

JOHN
MUIR
AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE



The John Muir Award and the National Curriculum

The John Muir Award is a UK-wide environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It supports experiential learning outside the classroom, and acknowledges and celebrates the achievement of young people in and beyond formal education.

England's National Curriculum (Sept 2014) provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons. It aims to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills whilst also providing time and space within the school day to range beyond the National Curriculum.

Pupil achievement and enjoyment of learning plays a key part in school inspections. It is recognised that outdoor learning experiences contribute to a varied and enriching curriculum. Use of the John Muir Award can support teachers to deliver learning outcomes through practical, creative and engaging approaches that are beneficial to all.

"Hands-on [learning outside the classroom] activities led to improved outcomes for pupils and students, including better achievement, standards, motivation, personal development and behaviour." (Learning Outside the Classroom: How far should you go? Ofsted 2008).

The John Muir Award can help individuals to gain a greater awareness and understanding of relationships with natural environments. These can help them to *'participate in decisions about the way we do things, individually and collectively, locally and globally that will improve quality of life now without damaging the planet in the future.'* (Sustainable development in learning and skills inspections, Ofsted 2012).

"The new curriculum allows us more freedom to design learning in a way which we feel suits our school and pupils – so we're heading outdoors! The John Muir Award will really enhance what we've got planned."

Teacher, Garrett Hall Primary School

How can the John Muir Award contribute to learning in schools?

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

- Support a wide range of educational needs
- Contribute to learning and teaching across all subject areas
- Recognise achievement
- Help deliver whole school initiatives

JOHN
MUIR
TRUST

FOR
wild LAND &
wild PLACES

Photo © Katrina Martin

Introducing the John Muir Award

The John Muir Award encourages people to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration. The Award is free, open to all backgrounds and suitable for upper primary school and above - for further guidance refer to the 'Get Involved' section of the website.

It offers a flexible framework in which the activities identified by the participating school, college, or youth organisation can be tailored to meet the needs of the group, the wild place(s) chosen and the curriculum. It is an individual Award that can be used with whole year groups, class groups, and small groups of learners, individuals and families.

Four Challenges are at the heart of each John Muir Award. Designed to encourage awareness, understanding and action, participants/schools identify their own places and activities to meet these challenges:

- Discover a wild place(s) - 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

How can the John Muir Award be used in schools?

- As a framework for learning on a one-off basis, or as a progressive scheme over a year or more. There are three levels, each based on meeting the same Four Challenges
- In experiential studies of a specific subject area such as geography, science, social studies, art, music, English, maths and IT (see pages 4 and 5)
- To help 'join up' cross curricular learning
- To give focus and structure to a residential course, field trip or visit and help provide links between remote and school-based activity.
- To support wider themes across learning - such as personal learning and thinking skills, global citizenship and sustainability - by providing an experiential context
- To recognise achievement
- To develop and support links between pupils, families and the wider community

Why use the John Muir Award in your school?

- Ideal for bringing together a range of activities and subject areas
- Flexible framework embraces different learning styles and abilities
- Effective with children and young people who have special educational needs
- Certificate recognising individual achievement
- Can take place in school grounds or further afield
- Encourages ownership of planning and activity
- Different levels of the John Muir Award can encourage progressive involvement
- Complements and adds value to other Award schemes and initiatives e.g. Eco-Schools, Forest Schools, ASDAN and Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Encourages links within the local community and partnership working
- Continuing Professional Development opportunities for staff and leaders
- Simple structure, minimum bureaucracy
- It's free to use

Photo © Katrina Martin



The John Muir Award in action in schools

Examples of how and why the Award has been used in primary and secondary schools



Mill View Primary School – Cross Curricular

The Award is embedded into termly plans through cross curricular projects – ‘Why are wild places important?’ and ‘Where do my wellies take me?’ Each subject area is integrated into Award delivery, embracing a wide range of experiences and learning styles. This cross curricular aspect helps to engage students of differing abilities and interests encouraging everyone to achieve success. The activities are wide ranging and include: researching John Muir, environmental surveys, artwork and conservation tasks to improve the biodiversity within the school grounds. These incorporate subjects such as English, science, art and history.

“I love helping to keep this place safe for all the animals. It looks so much better and I really enjoyed that!”

Participant

Larbert High School – Literacy and Creative Writing

Activities contributing to Award achievement are used to help inspire participants and improve literacy for Year 7 students. As part of their Award students were asked to ‘share’ experiences of their local nature reserve – the Carron Dams – through various forms of writing.

“I’ve been delighted by the pupils’ responses to an outdoor learning environment and feel that their writing and focus in English has improved as a result of engaging with nature.” English Teacher



Penrice School – Duke of Edinburgh’s Award

The John Muir Award provides more direction for the Expedition Aim. Groups plan their own activities; which include exploring the habitats and the wildlife seen on their journeys, taking part in species ID surveys, mapping human impact along the route, photographing areas of damage or erosion and completing litter picks. Participants share their experiences with parents and peers and often send findings to the relevant organisations to make them aware of issues in their local environment.

“The focus it brings to the Expedition Aim is brilliant; the students genuinely care about what they are doing. The Award really inspires the students to care about the environment around them and try to make a difference.” D of E Co-ordinator

Clavering Primary School – Framework for outdoor activities and Residential trips

The Award framework is used to help relate visits to contrasting wild places to each other. Students take part in activities within the school grounds and join a residential trip to Carlton Lodge in the North York Moors; the Pupil Premium grant is used to support eligible students. Staff use these experiences to help improve self-confidence and team work, and encourage students to enjoy and care for wild places in their local environment and beyond.

“Participation in the John Muir Award has engaged the pupils in ways impossible to achieve if you spend the entire year sat behind a desk.” Head teacher

Sussex Downs College – Employability skills

The John Muir Award is used to support a project for post-16 students from Sussex Downs College, Lewes. The project helps them to enjoy and engage with the natural environment of the South Downs National Park and help develop employability skills through the creation of an outdoor classroom and wildlife area within the college grounds. The Award provides a sense of achievement as participants taking part in the course develop new skills and experiences as they move into further education or employment.

“I gained new skills and interests that I can take into the future and use when looking for a job.” Participant

Kings Norton School – Special Educational Needs

A programme of activities has been developed by the school to help a small group of boys with special educational needs to improve self-esteem, communication skills and team work. It offers opportunities to enjoy success and spend time outside the classroom. The group focused on getting to know an area of the school grounds, and then worked to create an outdoor classroom for the whole school to use. They use this space to promote awareness of the natural environment, and John Muir.

“These boys struggle to access the curriculum, but this alternative learning and practical work enables them to achieve, which has really helped with their confidence and self-esteem.” Teaching assistant

How can the John Muir Award be used across the curriculum?

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

Activities can:

- take learning outdoors
- make connections across the curriculum
- support whole school priorities such as improving literacy and numeracy, 'closing the gap' and education for sustainable development

Modern Languages

- learn environmental and emotional vocabulary
- write newspaper articles
- translate work into a poster
- create a PowerPoint presentation
- produce a leaflet to attract tourists

Sciences

- sensory exploration of nature
- pollution surveys
- survey wildlife in school grounds – citizen science
- study biodiversity
- litter campaigns
- pond dipping
- soil sampling
- work with experts e.g. ranger services
- nature walks
- consider food miles
- food chains
- consider personal impacts and lifestyle choices

Physical Education

- participate in risk assessments
- orienteering
- connect with nature – solo time, personal reflection
- scavenger hunts
- walking
- group work – planning and participation
- review experiences – awareness of self and others
- practical conservation projects – taking responsibility, physical activity
- cross country running
- adventurous activities
- plan sustainable transport

English and Literacy

- creative writing
- presentations
- write newsletter articles
- write a campaign letter
- produce a guide to local wild place
- create a poem
- find nature in literature
- reflect in Record Books
- lead guided walks

Citizenship

Contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of young people and supports wider community cohesion

- investigate local, national and international wild places
 - volunteer – community and environmental projects
- initiate a natural resources debate
 - campaign on environmental issues
- explore values and spirituality
- Countryside Code
 - investigate climate change
 - consider fair trade, organic issues

Mathematics and Numeracy

- plan and measure routes
- mapping skills – references and bearings
- estimate and measure height and age of trees
- presentation of data e.g. wildlife surveys
- sort and categorise litter – time spans and biodegradability
- estimate and measure area, angles and distances
- analyse wildlife data

Design and Technology

- make bird seed cakes
- consider personal impacts and lifestyle choices
- film making, photography and animations
- recycling
- consider fair trade and organic foods
- design and place homes for wildlife – birds, bats and insects
- share on the internet
- compost at school
- build planters for school ground
- create displays and give presentations
- research ecological footprints
- litter picks – understanding litter sources
- consider alternative energy sources – large or small scale
- consider food miles – local and seasonal food
- make nature inspired art and crafts – needlework, natural dyes, collages

JOHN MUIR AWARD

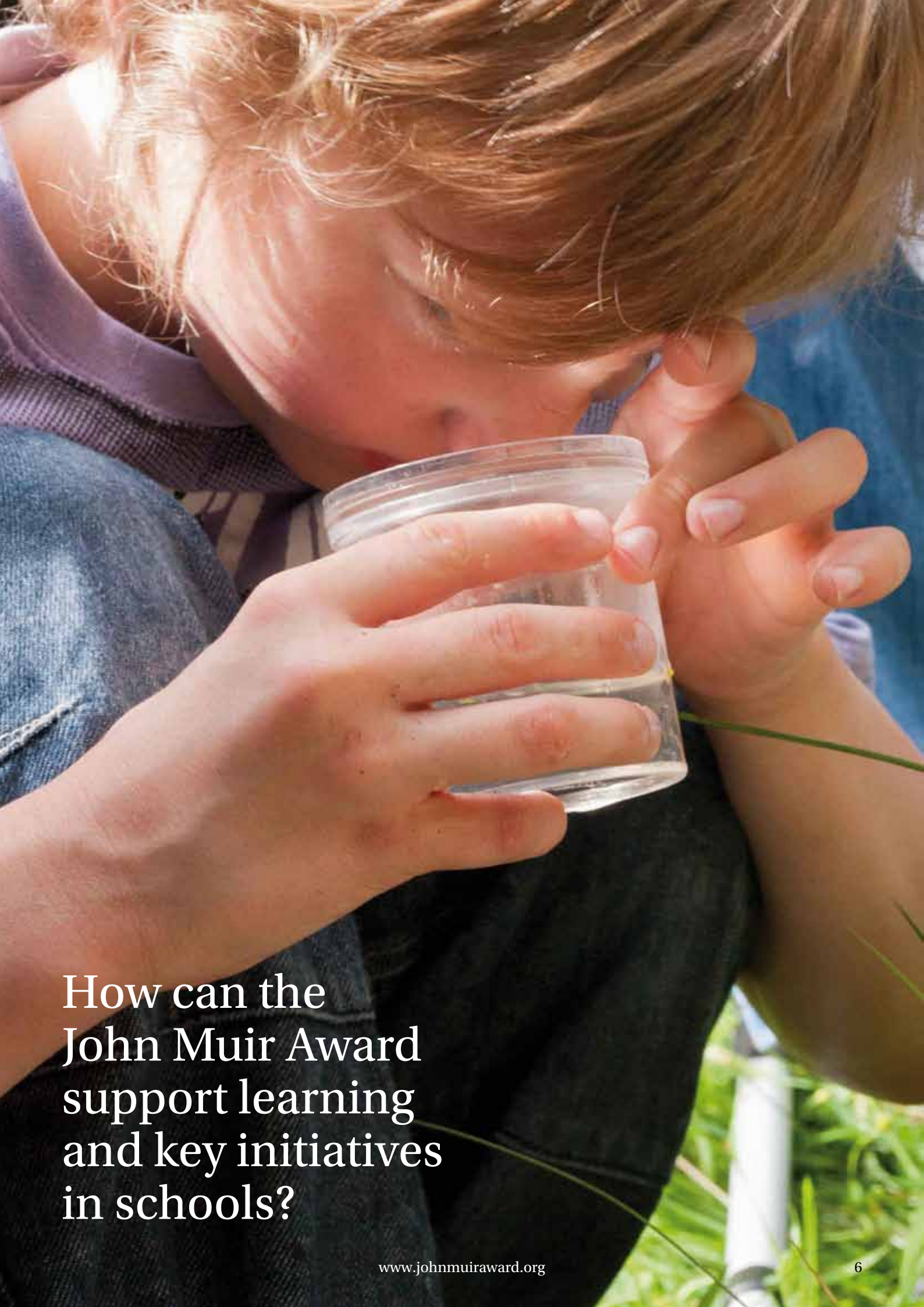
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Expressive Arts

- map natural sounds
- perform outdoor plays
- create music inspired by nature
- photography
- paint and draw outdoors
- hold celebration events
- present at school assemblies
- make environmental films
- investigate John Muir's sketches and drawings
- lead guided walks for peers and family
- create exhibitions and displays
- find art in nature
- consider English landscape painting

Humanities

- consider the social impact of pollution
- conduct environmental quality surveys
- investigate the life and legacy of John Muir
- map read – investigate scale, distance and direction
- consider the environmental impact of human activities
- map land use – understand competing needs
- experience the seasons
- learn about conservation values
- investigate the history of local green spaces
- compare and contrast different wild places
- investigate weather and climate impacts on living things
- improve school grounds
- consider the environmental impact of transport
- investigate features of England's landscape



How can the
John Muir Award
support learning
and key initiatives
in schools?

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning provides opportunities to use 'real world' and practical approaches to teaching and learning which can raise attainment, engage children of all abilities and improve behaviour. Outdoor Learning Resource Guide.

"When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development." Ofsted 2008.

"The John Muir Award taught us that there is more to education than sitting in a class and writing. Being outside is a different type of learning." Pupil, Bellahouston Academy

Health and wellbeing

Research shows that connecting with the natural environment cultivates positive physical and mental health, enhances wellbeing and encourages more active lifestyles. Five Ways to Wellbeing.

"Fresh air comes into your body and all the bad stuff goes the stuff that makes people not well like angriness and stress." Pupil, Drumchapel Primary School

Cross-curricular links

The Award can be embedded into the curriculum, enhancing subject delivery and promoting cross-curricular links and themes across learning, e.g. citizenship, literacy, sustainability.

"The John Muir Award has cross curricular benefits in educating through participation and by certification, rewarding achievement. It's been great for our alternative curriculum groups." Teacher, Samuel Kings School

Use of school grounds and the local environment

Use of the John Muir Award helps participants to explore and improve the quality of local wild places, such as school grounds and parks, encouraging students and teachers to engage with, value and take ownership of their own natural environment.

"The Award is very satisfying to use. Its structure is easy for the children to understand. It builds a relationship with place." Teacher, Skelton School

Sustainability

The Four Challenges of the John Muir Award inspire an understanding and care of the natural environment in a spirit of enjoyment and personal responsibility. They help students consider relationships with place and understand the impact of actions at both local and global scales. This supports a holistic approach with the delivery of necessary skills, knowledge understanding and values to be effective citizens through all subject areas (as recommended by Ofsted 2012). Use of the Award with a school council or Eco-Schools committee supports expression of ideas and opinions and encourages pupils to have a positive impact on their local wild places.

"I really like its simplicity, its four challenges allow you to cover so many ideas and concepts, yet it still has a structure and purpose." Teacher, Orkney Primary School

Alternative curriculum and Youth work

The Award is used with alternative and vocational curricula, such as ASDAN Award, BTEC and Youth Work programs. It can offer a framework for using outdoor learning approaches to re-engage pupils with education by providing structure, value and a contribution to their Record of Achievement.

"You get a great sense of achievement afterwards, knowing your hard work is for a very worthy cause. It contributes towards my future; hard work to gain good, positive things." Pupil, Fairfield High School

Literacy and numeracy

Writing activities such as nature diaries, stories and reflections can all contribute to an Award, encouraging awareness, understanding, and sharing. Numeracy can be used in many ways including surveys, journey times and bearings in activities.

"The process of discovering, exploring, conserving and sharing gives them so much to talk about. Pupils previously reluctant to put pen to paper now confidently write about their work." Teacher, Cockburnspath Primary School

Community cohesion

Structured activities in the outdoors are powerful catalysts for a stronger sense of community, both within and beyond the school boundaries. Such shared experiences can nurture a sense of achievement and pride in the local area.

"The Award allows pupils to embrace and extend ideas and activities beyond the school wildlife garden to the community allotment or local park." Teacher, St Margaret Mary CP School

Progress and attainment for all pupils

Participation is designed to engage and challenge all ages and abilities whilst leading to meaningful outcomes. Achieving success alongside peers helps to develop confidence and self-esteem. Schools can choose to use the Pupil Premium to provide access to nature for pupils from deprived backgrounds, for example, funding school trips to support outdoor learning.

"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." Teacher, Cockburnspath Primary School

Employability Skills

Involvement in Award activities help to develop core employability skills, such as problem solving, decision-making, effective communication and team working. It can provide positive examples and experiences to include in personal statements and discuss at interviews. It also brings young people into contact with a range of outdoor, creative and countryside-based jobs. Employability and the John Muir Award.

"Award projects are a great way in which the students can gain extra skills to prepare them for their future working environment. They are able to gain confidence through undertaking new activities and put into practice the health and safety learning in the class room into a real working environment." Lecturer, Kendal College



Planning your next steps

For further information visit our website
www.johnmuiraward.org, where you can:

- Watch a 10 minute introductory film
- Download an Information Handbook – detailed guidance on delivering the Award
- Read Case Studies – see the Award in action in a wide range of settings
- Download Resource Guides on: Outdoor Learning, Biodiversity, Wildlife Gardening, Surveys, Outdoor Access, Campaigning, National Parks and John Muir
- Find out about John Muir at www.discoverjohnmuir.com

To register an Award, outline your activities on a Proposal Form and email this to england@johnmuiraward.org. We will review and develop the Proposal with you, before you begin your Award.

“It gives the children a focus when they’re out and about, things to look for. It helps to bring it back into the classroom.”

Teacher, St Catherine’s CP School, Lowton – visited Low Bank Ground OEC

Training opportunities

Training is not needed to deliver the Award – the website and handbook provide all the information required to run a John Muir Award. We do, however, offer a 2 day training course which gives new Providers the opportunity to learn more about the practicalities of delivering an Award, meet other Providers and develop skills and confidence in outdoor learning. Training can also be tailored to meet the needs of groups of leaders and runs for a single day or half day.

Please contact us if you wish to discuss ways the Award can be used in schools and colleges, we are keen to support your interest.

Contact

England Education Manager
John Muir Award
Trevelyan House, Dimple Road, Matlock DE4 3YH

Email: england@johnmuiraward.org

Tel: 01629 584457

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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