

Grange Academy S3 Literacy Group

What was the project?

This four-week literacy project was a partnership between Grange Academy, Kilmarnock and East Ayrshire Council Learning Outdoors Support Team (LOST) from October to November 2020. The objective of the project was to support a group of S3 learners to engage in literacy learning and skill development through outdoor activities. Learners participated each week in different types of activities which promoted a variety of skills and attributes including team building, collaboration, talking and listening and patience. Each week, the class teacher would follow up the outdoor activity with a literacy lesson indoors to help make connections and consolidate learning.



“It was great to hear laughter and watch the boys enjoying learning new skills such as wood whittling and fire setting. We have struggled to maintain learning within a classroom since August, so it was fantastic to see the group enjoying tasks and keen to participate.”

Classroom Assistant



Grange Academy is situated on a large campus, with a few areas of greenspace. The pupils chose an area which had trees, tyres to sit on, and was quiet and private to visit each week. Each week had a different focus activity for pupils to participate in, including making paint from soil, leaves and other natural materials, whittling, den building and fire lighting. These activities allowed the pupils to lead their own learning through exploration of the different tasks and to develop self-confidence and experience success. It was important for this group of pupils to have the opportunity to experience success. Engaging in activities they had not tried before ensured a

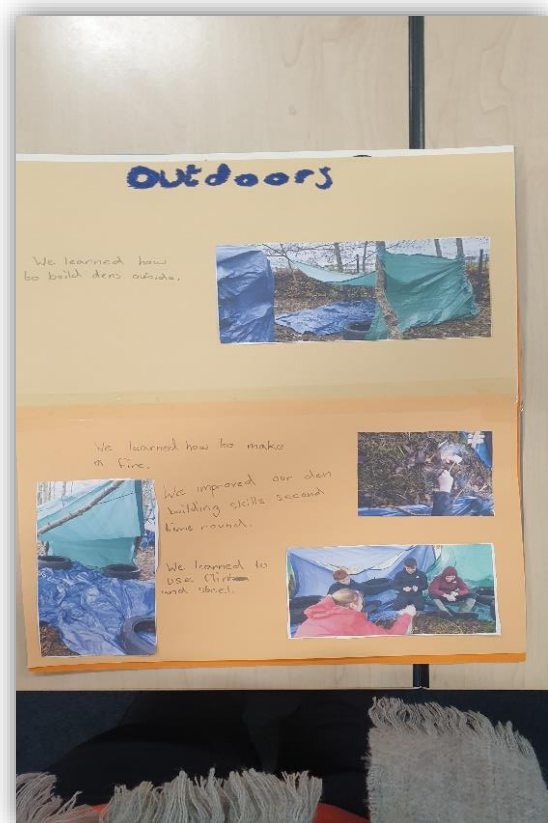
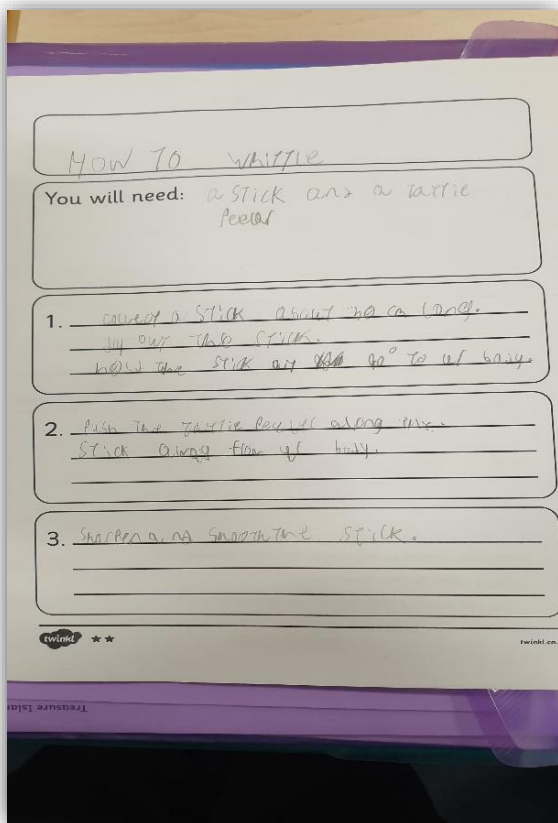
greater chance of success as their mindset was not that they would 'fail' because they had tried it before. Pupils built relationships with each other and staff in this new 'neutral and natural' environment.

Impact

The impact of the project was assessed through observation and anecdotal evidence of the pupils' behaviour and engagement over the program and through hard evidence of the follow up work produced by the pupils.

Each week the teacher delivered a literacy lesson as a follow up to the outdoor session. These included instructional writing, reflective writing and evaluating tasks and experiences. Pupil engagement levels in these tasks were higher than normal, pupils had enjoyed the activities and were able to share learning that had occurred from the participation.

Anecdotal evidence from the teacher involved showed that the project had a positive impact on the pupils overall. The teacher found that there was greater engagement with the follow up tasks after learning outdoors and that the quality of work produced was of a higher standard than they would usually see. The teacher commented that the level of engagement in some tasks was "a big step" for the pupils.



“Outdoor learning provides a way of engaging and promoting group discussion for learners who find a classroom a challenging environment. The group we worked with suddenly found leadership skills in den building, evaluation skills after creating tools and they found a confidence in writing about their outdoor experiences.”

Class Teacher

Impact was also seen through the engagement and behaviour of pupils on a weekly basis during the sessions. Each week, the pupils were calmer, more focused and more eager to participate overall in the sessions. The pupils seemed happier each week when spending time outside and off task behaviour began to reduce overall as the sessions progressed.



Pupil Evaluation Quotes

“I enjoyed building fires and toasting marshmallows.”

“I learned how to use a flint and steel.”

“We learned how to build dens outside.”

“We learned how to make a fire. We improved our den building skills second time round. We learned to use flint and steel.”

“We built dens using tarpaulin, rope and tyres. We enjoyed toasting marshmallows on the fire and drinking hot chocolate. We used a ghillie flask to boil the water. Dried wood is needed to make a fire. We learned how to use a flint and steel.”

Benefits of the project

- Pupils had the opportunity to try activities which were new to them, to develop new skills and experience new successes. This helped to develop self-efficacy and self-esteem.
- Learning in the outdoor environment removed many 'hidden barriers' which allowed the pupils to engage with staff in a less formal setting. Having success gave them confidence to try new things each week.
- Pupils began to learn about the impact that they and their actions can have on the wider and natural world through beginning to develop a connection with nature.
- Pupils were able to engage in more positive interactions with others and begin to develop positive relationships. There were opportunities for pupils to engage in quality dialogue to develop their listening and talking skills.



"It was great to be outdoors. Some of the tasks I had never done before like wood whittling and learning how to use a ghillie kettle. The best bit was sitting round the fire chatting and toasting marshmallows. The day after we had been outdoors, we completed different writing tasks, but I found them ok because I had actually done the things."

Pupil Comment

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