlands.

Expectations are high and we are increasingly tracking the development of resilience, confidence and integrity of pupils who complete the Outward Bound courses. Academic achievement and attendance is tracked alongside key features of character education such as leadership, empathy and aspiration.

Diane Curley, Assistant Head and Upper Key Stage 2 leader is convinced by the transformative power of the experiences:

“What is particularly laudable is the way in which the courses are tailored by the Centre staff and instructors to meet the needs of the group. Their staff take the time to listen to our teachers and hear what the chief aims and objectives are intended to be, modifying and structuring the course as it progresses to maximise learning. An excellent understanding and application of learning theories underpin the courses, and each course is a CPD opportunity for our staff who are offered every opportunity to engage in the learning process. It has made us more aware of what our pupils can do if they are taught these crucial life skills”.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS SEEN BACK IN SCHOOL?

Over our 5-year engagement with The Outward Bound Trust we have seen pupil scores rise from some of the worst in the country to the latest published results placing the school in the UK top 100 for progress KS1-KS2.

The most profound difference has been for our disadvantaged pupils whose progress outperforms that of their peers and has resulted in the school being the joint winner of the National Pupil Premium Awards for schools with KS2 results.

Steve sums up the power of using The Outward Bound Trust by reflecting on pupil and parent comments. I met Connor (now Year 8) and his mother recently and was intrigued to hear how he was getting on, knowing that he had been shy and underachieved. His mother was beaming:



IT WAS THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST THAT DID IT. HE CAME BACK WITH AMAZING CONFIDENCE. HE BELIEVED HE COULD ACHIEVE ANYTHING AND HAD LEARNED NEW WAYS OF GETTING ON WITH IT. HE'S A DIFFERENT PERSON NOW, FULL OF HOPE AND POSSIBILITIES AND HE IS ACHIEVING ABOVE THE REST OF HIS CLASS.



WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST?

Using the Outward Bound Trust takes some of the worry out of mapping the impact of the Pupil Premium expenditure. The track record speaks for itself and our 120 or so young people on the courses this year can't wait for their next adventure.

If your school is considering outdoor learning, feel free to contact me or The Outward Bound Trust directly for some advice.

I'm happy to share our experiences and can provide testimonials from our staff, students and their parents.