

Wellbeing - Attainment for all Anderson High School, Lerwick, Shetland

Anderson High School is the largest school in Shetland with a school roll of 900 pupils. The John Muir Award is used across several year groups and is embedded into the curriculum. Geography Teacher Keith Turner shares his reflections on impacts of the Award for pupil wellbeing and attainment.



Why do you use the John Muir Award?

Having learners who are engaged is crucial to improving attainment and helping young people realise their own potential. We aim to encourage an 'all in it together' attitude and sense of optimism throughout the school community. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in 2010 was a justification for a focus on outdoor learning approaches as a way to improve engagement and motivation. We were looking for something to give us a solid basis for our outdoor learning that would also recognise pupils' achievements, and the John Muir Award was a natural fit.

What does your John Muir Award look like?

Our theme is 'Wild Shetland'. Pupils take part in four outdoor days of adventure focusing on our hills, our coastline, our forest and our rocky journey, supported by Shetland Council's Outdoor Education Officer, Pete Richardson. Learning is reinforced with activities in the classroom and local community. Every year, pupils participate in Voar Redd Up, Shetland's Award winning community spring clean, litter picking in school grounds and around the coastal environment.



© Pete Richardson

How has your John Muir Award developed?

We've had to work hard over the last 8 years to embed the John Muir Award into the curriculum – our timetable like most schools, is incredibly busy. Getting the school management team on board and integrating the Award into the school's development plan was crucial. Initially, we developed our activities within Social Subjects, but now other departments collaborate and help pupils make links with other aspects of their learning. Religious and Moral Education colleagues have created lessons on 'mindfulness in the forest' and the English department has been involved in our reflective writing. Now we're at the stage where teachers from across the school volunteer to accompany groups outdoors.

How have you built in progressive involvement?

We have developed a really good model for how we use the John Muir Award. It supports transition from P7-S1 at Discovery Level, with S2 working towards an Explorer Level certificate, and S3-4 committing 20 days over an academic year towards their Conserver Level Award. As pupils progress through these levels they commit to extra-curricular time during evenings, weekends and holidays – making personal connections with local wild places and developing their independent learning skills.

"I like to think of the outdoor days as providing a thread between primary and secondary and also a thread between childhood and teenage years. Without the excellent framework of the John Muir Award, we would not find it quite so easy". Pete Richardson, Shetland Outdoor Education Department

