



#ThisisLfS

Towards a whole setting approach
to Learning for Sustainability:
Inspiration & Insights



Levenmouth Academy, Buckhaven, Leven
Local Authority: Fife
1600+ pupils and 200 staff



Summary

Levenmouth Academy is a large new Secondary School in Fife. Back in August 2017, with some initial Pupil Equity Funding, teacher Duncan Zuill started to explore how to engage learners in Learning for Sustainability through outdoor learning in ways which would best meet the needs of the whole school.

The land at the back of the school was not being used to its full potential. In fact, most teachers didn't know it was even part of the school at all. The school is at the heart of its community situated in an area that is in the most deprived 20% of Scotland's communities and some of it is in the lowest 5%. Making connections with both urban regeneration and lifelong learning, this area is now being developed as "Bat's Wood". The plantation consists of 8000 native woodland trees and an orchard of 200 apple, pear and plum trees and aims to become a massive 1.8 hectare (i.e at least 3 football pitches) area for community gardening, woodland walking and mountain biking as well as an outdoor learning area for the school. Through this ongoing development pupils are now engaged with John Muir Awards, [Rural Skills National 4 qualifications](#) and work placements all of which are delivered on campus. The area has added long-term benefit to the community, the school and its learners and has radically transformed an area of the school grounds from a "grassy wasteland at the back" to ["Bat's Wood, Growing Space and Bike Track"](#).

How did Levenmouth Academy develop its grounds for outdoor learning?

1. Following extensive consultation with parents, pupils and partners, [Pupil Equity Funds](#) were used to identify the possibilities for outdoor learning at Levenmouth Academy.
2. Pupils were involved from the start in developing plans for the area.
3. By 2019, the pupil group has evolved into a mix of pupils who enjoyed working outside and felt that the experience was a worthwhile one.
4. Partnerships have been developed with local and national organisations that could support the project; for example urban regeneration charity CLEAR Buckhaven, Falkland Centre for Stewardship, [the Royal Horticultural Society](#), [John Muir Award](#), Fife Council's Biodiversity officer and Fife Council's Parks Department, Scottish Cycling and the region's cycling development officer..
5. Parents and members of the local community are encouraged to get involved

Bat's Wood is now used as a transitional space to engage P7 pupils starting at the Academy. Mainstream pupils work successfully in the Wood alongside additional support pupils using buddying approaches.

How do you know it is working?

- Pupils have responded strongly to their sense of making a lasting difference to a part of the world.
- Pupils' families have engaged with practical tasks and physical activities in a relaxed non-competitive atmosphere generating social value and acquiring a range of skills.
- The planting of so many trees has, hopefully, had a longer-than-life effect. There is a sense of permanent and lasting change and in the years to come the school will have apples, plums and pears to harvest and cook with.

'A pupil at the end of term asked if he could take a wheelbarrow home. He wanted to return to school to keep building footpaths over his holidays. And he did....This has brought the world of work closer to the pupils'.

Top Tips to keep this all going!

Levenmouth Academy has a bewildering number of next steps to take forward their outdoor learning project: from building a 1km MTB track, forming a charity called Bat's Wood, Growing Space and Bike Track (SCIO) to developing the Rural Skills courses. Duncan has been asked for his top tips. Here they are:

1. Think bigger than yourself, think about sustainability in terms of decades.
2. Join (rather than contact) your local environmental organisations and charities and partner with them.
3. A young person of 12-15 can only do so much physical labour; adults need to be there for the heavy lifting.
4. Avoid building anything permanent that is easily vandalised, broken or burnt but continue, nevertheless, to think big.

Thanks to Duncan Zuill, Teacher, Levenmouth Academy.

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