

**Scottish Secondary Schools**  
**incorporating The John Muir Award in their curriculum.**

**The John Muir Award**

The [John Muir Award](https://www.johnmuiraward.org) encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. It is free and open to all. The Award is flexible, meeting the specific needs of individuals and groups. To achieve a John Muir Award each individual participant engages in a range of activities that meet the following four Challenges: Discover a wild place(s) – this can range from school grounds to mountain ranges; Explore it – do things to raise awareness, increase understanding; Conserve it – take personal responsibility and Share your experiences.



Pupils at St Joseph's Academy celebrating John Muir Day

**The John Muir Award in Secondary Schools**

The John Muir Award is used by primary, secondary and special schools to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence and whole school priorities such as health and wellbeing, learning for sustainability and attainment. This document gives examples of some of the different ways that the Award has been delivered in secondary schools in East Ayrshire and throughout Scotland. The examples include promoting interdisciplinary activity with whole year groups, meeting specific subject outcomes through electives, adventurous activities and residential experiences and wider achievement options in the senior phase.

**S1-S3 interdisciplinary elective, Auchinleck Academy East Ayrshire Council**

Auchinleck Academy was situated within the heartland of rural Ayrshire which provides a variety of wild places (woodland, rivers etc.) all within walking distance from the school.

Consideration is given to "Significant Aspects of Learning" and students are given the opportunity to develop personal qualities such as confidence, teamwork and resilience. The Award encourages group ownership for learning, all skills recognised by employers in a young workforce

The school deliver an interdisciplinary project with S1-S3 pupils, where staff work together to enable students to gain their John Muir Award through meeting core curriculum outcomes. Departments

use a variety of teaching styles when lesson planning and find ways to meet their specific curriculum areas e.g. PE – orienteering and cycling; Geography – GPS usage, mapping and geology; Biology – agriculture, wildlife and survey; History – local history in the community; Art – inspired by nature.

### **S1 Literacy, Larbert High, Falkirk Council**

At Larbert High School a John Muir Award at Discovery level is integrated into a Humanities course and offered to the S1 cohort of approximately 300 pupils every year. Through weekly outdoor learning experiences, pupils explore the experiences and outcomes of CfE for Geography, History, Modern Studies and RMPS.

Pupils participate in a range of progressive activities and outdoor learning experiences which build self-confidence and raise self-esteem. Students gain an understanding of the significance of the outdoors, its contributions to green health and the importance of conservation and protecting outdoor environments, namely the Carron Dams and Lade which is a local nature reserve adjacent to the High School. Pupils also take part in a Conservation Week and work with external partners in a variety of workshops.

The sharing aspect of the Award was integrated in the English Department in a variety of writing forms which has helped with literacy outcomes. Visits to the Carron Dams nature reserve provide stimulus and inspiration for pupil's creative writing. Staff were delighted by the pupil's responses to an outdoor learning environment and felt writing and focus in English improved.

### **S2 Whole year group. Social Sciences, St Joseph's Academy East Ayrshire Council**

The John Muir Award is embedded at St Joseph's Academy through whole year group participation with S2 pupils working towards the Discovery Award as part of their Social Science subjects. The whole year group is given an opportunity to achieve their John Muir Award by groups of pupils taking part in 3 hours per week over a ten week period. Groups are rotated throughout the academic year.

The Award is based in the school grounds which have the advantage of the students accessing their wild space on a daily basis during their school day. It gives opportunities for pupils to develop their grounds for themselves and peers giving a sense of ownership over not only their Award but school grounds as well.

Using the John Muir Award allows pupils to experience the Sciences curriculum with breadth and depth using real life learning, to help raise awareness of the environment while recognising the achievements of pupils taking part. Karen Fulton the lead teacher using the John Muir Award at St. Joseph's Academy recognises the advantages of outdoor learning and how wider achievement awards benefit students.

The Award is also offered as a selected subject by students further up the school at Explorer level and the school is hoping to develop capacity for senior students to select the Conserver Level as part of their final years in school.

### **S3, Doon Academy East Ayrshire Council**

The Award was integrated in the whole school timetable and was included as an option choice for S3 pupils. The pupils had three periods a week for John Muir, programmed as two periods of practical activity - one period planning and one period implementing. This left the third period to have a

literacy focus during which we read sections of John Muir's 'My Boyhood and Youth' and associated tasks were included to extend their learning.

The group spend time in a variety of areas within walking distance of school and working in partnership with Forestry Commission further afield. They use tree planting, mapping, surveying and climbed Ben Lomond to further experience the Loch Lomond and Trossach's National Park. Experiencing a wild landscape with weather and adventurous challenges help develop a sense of personal achievement and team spirit within the group.

### **Adventurous activities and residential experiences, Cumnock and Auchinleck Academies**

This Award was delivered in partnership with East Ayrshire and The Outward Bound Trust to support pupils through the merger of the two schools, using the Loch Eil Outward Bound Centre as a venue. Pupils worked towards a John Muir Award as part of a five day residential, with adventurous activities and an overnight wild camp. The wild camping experiences in particular had a diverse range of benefits, helping students slow down and reconnect. Students engaged with each other working together to set up camp and organise themselves. This encouraged teamwork and leadership.

The area had a huge impact on some of the students as their first experience of the vastness of wild spaces they visited. Some pupils came back with changed attitudes to caring for their environment. A respect and closer friendships with both old and new acquaintances was formed which can only aid the merger of schools.



Adventurous journeys, day and night time allowed for some "scare times!" building resilience and self-esteem, opportunities to spend quiet time in nature and poetry was used to share the student's views and feelings. Geology, history, myths and legends were another area of interest to the pupils.

Students gained a real sense of "giving back" when involved in the Conserve Challenge of their Award by path clearance, beach clearance, litter picks, bird feeding and a favourite Rhody bashing!

### **S5/S6 wider achievement, Stewarton Academy East Ayrshire Council**

Stewarton Academy used the John Muir Award in a mixed year approach. S5/6 pupils selected to study wider achievement with a goal of completing different voluntary and leadership awards. They work alongside some more vulnerable S1 pupils. This peer mentoring encouraged a leadership role for students benefitting both older and younger pupils.

The students spent 1-2 hours per week alongside the S1's coming off timetable to work on the Green Gym project in school grounds. This project gives the opportunity to tackle physical jobs in the outdoors - improving strength and stamina, boosting practical skills and confidence.

The wild space being in school grounds or close by made time management easier as there was no added travel required. Other conservation work in a forested area on the periphery of the school grounds was also carried out giving an opportunity to work with outside partners.

### **Progressive model, Anderson High School – Shetland**

Anderson High School is the largest school in Shetland with a school roll of approximately 900 pupils. John Muir Award activity at Anderson High School engages several year groups and is embedded into the curriculum. An excellent progressive model for the Award has been developed, supporting transition from P7-S1 at Discovery, S2 working towards an Explorer level and S3-4 Conserver Level. As pupils progress through the levels they commit to extra-curricular time during evenings, weekends and holidays – making personal connections with local wild places.

At Anderson High using local areas alongside school grounds worked well giving students the opportunity to explore their homeland and see our variety of landscapes. Pupils participate in 4 outdoor days exploring their natural environment and an annual community clean up.

### **East Ayrshire Council and John Muir Award partnership- raising attainment**

A new partnership between East Ayrshire Council and the John Muir Trust was launched in 2017. The partnership aims to increase outdoor learning activity and help close the poverty-related attainment gap. Enjoyment, challenge and engagement that the John Muir Award brings, helps students realise their potential and raise attainment.

East Ayrshire Council is leading the way in recognising and supporting outdoor learning as an entitlement for all pupils and realising the benefits of wider achievement awards. Funding was sourced for officers to be based in the authority to support schools to offer a range of awards suitable to all age and stages in our schools and local community. These include Heritage Heroes, TCV Green Gym Project, RSPB, DofE and The John Muir Award. These organisations work collectively alongside East Ayrshire's Learning Outdoors Support Team (LOST) and the Curriculum Outdoors Attainment Challenge (COACH) project.

CPD training in a variety of Outdoor Learning is also offered as part of LOST.

Willie White East Ayrshire's lead in outdoor learning said ***“What a great opportunity for pupils and staff in our authority to be able to access support and deliver these awards”.***

**Further information:** More case studies on how schools use The John Muir Award can be found [Closing the Gap 2020 original.pdf \(johnmuirtrust.org\)](#) how the John Muir Award helps raise attainment in Scotland [www.johnmuirtrust.org/in-action](http://www.johnmuirtrust.org/in-action) Curriculum for Excellence and the John Muir Award resource [www.johnmuirtrust.org/about/resources/356-curriculum-for-excellence-and-the-john-muir-award](http://www.johnmuirtrust.org/about/resources/356-curriculum-for-excellence-and-the-john-muir-award) John Muir Award and raising attainment document <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/about/resources/624-attainment-and-the-john-muir-award-in-scotland>

For support in East Ayrshire with the John Muir award please contact  
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