Attainment for all

Anderson High School, Lerwick, Shetland – Winter 2019

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.

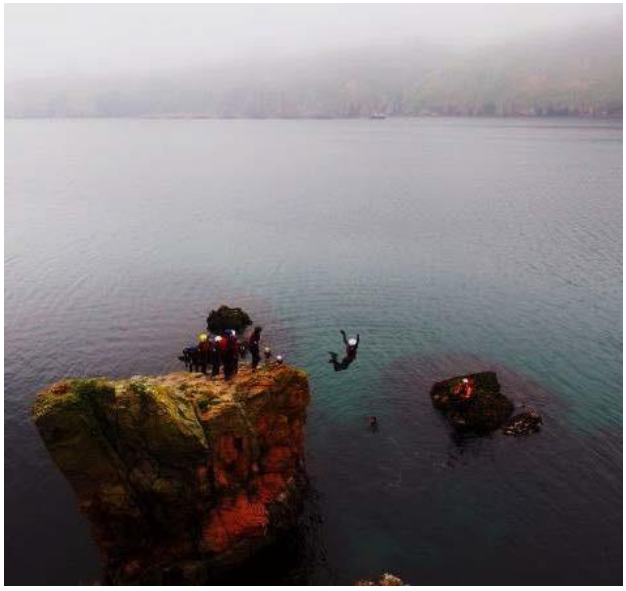
Why do you use the John Muir Award?

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.

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.



Credit: Pete Richardson

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 –

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making personal connections with local wild places and developing their independent learning skills

Does adventure feature?

Adventurous activities are a key aspect of our John Muir Award. Pupils are challenged to climb to the summit of Ronas Hill, Shetland's highest point and a sub- Arctic environment, and to investigate the coastline in a dramatic journey through the volcanic landscape. For many of our young people, these outdoor adventures are new challenges, important to their learning, and something to be proud of.

> "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

What impact does this have on health and wellbeing?

Embracing adventure helps develop resilience and assess risk, ensuring that our young people are physically active in different ways. Pupils take on new challenges whilst feeling cared for, trusted, and trusting of others.

We ask pupils two key questions to encourage reflection on the impact of their experiences on their wellbeing:

How does the wild make you feel?

How do the experiences make you feel about Shetland?

The responses are fantastic to hear - of how the wild makes them feel free, happy, relaxed, empowered and inquisitive.

We've also found that it gives pupils a real sense of place. This helps them directly through their studies, and more widely with their own personal identity and confidence.

Young people value their own achievements more. This is reinforced with praise and encouragement from staff and peers and an end of year celebration at assembly. It's been a success so far and we hope to continue using the John Muir Award to build on this.

Anderson High school demonstrates that adventure can be found on the doorstep of schools and how outdoor learning can act catalyst for cross departmental working. The activities have helped to meet Health and Wellbeing outcomes and with happier and more engaged learners.

> "After our John Muir Award, group work in the classroom was so much easier as we all knew each other better."
> Rachel, pupil

Find out more about the John Muir Award at johnmuirtrust.org/award