

Let's take this OUTSIDE

From litter picking to considering the cosmos, teachers have been telling us what learning beyond the classroom looks like for their students...



“Our learners were moved to tears”

10 years ago, when I worked as head of RS at Bennett Memorial Diocesan School, colleagues and I took 42 12-14-year olds on a five-day residential trip to study the impact of war. We began at Anne Frank's house, then moved on to the Last Bridge at Arnhem and the mass graves of the soldiers. Next was Camp Vught, a work camp. The triple bunk beds, poor living conditions and finally, the memorial to the children who died in that camp, moved many of the students to tears. They handled the incredibly heavy atmosphere with maturity paying their respects in a sombre silence. Students and teacher stood side by side, for a moment united in grief for the loss of life and hardship endured on that very spot.

I think the thoughts of one year 9 boy echoed many from this trip, as he stumbled from the coach into the arms of his mother, tears in his eyes, and declared that this was “the best trip ever”. It was undoubtedly the most enriching and impactful trip for students that I ever have been involved in. The relationships built during those five long days were long-lasting; pockets of children who were party to it were often seeking out members of staff just to chat about their experiences and memories. Meanwhile their contributions to lessons following that trip were sensitive, thought provoking and insightful.

Gemma Lettington, social sciences teacher, Mascalls Academy



“The rewards are immense”

Extending education

beyond the classroom can be incredibly rewarding for pupils. One example of our work in this area is our relationship with the DHL

(UK) Foundation. With them, we developed the ‘Look into Logistics’

programme that has now been rolled out

across seven of our secondary academies in the last six years. Participating pupils undertake a five-day ‘Adventure & Challenge’ course at the Outward Bound Centre at Aberdovey where they work alongside 15 members of the Trust's staff and 15 mentors from DHL. By participating

in various activities, such as an overnight expedition and rock climbing, pupils are given the opportunity to develop a wide range of personal, social and emotional skills.

Beyond this, the programme also allows for pupils to visit DHL sites across the UK where they can experience a workplace first hand, attend careers fairs hosted at the academies and receive mentoring support for at least two years. These interventions offer career insights, CV advice and interview practice to help prepare our young people for the future. The programme is so popular that this year alone, we enrolled 180 Year 10 pupils onto the programme. Also, one of our pupils from Weston Favell Academy successfully obtained a degree apprenticeship with DHL after being part of the Look into Logistics programme, which only goes to highlight just how inspiring and engaging it really is.

Wayne Norrie, chief executive, Greenwood Academies Trust

“He was a different child!”

Every year we organise a sponsored walk to raise money for charity. This involves an eight mile trek around the countryside. We have one particular student with serious SEN issues who was not able to take part in the walk this year. He finds large crowds difficult, and in new situations becomes panicked and aggressive. Instead of the usual eight miles, one of our pastoral leaders took him for a short, half a mile walk instead, accompanied with her dog.

It was incredible to see him return to school, spaniel still firmly attached to him – laughing, chatting and confident in his own skin; he was a different child. He spent most of the walk talking to the dog, but that meant the staff member could have a positive interaction with him because he was open and relaxed.

Anonymous



“It’s about the community”

Our Academy and the surrounding community have been striving to come closer over the last five years, so a lot of our out-of-school learning and enrichment opportunities have focused around community needs.

For example, since June 2016 our students have supported our local Residents Association with litter picks and in road traffic safety initiatives. This not only improves our school environment, but helps to ensure the safety of our students, and build their social skills and confidence as they interact with people from all walks of life.

In February 2017 we also opened a community ‘outdoor gym’ on our Academy site thanks to a successful Lottery bid and this is open to everyone. It forms part of our ‘Thistley Hough Active’ initiative which aims to encourage our students, their parents and our local community to incorporate more exercise into their daily life.

The impact of these schemes on our school community is incredible. Not only is our school regarded positively by the locals, but it helps us as a school to embed our key values of creating well-rounded, ambitious and compassionate members of society.

Ian Brailsford, assistant principal, Thistley Hough Academy

“We brought the stars alive”

We recently hosted the outreach team from Portsmouth University's Institute of Cosmology & Gravitation, which was an extremely exciting opportunity for our Year 7 students to get thinking about the wider cosmos.

The team brought along their mobile Astrodome – an inflatable planetarium big enough to hold an entire class. Led by our science technician, the idea was to ‘bring the stars alive’. We set the Astrodome up in the sports hall, and students had a fantastic interactive experience. Over the course of three days, all of our Year 7 classes went into the dome for some stargazing and an amazing 3D video about the possibility of life on other planets. This was

followed by a Q&A session from the Portsmouth University experts, and the opportunity to take a closer look at some of the planets.

Our thinking was that an interactive style of learning like this would be aspirational for the students – giving them the chance to see what is out there and bringing science to life, while also making the most of our excellent relationship with the University. We received great feedback from our Year 7s, who emphasised the sense of excitement that the sessions brought to their understanding of the subject. We would definitely take the opportunity to engage our students in events like this again – everyone had a great time and learnt a lot.

Natalie Sheppard, Principal, The Portsmouth Academy

