

Beyond your Boundary

easy steps to learning in local greenspace



Beyond your Boundary: Main Menu

Click on the icons to go to the start of a section.

These six sections provide the main themes of Beyond your Boundary to help you at each stage of taking learning into your local greenspace.



↑
Sets out how to use
and find your way
around this resource.



↑
This last section provides more
details and tools to help you. Many of
the links in the main sections lead to
the sub-sections that are listed here.



Introduction

What learning does your local greenspace offer? Be it an unloved grassy area, a woodland owned by a neighbour, a large local authority park, or anything in between, taking learning in to local greenspace can open up almost endless possibilities!

This resource is for educators in all schools, of any subject, working with pupils of all stages. It will help you to find, access, use and improve your local greenspace and spread and embed learning in local greenspace in your establishment.

Read on to find out how to navigate and get the best from this resource.



Beyond your Boundary has been designed to be explored on-screen, rather than being printed out and read from start to finish. Use the icons and text links to explore the resource. You can click through to see relevant information as you read and then **use the 'Alt' key plus the back arrow on your keyboard to return to the previous page you viewed**, just as you would use a browser to explore a website. The screenshot below provides tips on how to find your way around.



You can also scroll through the pages using your mouse or the side bar.

To change the page use the back or forward arrows on your keyboard, or the buttons in your PDF Reader.

The icons and colour bar indicate the start of each section. Click on the icons to go to the start of a section. Each section links to relevant material in the 'More Information' section.

Clicking **blue text** will take you to online sources of support and information.

Clicking **green text** will take you to places within this guide.

All sections have more than one page. A colour bar at the bottom of a page indicates the end of a section. The clickable icons will take you to the other sections in the resource.

The screenshot shows a PDF reader window with a toolbar at the top containing navigation and zoom controls. The main content area displays a page with a blue navigation bar at the top. The bar includes icons for a lightbulb, a question mark, a magnifying glass, a boot, a ruler, a flower, and a speech bubble. Below the bar, the text reads: "Introduction", "What learning does your local greenspace offer? Be it an unloved grassy area, a woodland owned by a neighbour, a large local authority park, or anything in between taking learning in to local greenspace can open up almost endless possibilities!", "This resource is for educators in all schools, of any subject, working with pupils of all stages. It will help you to find, access, use and improve your local greenspace and spread and embed learning in local greenspace in your establishment.", and "This resource will evolve; incorporating the experiences of schools that are learning in local greenspace, including those taking part in the Learning in local greenspace project part of Scotland's Biodiversity: a Route Map to 2020, Priority Project 6: Taking Learning Outdoors. Please do offer feedback and share your story." A photograph of children in school uniforms working in a field is shown on the right. At the bottom of the page, there is a blue bar and a row of icons: a lightbulb, a question mark, a magnifying glass, a boot, a ruler, a flower, a speech bubble, a plus sign, and a home icon. A sidebar on the right contains a home icon. The PDF reader toolbar at the top shows page 2 of 67 and a zoom level of 75.2%.

Your learning in local greenspace

This resource is based on the experiences of schools that learn in local greenspace, including those that took part in the [Learning in local greenspace project](#), part of Scotland's Biodiversity: a Route Map to 2020, Priority Project 6: Taking Learning Outdoors. Please do offer feedback and share your story.

Can you:

- ✓ share your experience of learning in local greenspace via a case study, blog, video or anecdote?
- ✓ share your experience of using this resource: what has been most helpful, what is missing - can you help fill the gaps?
- ✓ offer innovative solutions to [barriers and issues](#)?

Please contact sharon.cunningham@nature.scot

Updates and changes to the resource are summarised [here](#).





Why learn in local greenspace?

Your local greenspace is on your doorstep. It is likely to be more diverse than your school grounds, offering a greater diversity of learning opportunities: opportunities to apply concepts in a real context; capitalise on seasonal and other changes; experience the unexpected; use natural items; foster creativity and imagination; build resilience and independence - in fact, the opportunities are almost endless!

Engaging with your local greenspace can foster in your pupils a sense of place and stewardship and encourage the wider community to engage and value their local greenspace too. Connection to nature can last a lifetime and be a foundation for pro-environmental behaviours, helping your pupils become true responsible citizens.



Learning in local greenspace is more cost effective than hiring a bus to travel further afield and brings added benefits. It is more sustainable, making it more likely you can embed learning in local greenspace throughout the school and across the curriculum.

Not yet convinced or need to convince others? Find out more about the Scottish educational [policy that supports learning in local greenspace](#) and what the [research](#) says.



"The children were more interested, got caught up in the excitement and actually their behaviour and performance improved. The children managed to cooperate more outdoors."

P1 Teacher, Inverclyde



"These learning experiences have helped to consolidate much of the theory in the topic and the pupils found it a memorable experience."

Biology & Geography Teacher, Stirling



"Most people would say that The Dams are a horrible place and that it looks like a dump (that's what I thought)... My opinion has changed so much since then. Now, when people say to me The Dams is a dump, I say NO it's lovely and lots of people care about it. I feel honoured to have the experience of going down there..."

Pupil Larbert High (John Muir Award)





Finding your local greenspace

It can be easy to sit in school and think 'there is no greenspace within walking distance I can take my pupils to'. Most of the time this is not true. The easiest and best way to find out is to take a walk. Ideally take some colleagues with you to bounce ideas off. The space doesn't need to be big or 'special', and remember it can and will change - so what may appear to be an urban desert or overrun with nettles will not always be so.

Involve pupils; where do they play or hang out after school? They could design and carry out a survey of fellow pupils, local staff and/or the local community to find out about local greenspaces and how they are used. They might create a map of the local area for others to annotate with information and memories as a starting point for their own visits.



You or your pupils could access online maps and tools such the [Greenspace Map for Outdoor Learning](#); [Core path maps](#); [Google maps](#); the Woodland Trust [Find a Wood](#) search; or the [Fields in Trust](#) search. Are there local leaflets or guides you/your pupils could research?

Don't necessarily rule out private land; many land owners are happy for local groups to use their space - and don't automatically discount places that have a reputation for inappropriate night time or weekend use. These can be fantastic learning resources, and school use may encourage more positive engagement by the wider community. You can **overcome many of the issues** other users create. There may also be options to use unadopted land/[stalled spaces](#).



"I didn't know how close I live to nature"

S5 pupil, Clydebank High



"I can't believe we have existed so closely to this place and never made use of it... I felt that the curricular areas were endless."

P1 teacher, North Lanarkshire





Accessing your local greenspace

Many landowners welcome and value community or educational access. It is good practice to ask permission before using their space. If you do not know who owns/manages the space you would like to use, try asking parents; local community members; staff who live locally; neighbours to the greenspace; Local Authority staff or **others that work locally**.

Find out about your rights and responsibilities in the outdoors in the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#). There is specific guidance on [responsible behaviour by educational groups](#) and [educational materials](#) for use with your pupils too. There is also information on [responsible behaviour by land managers](#) regarding educational use. If your landowner is reluctant or apprehensive about allowing you to use their space, the OWL Scotland [Guidance for Land Owners](#) may be of use. In working with the school and local community, the land owner may be able to access **grants** to help manage or improve their greenspace.



You might like to audit the space with colleagues or partners using our tried and tested [site audit](#) and consider routes there and back. If use of local greenspace is to be embedded then access must be straightforward. You should, of course, also do a [risk-benefit assessment](#) too.

Keep in close, regular communication with your landowner; share the positives as well as any issues. Discuss any work they have planned and [improvements](#) you would like to make. Particular activities may require specific permission, such as adapting/improving the space; erecting permanent or semi-permanent structures; removing items to take back to school; digging, e.g. for clay/mud kitchens/loose materials; building fires.

Ideally, you should take a [whole school approach](#) to learning in local greenspace and involve colleagues from the start.



"It has been heartening to see the teachers gaining confidence in using this outdoor classroom and to see the children negotiating steep slopes with care and delight. I'm sure each will remember a spider or a bird but, perhaps more importantly, they will have learnt that they don't have to stop exploring when the pavement runs out."

Greenspace Manager





Using your local greenspace

Before visiting your greenspace with pupils for the first time, you must identify potential risks and eliminate or reduce them to an acceptable level. Your local authority may have a preferred approach to risk assessment. Try your [SAPOE representative](#) if you don't know what this is. It may be beneficial to use a [risk-benefit approach](#). You should involve pupils in assessing and managing risk before and during visits too. Look at [policies and procedures](#) to support learning in local greenspace for some things to consider.

Don't forget to include your journey to and from the site in your risk-benefit assessment. Here are some tips from others on [making the most of walking time](#).

Establishing and reinforcing [boundaries and routines](#) are an essential element of your [first few visits](#).

[Involving parents](#) from an early stage and keeping them informed and involved throughout is a worthwhile investment. Likewise, working with others in your [community](#) can bring many benefits and make it easier to normalise learning in local greenspace in your school and community.



Learning in local greenspace is not an added extra; it can be a powerful context for learning across the curriculum and link with many of the **educational initiatives** you may already be involved in. Using a real, local context can facilitate interdisciplinary learning and contribute to pupils' wider achievement, giving them opportunities to gain **awards** such as the John Muir Award. Try to involve **school leaders** and **colleagues** from the outset.

Build in evaluation from the start. As well as helping you **assess children's learning**, this will help demonstrate to colleagues and parents that what you are doing is worthwhile and help **spread and embed** learning in local greenspace. It will also help highlight to yourself the progress you are making, should **times get tough**. You may want to gather baseline information before you start, e.g. on pupil attainment in a certain curricular area.



"This project allowed me to really embrace the concept of delivering a fully cross curricular topic through outdoor learning, rather than taking a series of separate lessons outdoors."

P6 teacher, Inverclyde



"I really enjoyed being part of this project and felt it lent itself to my teaching rather than being an 'add on' or 'added extra'."

P3 teacher, Perth & Kinross





Improving your local greenspace

Other than improvements essential for safety, try to use your space for a while before making any changes. Your greenspace will change with the seasons: you will need at least a full year to really get to know it. Always get the permission of the land owner/manager before making any changes to your space.

Think about **other users** and **partners**: what are their needs and wishes; how can you involve them in your plans or share the workload? Can they help source **funding**?

Think about improvements for biodiversity. A greater variety of life equals a greater variety of learning opportunities. Discover what nature exists in your greenspace through some of the many **Citizen Science** websites, apps and resources. This might help focus your improvements in the right areas (e.g. for pollinators). You might consider planting trees or wildflowers; erecting bird boxes; creating bug hotels or **log piles**.



Appropriate planting can enhance biodiversity, generate more diverse learning opportunities and offer shelter and privacy – but don't forget, things grow! Check you know how big shrubs grow or how easily wildflowers spread – and check for power lines before planting trees. Some organisations offer free trees or seeds at certain times in the year. Keep your eye on email bulletins or try [Woodland Trust](#); Royal Horticultural Society or Keep Scotland Beautiful.

There may also be [Grants](#) available to help you improve and use your greenspace.





Spreading and embedding learning in local greenspace

Perhaps colleagues have seen the impact of learning in local greenspace on your pupils and your community and are keen to get involved? Maybe you have been given the role of developing outdoor learning in your establishment and don't know where to start? Perhaps you are a school leader looking for guidance on how to embed outdoor learning?

This section outlines the approach that schools took in the [Learning in local greenspace project](#), with the aim of embedding learning in local greenspace in their establishments. They:

- ✓ carry out a **baseline assessment**
- ✓ **find** and **access** a local greenspace
- ✓ develop an **action plan**
- ✓ **use** local greenspace
- ✓ **improve** their greenspace (if required)
- ✓ constantly **reflect and self-assess**, **assess children's learning** and revisit their action plan as required.



School policies and procedures for learning in local greenspace help ensure staff, pupils and helpers feel confident and safe.

Here are some tips from others on getting and keeping colleagues on board, including links to the benefits and policy drivers for learning in local greenspace and links to drivers such as the National Improvement Framework and How Good Is Our School 4 (HGIOS4).





+ More information

This section provides more detailed information, advice and support for learning in local greenspace. Much of it is linked to from earlier sections.

+More Menu

Click on the links below to go to the following sub-sections:

- 1 [Building a firm foundation for learning in local greenspace](#)
- 2 [Practicalities of using your local greenspace with pupils](#)
- 3 [Further support for learning in local greenspace](#)
- 4 [Educational policies and drivers for learning in local greenspace](#)
- 5 [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Routemap to 2020](#)
- 6 [Resources](#)





+1 Building a firm foundation for learning in local greenspace

+1 Menu

1.1 Getting colleagues on board

1.2 Keeping parents involved and informed

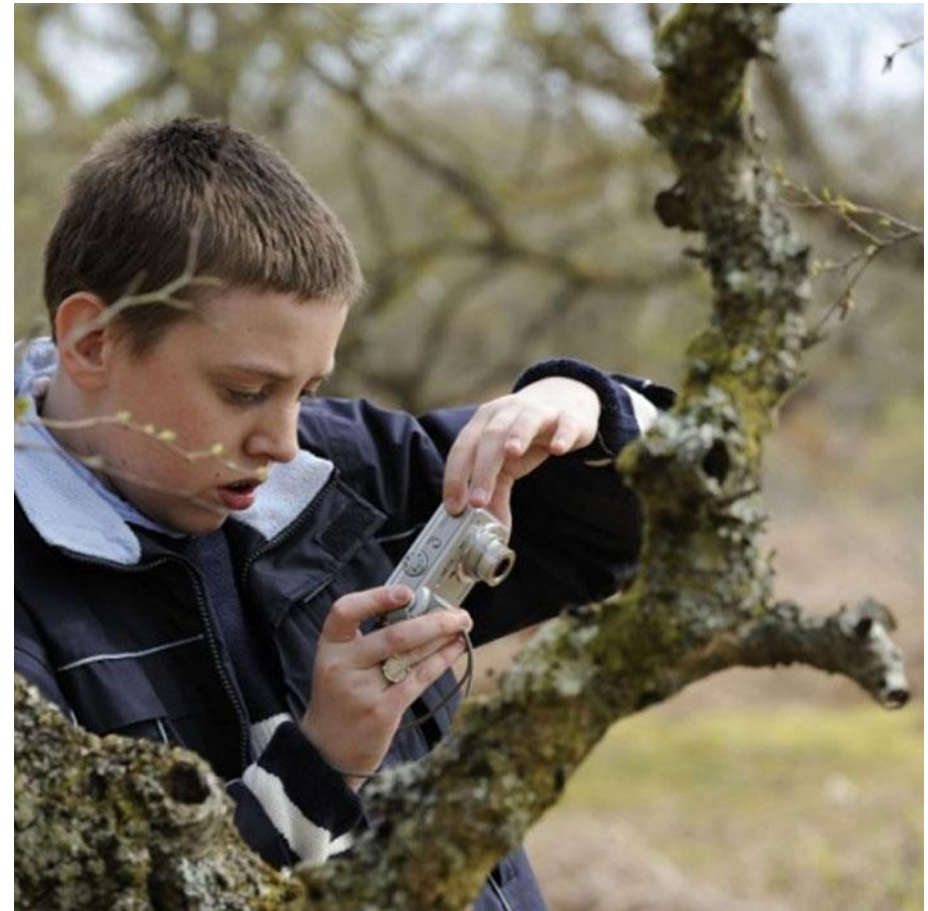
1.3 Engaging your community

1.4 Partnerships



1.1 Getting colleagues on board

It can sometimes be a challenge to get or keep colleagues on board. Consider the reasons for their reluctance and choose your approach accordingly. If you did a **baseline assessment**, does this give you any insight? What barriers do they face or perceive? Perhaps they lack confidence; time; or just don't 'get it'. Enlist the help of **school leaders**. The National Improvement Framework recognises the quality and impact of leadership as one of the most important aspects of the success of any school.



- ✓ Tell colleagues about the **benefits** of engaging with local greenspace, from your own and your pupils' experience as well as the **research**.
- ✓ Highlight the **policy drivers**; not only do teachers have 'permission' but they are compelled to help pupils engage with their local area.
- ✓ If they are concerned about health and safety, work together to do a **risk-benefit assessment** or show them the **HSE Myth busters**, including **school trip myths**.
- ✓ Spend time at your greenspace as a whole staff, if possible. You could use the **Teaching in Nature** approach: learn about your space from the land manager; brainstorm lesson ideas; or just explore and enjoy being there.
- ✓ Ask staff to share fond memories of their childhood. Chances are they were outdoors and/or included an element of risk or challenge, which is easier to provide for pupils in the outdoors. Discuss the benefits of offering this to their learners.
- ✓ Involve your learners in convincing a reluctant colleague; this can be very powerful and effective. Can they introduce their greenspace to other teachers or classes; lead some of the **activities** they have done there; share some of what they have learned and enjoyed?
- ✓ Team teach in your greenspace with a buddy class or stage partner.
- ✓ Your accomplishments may seem unattainable; share your challenges and how you overcame them as well as the successes.
- ✓ Take baby steps: they will be easier to achieve and maintain and, ultimately, embed. Don't forget to celebrate 'baby achievements' along the way!
- ✓ Develop **school policies and procedures** for learning in local greenspace to give colleagues confidence and support.
- ✓ Hold a greenspace day each month/term, with inexperienced colleagues gradually taking on more and more responsibility.
- ✓ Ask colleagues to take responsibility for a small area of learning in the local greenspace (e.g. Level 1 Literacy or National 5 Art and Design); this will feel less daunting and give them ownership.
- ✓ Demonstrate the **links with other initiatives** to emphasise that this is not another added extra; it can 'tick more than one box'.
- ✓ Highlight some of the **professional development** options.
- ✓ Share these **films** from other schools that are learning in local greenspace to highlight the potential.
- ✓ **Case Studies** share how various schools have overcome their challenges to achieve great benefits.
- ✓ This CreativeSTAR **blog post** may give you inspiration and insight.

We'd love to hear **your stories** of how you got colleagues on board and share them to help others.

1.2 Keeping parents involved and informed

Involve parents right from the start. You could:

- ✓ Enlist their help to find a greenspace.
- ✓ Find out whether they have any expertise, interests or contacts they can share.
- ✓ Tell them **why you are learning in local greenspace**.
- ✓ Issue a parental consent form at the start of each year for **routine and expected** out of school visits within walking distance.
- ✓ Ask for parent helpers. Parents live in the local community and can often bring great breadth and depth to learning. Don't be afraid to learn together with pupils and parents; you should not feel you need to be an expert in everything or put on a performance each time you visit your space.
- ✓ Provide support; perhaps develop guidance for parent helpers.
- ✓ Share challenges and successes via school blogs, newsletters and displays in school. Invite parents to visit your space and have the pupils share their learning and experiences, like [these pupils](#) in South Lanarkshire.
- ✓ Acknowledge concerns as soon as possible and address promptly where required – see **barriers and issues**.
- ✓ Keep a store of spare clothing and footwear for pupils who don't have/bring suitable clothing, reducing the likelihood of complaints about dirty uniforms or 'catching colds'. Perhaps ask families to donate items they have grown out of.
- ✓ Parental engagement is one of the drivers for improvement in the **National Improvement Framework**. **Involving parents** can also help drive your change to do more learning in local greenspace.



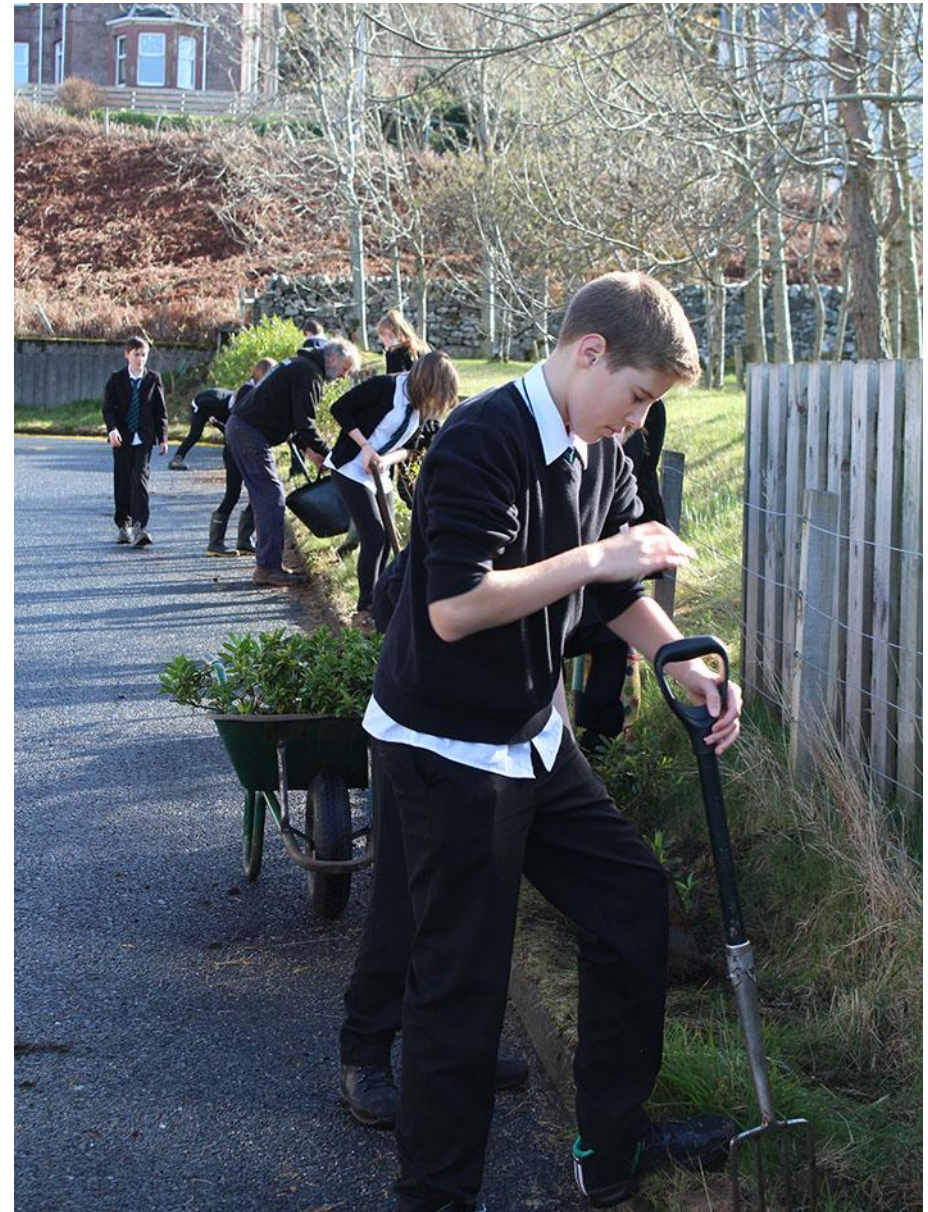
1.3 Engaging your community

Engage with your local community early in your journey towards learning in local greenspace. Can they help you find a site, establish who owns it or do an initial 'clean up'?

Involve pupils as much as possible in working with the community, e.g:

- ✓ pupils could create and carry out a survey of other users; what do they enjoy about the space, what do they do there? Tap into users' interests and expertise; is there potential for joint projects?;
- ✓ keep neighbours informed of what you are doing and why, through newsletters, posters and leaflets – all created by the pupils;
- ✓ pupils designing posters; leaflets; letters and newspaper articles can also be an effective way to address issues such as dog waste; litter and antisocial behaviour;
- ✓ hold 'days' to share the workload and highlight the positives about what you are doing, e.g. a clean up day; a planting day; an open day.

Partnerships with others may even give you access to **funding** not normally open to schools.



1.4 Partnerships

Partnerships will help spread the load and better embed the use of local greenspace for learning in your school and community. As well as pupils, **staff**, **parents** and members of the local **community** there may be groups and organisations local to you that could help you find, access, improve and/or use your local greenspace.



Be specific about the type of help you require when contacting people and they will be more likely to be able to commit.

- ✓ Local Authority staff may be able to help with different elements of learning in local greenspace.

Does your Local Authority have:

- a **SAPOE representative**;
- **Countryside Rangers** (LA or other organisation);
- a Quality Improvement Officer responsible for Outdoor Learning and/or Learning for Sustainability;
- a Greenspace officer;
- an Access Officer;
- a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Officer;
- Planning Officers;
- Active Schools Coordinator?;
- and don't forget your Cluster schools.

- ✓ Find out about local employers. Try energy companies, local supermarkets and DIY/builders merchants.

Local businesses may:

- have some greenspace they would allow you to use;
- undertake volunteering days in the local community: could they help you clean up or improve your greenspace?;
- have a community fund you could access.

✓ Working together with a local group or charity can bring many benefits and better embed the approach in the local community.

- Try:
- your local [Outdoor and Woodland Learning \(OWL\) group](#)
 - your Community Council
 - church groups
 - pre-school groups
 - care home or groups for the elderly
 - groups for people with additional needs
 - local natural history groups
 - local walking groups
 - mental health groups
 - local land owners/managers: see [accessing your greenspace](#).

Do/could any of these groups use your greenspace too? Can they share their knowledge and skills or take responsibility for an area of work? Partnerships with others may even give you access to [funding](#) not normally open to schools.

Many [resources](#) are also available to support you in using local greenspace.



"You are always going to plan for things that you have experienced yourself or seen others doing, which is somewhat limiting in nature. I'm much more confident about starting off on a journey with an initial idea; and then being completely flexible, adaptable and open to the suggestions of others with talents that far surpass my own."

P6 teacher, Argyll & Bute





+2 Practicalities of using your local greenspace with pupils

+2 Menu

2.1 Getting to and from your local greenspace

2.2 Establishing boundaries and routines

2.3 Activities for your first few visits

2.4 School policies and procedures for learning in local greenspace



2.1 Getting to and from your local greenspace

Your trip to and from your greenspace should not be seen as wasted time, rather this can be an integral part of the experience and valuable learning time. This can be a transition between indoor and outdoor lessons, a time to get in the right frame of mind; a time to chat and strengthen relationships with classmates and adults; an opportunity to exercise and enjoy the surroundings; a chance to observe seasonal changes and other goings on in their community.

Give the pupils some independence and responsibility. Designate roles amongst the group and rotate for each visit, e.g. leader; 'ender'; resource carrier; route planner (if appropriate). Younger pupils may benefit from a song, story or rhyme to help keep up the pace (e.g. When *the saints* [replace with your school name] go marching) and/or highlight hazards (e.g. an adaptation of We're going on a bear hunt).

Potential activities include:

- ✓ asking questions about the things you encounter to research later;
- ✓ observing and recording changes in a specific tree you always pass, for example, perhaps logging findings over time and maybe even contributing to a national database like [Nature's Calendar](#);
- ✓ mapping exercises and compass work; can the pupils accurately direct others to their greenspace?;
- ✓ count or collect certain items for use on site or in class;
- ✓ if safe to do so, try seeing things from a different perspective, e.g. focus on one particular sense, look up or look down;
- ✓ create a [journey stick](#);
- ✓ link with the Daily Mile or add some fun with 'Don't step on the cracks!'



2.2 Establishing boundaries and routines

Regardless of the age or stage of your pupils, routines that are learnt and carried out on a regular basis will help them feel secure and relaxed in your space, and more able to learn. There are also [school policies and procedures](#) you should have in place.

- ✓ Help the pupils decide which area they will learn in today and where physical boundaries should lie. Younger learners, or those less experienced outdoors, could attach coloured ribbon to trees or use other items to mark boundaries. Don't forget to remove these afterwards.
- ✓ Involve the learners in identifying hazards, assessing risk and discussing mitigations. Consider hazards at different heights; little ones could think 'head, shoulders, knees and toes'. Mark dog poo and other hazards you can't safely remove, e.g. with a flag or stick, to highlight them for pupils to avoid.
- ✓ Establish fun techniques for getting your learners' attention, such as using a bird whistle (you can buy these) or co-create and sing a song that pupils gradually join in with until all are engaged.
- ✓ Similarly, establish fun routines for gathering together, e.g. playing sticky feet/hands/elbows (pupils gather in a circle with the relevant body part touching).
- ✓ Establish routines for [toileting outdoors](#). Investigate what local facilities are available – can you come to an agreement with a local café or business?
- ✓ Make sure you leave no trace of having been there; get the pupils to check for any litter or resources left behind.
- ✓ Agree on and frequently practice procedures to avert potential issues, such as:
 - 'lost' pupil drill (should they find themselves separated from the group), e.g. sit down and shout an agreed word or play '1,2,3 where are you?' (pupil answers '1,2,3 here I am!' to each call until found);
 - bee/wasp drill, e.g. stand still, cover mouth and nose and buzz;
 - unknown dog drill, e.g. fold arms and turn away, perhaps calling something to warn others;
 - known or unknown adult approaching. Children should know never to leave the group without your agreement.
- ✓ You will also need routines to ensure effective [hand washing](#) and proper application of sun cream/insect repellent; can your group come up with a rhyme, [song](#) or rap to facilitate this?
- ✓ Can your learners come up with a greenspace code that they all sign up to? As well as behavioural expectations, consider other users and your [rights and responsibilities in the outdoors](#).
- ✓ [Getting Going with Outdoor Learning](#) includes tips on setting boundaries and establishing routines.

2.3 Activities for your first few visits

As well as establishing and reinforcing **boundaries and routines**, activities for the first few visits should support learners to explore their greenspace, connect with it and begin to develop a sense of ownership of it. Your place is your source of inspiration and resources. Avoid bringing in lots of things. Learners could:

- ✓ choose a tree or area that ‘draws’ them; explore it (see sensory activities, below), give it a descriptive name, tell others about it. Revisit it on subsequent trips; how is ‘your’ space, what has changed?
- ✓ carry out some exploratory or sensory activities, like blindfold games (e.g. **Meet a Tree**); sound bingo or colour ‘catching’ (you will be amazed at the range of colours and shades). Give each pupil a cardboard tube or small mirror to help them see things from a different angle (e.g. up!); use magnifiers, play ‘I spy’. Even older pupils enjoy and benefit from activities like these.
- ✓ generate questions about the space, which you might work together to answer over time.
- ✓ conduct research into current users and uses. How might this impact on your plans to access it for learning; what are the opportunities as well as any threats?
- ✓ consider the risks and benefits of engaging with their greenspace and the various activities they may do there.

Build in time just to ‘be’ and to play, even for older pupils. Let yourself be guided by the pupils’ interests and involve them in planning future visits. Chances are, by the end of your first few visits you will have found a whole host of learning opportunities you can’t wait to investigate.



"After the first visit my brain was buzzing with ideas... I think this will have a very memorable impact on the class."

S3 teacher, Fife

- ✓ explore what is available in their space, e.g. via a **greenspace audit**; leading to discussion on what they might like to learn about during visits or how they might (in time) enhance it.
- ✓ discover more about the biodiversity of your greenspace, e.g. via a **Citizen Science** activity. This could feed in to ideas for enhancing your greenspace for the benefit of biodiversity which, ultimately, will enhance learning (the more diverse your space, the more diverse your learning opportunities). If you lack confidence with identifying what you find, apps like **Seek** can help.
- ✓ map their space: make a natural map, use compasses, create orienteering routes or set up a Geocache.
- ✓ turn issues and setbacks into learning opportunities, e.g. pupils could write letters and create posters regarding dog waste.
- ✓ embrace the different learning opportunities brought about by changes in the weather; for example make a rain gauge, kite or wind sock.

2.4 School policies and procedures for learning in local greenspace

School policies and procedures can support you to learn in local greenspace and help you to make quick, correct decisions should issues arise. Up to date and relevant policies will safeguard your pupils, accompanying adults and yourself. Remember your [risk – benefit assessment](#). Take a look at the [Going out there](#) framework, which has a number of useful [toolkits](#).

Consider, particularly, what you will do:

- ✓ in adverse weather: when is it too bad to go/so bad you must leave early? This will differ according to your site and your pupils;
- ✓ if you encounter anti-social behaviour: can you move to another area; when must you leave all together?;
- ✓ if a pupil needs to return to school: will the whole group return or will one adult go back (who; are enough adults left)?;
- ✓ if a pupil is 'lost' (see also [establishing routines](#)): different responses are required according to the age of the pupil and length of time they have been missing;
- ✓ about pupil/adult ratios: this may differ according to your pupils and the activities you will be doing (e.g. using tools or fire).

You may also want to:

- ✓ gain parental consent at the start of each year for [routine and expected out of school visits](#) within walking distance;
- ✓ develop a site checklist to be used as you arrive at the site for each visit;
- ✓ create a code of practice for parent helpers supporting learning in local greenspace.





+3 Further support for learning in local greenspace

+3 Menu

3.1 Baseline assessment

3.2 Creating your action plan

3.3 Grants to help you access, use and improve your local greenspace

3.4 Barriers and issues



3.1 Baseline assessment

It can be helpful to know your starting point regarding the use of local greenspace for learning. This may highlight strengths that could be built on, or give you a focus regarding gaps to fill. Are your pupils offered a progression of outdoor learning experiences in their school career? Are opportunities taken to learn outdoors as part of all curricular areas, at all stages?



Involve the pupils in helping you find out. Pupils could:

- ✓ develop and carry out a survey of teachers on their current use of the school grounds and local area – which greenspaces do staff already use, if any?;
- ✓ question teachers on how frequently they take learning outdoors and within which curriculum areas;
- ✓ ask staff what would help them get out more;
- ✓ help complete a SWOT analysis for using local greenspace (identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats);
- ✓ use this example [questionnaire for staff](#), which has been designed to link with an [action plan template](#).

Highlight to colleagues **why** they should learn in local greenspace. Here are some tips from others if you are struggling to **get colleagues on board**.

Revisit your baseline assessment regularly – and celebrate and share the progress you have made.



3.2 Creating your action plan

For learning in local greenspace to become truly embedded throughout the school you should include it in your [School Improvement Plan](#).



Things to think about when creating your action plan:

- ✓ Use your [baseline assessment](#) and [greenspace audit](#) to inform your action plan. Build on your strengths and plan how you will overcome any barriers. Do you need to do anything at your space or en-route before you can begin using it with pupils?
- ✓ A great start to planning pupil visits is to use the [Teaching in Nature](#) approach. If you don't have a site manager or other person to share their knowledge about the space, just go yourselves as a group of colleagues; you will be amazed at the ideas that are generated when you simply spend some time there together.
- ✓ Working with [parents](#) and the wider [community](#) is an extremely worthwhile investment and will help normalise learning in local greenspace. Who else could you [involve](#)?
- ✓ Be ambitious but realistic. You are likely to encounter many [barriers and issues](#) along the way but also come across many opportunities you haven't even thought of now. Build in frequent review dates in case you need to update your tasks and timescales in the light of these.
- ✓ Do you want to link with [other initiatives](#) or [award schemes](#), perhaps enhancing something you are already doing?
- ✓ Don't try to do everything at once. Is your initial aim to improve health and wellbeing; help pupils apply Maths in a real-life context; improve Literacy; increase physical activity; develop leadership skills; ease transition? Perhaps different teachers/year groups/subject teachers could focus on different things and then share with others.
- ✓ [Evaluation](#) should be planned in from the start. Do you need to gather baseline information, e.g. on pupil attainment in a certain curricular area? Having information on raised attainment or improved behaviour, e.g. could help you [convince colleagues](#) that learning in local greenspace is worthwhile or even help secure [funding](#).
- ✓ Get [school leadership](#) on board as early as you can. The [National Improvement Framework](#) recognises the quality and impact of leadership as one of the most important aspects of the success of any school.
- ✓ You could also use our [action plan template](#), which builds on our [questionnaire to inform an action plan](#).
- ✓ The '[practicalities of using your greenspace with pupils](#)' section helps you start learning in local greenspace.

3.3 Grants to help you access, use and improve your local greenspace

We cannot provide an exhaustive list of the grants available to help you access, use or improve your greenspace. These are constantly changing; some are only available in certain areas; some only for short timescales. Try:

- ✓ local businesses and employers; they often have a community fund, can donate useful items or may be able to offer practical help via staff volunteer days. Just a couple of examples are the Glasgow Airport [Flightpath Fund](#) and the Tesco [Bags of Help Fund](#)
- ✓ other local [partners](#)
- ✓ CreativeSTAR Learning [grants list](#) every 6 months
- ✓ email bulletins from organisations like [Learning for Sustainability Scotland](#) and [TCV](#)
- ✓ Scottish Forestry's [Woods in and Around Towns](#) (WIAT) project, which aims to support the management of urban woodlands
- ✓ your school's Pupil Equity Fund; many schools are now using this to raise attainment and close the gap through outdoor learning.

Grants often have short deadlines so it may help to have a list of items or projects in mind with some text ready to go. Different funders will have different grant criteria but, typically, they will want to know how you have or will involve pupils and/or the local community in your project and plans, as well as the benefits the funding would bring.



3.4 Barriers and issues

Teachers and schools often experience the same (often perceived) barriers and issues when learning in local greenspace. You may be experiencing some of the common ones, which we highlighted in our [questionnaire](#).

If your issue has not been addressed here, or you can offer advice, support or a case study about how you have tackled any of these issues, please [get in touch](#).



If we had school/LA support

- This resource includes lots of information that can be used to show senior managers and others in education why learning outdoors is worthwhile. See [Getting colleagues on board](#).
- If the local authority is the land owner or manager, see ‘If we had support from the owner/manager’ below.
- Depending on how your local authority is structured, a number of [staff members](#) may be interested to hear about and able to support learning in local greenspace. Local Authorities have a [biodiversity duty](#), on which they must report to the Scottish Government.
- Perhaps they are concerned about some of the other barriers or issues discussed in this section?

If we knew learning in local greenspace was worth the effort

- Frankly, some days it may feel it is not. At first you will probably find you spend a lot of time preparing and may find sessions more stressful. Do persist and, in time, you will find a great many benefits for your pupils, your school, your local community and yourself. Remind yourself [why](#) you are doing this.
- Take baby steps and celebrate ‘baby achievements’.
- Find a buddy or critical friend to support you. Perhaps join a local group or network like [OWL](#)
- Having well established [boundaries and routines](#) is essential for stress-free sessions.
- Try to let go and be guided by the pupils and the place – numerous learning opportunities will present themselves if you allow yourself to see them.
- If you or others are concerned that you are not ‘achieving enough Es & Os’, try observing the pupils in your greenspace. Chances are you are achieving far more than you think or planned! Build on the pupils’ achievements and interests and use them as a foundation for future sessions.

If we knew where to go

- See [Finding your local greenspace](#)

If we knew who owned/managed the space

- See [Accessing your local greenspace](#)

If the place was nearer

- See [Finding your local greenspace](#)

If we had support from the owner/manager

- See [Accessing your local greenspace](#)
- Be specific about the kind of support you would like, e.g. do you want their help to find historical information about the space; permission to leave a tarpaulin shelter erected; support to apply for funding to make changes?
- Consider whether you are being reasonable in your request or perhaps getting carried away. Take things slowly and try not to power in with a list of demands.
- Can you involve the children in explaining why their help would benefit them?
- Keeping in constant communication, about the positives as well as any issues, will help pave the way for a relationship that benefits both sides.

If the place was better

- Chances are if you [use](#) the space a little, and spend time there with pupils and/or colleagues, you will find there is more to it than meets the eye.
- Involving [others](#) can bring new dimensions; do they know about the history or wildlife or can they share a skill there?
- If it really needs improved, see [Improving your greenspace](#). A greater variety of plants and animals can mean a greater variety of learning opportunities.

If we knew what to do there with pupils/If there was more to do there with pupils

- Take a visit with colleagues, pupils or partners and, before you know, it numerous learning opportunities will emerge.
- Do something with pupils; almost anything! Just get started and other opportunities will follow.
- Try some simple [first activities](#)
- Be guided by the pupils and the place. What interests your pupils in your greenspace? What changes or issues are there in the space that could become learning opportunities?

If our pupils had suitable clothing/footwear

- Get **parents** on board. If they understand what you are doing and why, and that this is a long-term commitment, they might feel more able to invest in clothing and footwear.
- Can local **partners** help, particularly local businesses?

If the place was safer

- See **Engaging your community**.
- See 'Issues caused by other users' opposite.



If we could get enough adult helpers

- Get **parents** on board from an early stage.
- Can the land owner/manager or others in your **community** help?

Issues caused by other users

- Often when others see that a place is being valued and used, they also value it and use it more appropriately.
- Engaging other users and your **community** from the outset can reduce issues such as vandalism, dog mess and litter.
- Involve pupils as much as appropriate in helping resolve the issues. Children and young people sharing their plans and experiences can be really powerful.
- See **establishing boundaries and routines** for issues such as dog poo and glass.
- Be prepared to leave if you need to. Have a robust risk assessment and **school policies and procedures** to help you make quick, correct decisions.
- Complaints from others are often due to misunderstandings about what you are doing and why. Again, engaging **parents** and your **community** from an early stage and keeping communication channels open can avoid or drastically reduce this.





+4 Educational policies and drivers for learning in local greenspace

+4 Menu

- 4.1 Educational policy and learning in local greenspace
- 4.2 What research says about learning in local greenspace
- 4.3 The National Improvement Framework
- 4.4 HGIOS4 and learning in local greenspace
- 4.5 GIRFEC and learning in local greenspace
- 4.6 Developing the young workforce and learning in local greenspace
- 4.7 Educational initiatives and learning in local greenspace
- 4.8 Award schemes and learning in local greenspace



4.1 Educational policy and learning in local greenspace

Scotland's educational policy recognises the value of engaging with green and natural places.

- ✓ The [GTCS Standards](#) for Registration requires teachers to use “outdoor learning, including direct experience of nature and other learning within and beyond school boundaries.” and “connect learners to their dependence on the natural world and develop their sense of belonging to both the local and global community”.
- ✓ How Good is Our School 4 states, as a feature of highly effective practice, “Outdoor spaces are used effectively to promote positive relationships and wellbeing. Staff take account of research linking benefits of outdoor learning and green space with wellbeing.” Find out more about [how learning in local greenspace fits with HGIOS4](#) and the [SHANARRI Wellbeing indicators](#).
- ✓ Learning in local greenspace can link with the key drivers for improvement and priorities of the [National Improvement Framework](#).
- ✓ Education Scotland's [Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland](#) lists some of the benefits of taking learning outdoors, including some relevant research (pp7-12).
- ✓ Research also highlights specific [benefits to learning in local greenspace](#).
- ✓ The [Vision for 2030+](#) is that “all learners have daily contact with nature through thoughtfully developed green spaces and school grounds”
- ✓ The [Play Strategy for Scotland](#) emphasises the importance of children and families accessing local greenspace, stating “daily contact with nature and playing in natural spaces has additional benefits and promotes greater use of these community greenspaces as adults.”
- ✓ The Scottish Government remains committed to the EcoSchools programme; engaging with your local area is an essential element of the [EcoSchools approach](#).

4.2 What research says about learning in local greenspace

- ✓ [Our Research](#) found that “The effect of learning and play within green or natural places of all kinds... was particularly strong in generating greater engagement and challenge and enjoyment.” Greater engagement and challenge and enjoyment can equal higher attainment!
- ✓ A [Natural England evidence briefing](#) highlights “School students engaged in learning in natural environments have been found to have higher achievement (in comparison to their peers or projected attainment) in reading, mathematics, science and social studies, exhibiting enhanced progress in Physical Education and drama, and a greater motivation for studying science.”
- ✓ [Our Teaching in Nature research](#) found that “Repeat visits [which are more feasible when using a local greenspace] made a particular difference to the quality and depth of understanding and engagement with natural places... Teachers felt that repeated and regular visits resulted in improved fitness, confidence, and the many skills needed to navigate varied outdoor terrains... Repeat visits to sites over time encouraged a connection with place for many pupils, teachers and community members.” Repeat visits facilitate progression, breadth, depth and application.
- ✓ [RSPB](#) research found that “children who were more connected to nature had significantly higher English attainment”.
- ✓ Your greenspace is where your learners live. Learning in local greenspace can help foster a sense of pride and ownership in the local area. [Evaluation of the Forest School programme](#), which incorporates repeat visits to a local greenspace, found “the impact of Forest School doesn’t just occur only in the child who is fortunate to have this experience, there are what we term ‘ripple effects’ within the family and within the wider community...”
- ✓ Time in nature can be calming and restorative for ASN and mainstream pupils alike, helping them focus better: [Taylor et al.](#), (2001) found that children function better than usual after activities in green settings and that the ‘greener’ a child’s play area, the less severe his or her attention deficit symptoms. A [Spanish study](#) also found an improvement in cognitive development associated with surrounding greenness, particularly with greenness at schools.



4.3 The National Improvement Framework: sub-menu

4.3.1 Our priorities

4.3.2 School leadership and learning in local greenspace

4.3.3 Teacher professionalism and learning in local greenspace

4.3.4 Parental engagement and learning in local greenspace

4.3.5 Assessment of children's progress and learning in local greenspace

4.3.6 School improvement and learning in local greenspace

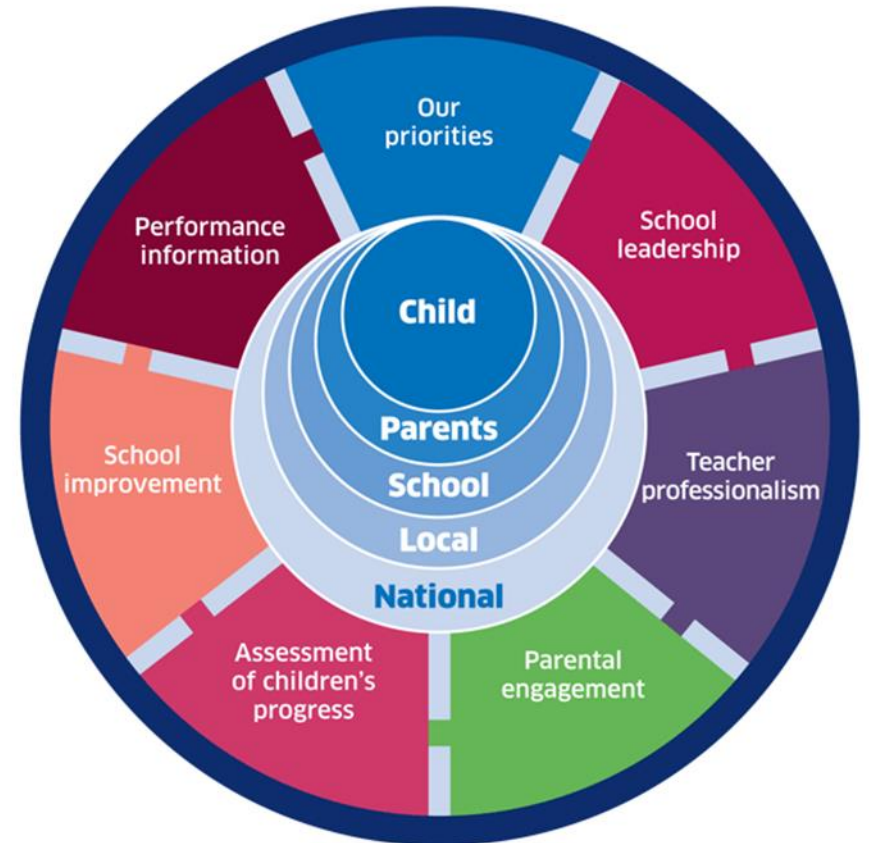
4.3.7 Performance information and learning in local greenspace

4.3.1 Our priorities

Learning in local greenspace has potential to meet the priorities of the [National Improvement Framework](#) for Scottish Education. It can:

- ✓ improve attainment, including in literacy and numeracy;
- ✓ help close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
- ✓ improve children and young people's health and wellbeing;
- ✓ enhance employability skills and contribute to sustained, positive school leaver destinations.

The Framework's drivers for improvement can also be drivers for learning in local greenspace. Click on the links at the top of the page or scroll through the next few pages for further information.



4.3.2 School leadership and learning in local greenspace

The National Improvement Framework recognises the quality and impact of leadership as one of the most important aspects of the success of any school. The tips in [getting colleagues on board](#) may help you gain school leaders' support too.

School leaders can offer practical support for learning in local greenspace, particularly regarding the development of [school policies and procedures](#) for learning in local greenspace. They can facilitate the development of a shared vision and ensure this is embedded through [school improvement planning](#). Leaders can support and encourage professional development and collaborative enquiry.

Leadership is, of course, not only the responsibility of Management; all staff (teaching and support), pupils, parents and the wider community can take on leadership roles, for example:

- ✓ **pupils** could undertake much of the planning work, e.g. they could survey the local community; take their buddy class to their greenspace; the Eco Committee or Pupil Council could take a lead in certain areas of your school's learning in local greenspace [action plan](#)
- ✓ **teachers** can take different roles, e.g. planning for a specific curricular area or level; finding funding; leading on engaging the community; taking responsibility for CLPL; or undertaking collaborative practitioner enquiry, for example on evidence of impact
- ✓ **parents** can contribute to planning and implementing learning in your local greenspace, leading where appropriate
- ✓ **support staff** can often contribute expertise and local knowledge
- ✓ the **wider school community** can also be a great source of knowledge and support. They should be encouraged to collaborate and lead when appropriate e.g. land owners, community wardens



4.3.3 Teacher professionalism and learning in local greenspace

The National Improvement Framework recognises that the quality of teaching is a key factor in improving children’s learning and the outcomes that they achieve.

The [GTCS Standards](#) for teachers are underpinned by the themes of values, sustainability and leadership. Teachers are expected to be enquiring professionals, continually self-evaluate and “engage in lifelong learning, reflection, enquiry, leadership of learning and collaborative practice”

Through learning in local greenspace, teachers could:

- ✓ take part in career long professional learning (CLPL) to help them improve the quality of the learning they offer outdoors;
- ✓ undertake self-evaluation and self-reflection to inform future practice;
- ✓ carry out collaborative enquiry, e.g. into whether taking Literacy into your greenspace raises attainment a curricular area;
- ✓ undertake professional reading on Outdoor Learning, Learning for Sustainability or Outdoor Play, including its place in relevant [policy](#);
- ✓ consider outdoor learning pedagogy, including [assessment](#) – and reflect to inform future practice;
- ✓ work towards [Professional Recognition](#) in Outdoor Learning, Learning for Sustainability or another area;
- ✓ take a whole school approach to the delivery of STEM subjects in a real world context;
- ✓ link with many other [educational initiatives](#).



4.3.4 Parental engagement and learning in local greenspace

The National Improvement Framework highlights that providing parents and carers with opportunities to contribute to leading improvements and making decisions that affect the school; and using the skills of parents and carers to enrich the curriculum can help all pupils achieve, reduce inequity and close the attainment gap. It encourages family members to learn together, fostering positive attitudes to lifelong learning.

Education Scotland's [Engaging parents and families toolkit](#) aims to help schools achieve and sustain high levels of parental involvement.

Engaging parents in learning in local greenspace could:

- ✓ add variety to the ways in which parents, carers and families can engage with teachers and partners to support their children and increase the voice of parents and carers in leading improvements. Outdoor activities may attract parents who don't normally engage;
- ✓ tap into valuable local knowledge and experience that will greatly enhance learning;
- ✓ contribute to family learning;
- ✓ support learners to gain an **award**;
- ✓ forge links with **partners**, who may be able to help with various elements of your challenge;
- ✓ make links with the wider **community**.

See also [keeping parents involved and informed](#).



4.3.5 Assessment of children's progress and learning in local greenspace

The National Improvement Framework acknowledges the need for more robust evidence that will help in raising attainment and closing the gap. Schools should gather a range of evidence on what pupils learn and how well this prepares them for life beyond school.

Learning in local greenspace provides the opportunity to learn in a real and relevant context, developing skills and attributes of value at school and beyond.

Through learning in local greenspace, schools could:

- ✓ employ a wide range of assessment techniques e.g: film; blogging; Pupil Profiles; floor books; displays; sharing events/performances; teacher observation;
- ✓ involve pupils in sharing their learning via, e.g: assemblies, displays, a newsletter or community leaflet; hosting visits from families and the wider community;
- ✓ carry out collaborative enquiry, e.g. into whether taking Numeracy into your greenspace raises attainment in that area, or whether Health and Wellbeing improves – and share the findings widely;
- ✓ consider **wider achievement**. Often, when taking learning outdoors, you achieve more than you set out to!;
- ✓ look at how the experiences you provide in your greenspace help young people develop interests, strengths, skills and aspirations that can help prepare them for the **world of work**;
- ✓ link to the **School Improvement plan**, ensuring assessment and evaluation techniques measure what you need them to;
- ✓ feed in to National Improvement Framework **Performance Information** gathering.



4.3.6 School improvement and learning in local greenspace

To ensure the success of learning in local greenspace you should include your work in your school improvement plan. Here is **just one example** you could use.

Priority:
Raising Attainment

Target:
To raise attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing through learning in local greenspace.

Implementation Strategies

Success Criteria/Outcomes

Identified key numeracy and literacy concepts will be taught outdoors, in a local greenspace

Long term retention of key concepts will increase.
Application of key skills will become more secure, particularly in new contexts.
We make regular visits to greenspace to build connections to nature and place, enhancing social and emotional skills and engagement with learning.
Pupils could achieve a nationally recognised certification (see [Award Schemes](#)).

Building capacity with staff through training and partnerships

Supporting teacher professionalism and leadership through career long professional learning will enable staff to feel more confident about using pedagogical approaches in the outdoor context, defining clear links across Literacy and Numeracy to real-life learning opportunities. Some teachers may consider aspects of professional development such as [Practitioner Enquiry](#) or Collaborative Enquiry in Literacy or Numeracy. Some may work towards achieving [Professional Recognition](#) from GTCS.



4.3.7 Performance information and learning in local greenspace

The Performance Information gathered via the National Improvement Framework aims to build a sound understanding of the range of factors that contribute to a successful education system. The Framework highlights that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to gathering this information, just as there is no one-size-fits-all approach to improving equity or raising attainment.

Schools can gather data on their learning in local greenspace to:

- ✓ assess children's progress;
- ✓ involve pupils in their learning;
- ✓ plan targeted interventions;
- ✓ provide a wider range and type of feedback to parents;
- ✓ share good practice amongst their cluster, Local Authority or nationally;
- ✓ strengthen the evidence base on the role of learning outdoors in raising attainment.



4.4 How Good Is Our School 4 and learning in local greenspace

The How Good is Our School (HGIOS) Framework provides a suite of quality indicators that support staff in all sectors to self-evaluate and reflect. There are a number of references to [Outdoor Learning in the HGIOS4 document](#). Ones that may be of particular interest are listed below:



✓ 1.2 LEADERSHIP OF LEARNING

Level 5 illustration: We support staff to access high-quality professional learning linked to cross-cutting themes such as
Impact of career-long sustainable development education, global citizenship, outdoor learning and international education.
professional learning *Page 22*

✓ 1.5 MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES TO PROMOTE EQUITY

Features of highly- All available resources, including digital technologies and outdoor spaces, are used effectively to create
effective practice: and sustain effective learning environments. These are used well to support learning. *Page 29*

✓ 2.3 LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Challenge questions: How well do we use our community and spaces to deliver high-quality outdoor learning? *Page 37*

✓ 3.1 ENSURING WELLBEING, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Challenge questions: What progress and achievement do children and young people gain from our outdoor learning
experiences? *Page 51*

✓ 3.2 RAISING ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Features of highly- Outdoor spaces are used effectively to promote positive relationships and wellbeing. Staff take account
effective practice: of research linking benefits of outdoor learning and green space with wellbeing. *Page 49*

4.5 Getting It Right For Every Child and learning in local greenspace

GIRFEC in the outdoors

Adapted from Education Scotland, *Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, advice and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland* (2011)

Achieving

- Provide opportunities for formal recognition of achievement such as ASDAN, John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Eco Schools etc;
- Provide opportunities to access natural areas and attend residential courses or expeditions where young people experience intrinsic rewards;
- Plan activities that appeal to the naturalist intelligence within young people and allow them to achieve in a range of real-world contexts.

Nurtured

- Listen to and observe children outside away from the perceived stress of school. This can give a measure of how nurtured they are;
- Demonstrate respect for living things and the environment and model appropriate behaviours;
- Allow children to run off excess energy in line with an agreed approach;
- Use nurture group principles and apply in outdoor settings.

Active

- Ensure children have opportunities to spend regular time in natural settings. This could be parkland, beaches, woods or other green-space;
- Enable children to have the freedom to enjoy unstructured play, providing physical challenge and a self-chosen level of risk;
- Provide big, open-ended resources such as guttering, planks of wood;
- Encourage children of different ages to play together.

Healthy

- Ensure children have access to outdoors during intervals and lunchtimes;
- Provide time to walk and talk and spend time just being outdoors, engaging with nature in green spaces;
- Find ways to provide regular experiences in natural settings;
- Provide plenty of opportunities for physical activity outside.

Health and wellbeing: responsibility of all

Successful learners
Confident individuals
Responsible citizens
Effective contributors

Respected

- Involve the children in outdoor projects that interest them and develop a sense of ownership and belonging, for example, growing plants of their choice in containers or gardens or improving play facilities in the playground;
- Listen to children and involve them in decisions at their level of understanding in a familiar context. Some children are more talkative outdoors;
- Use a variety of consultation techniques so that everyone can have their feelings and responses noted.

Safe

- Enable children to take calculated risks that allow a sense of achievement and exhilaration;
- Actively involve learners in the risk-benefit assessment process;
- Ensure that health and safety guidelines are followed and interpreted sensibly;
- Be aware that child protection procedures must be in place outside too.

Included

- Look for interests a child displays indoors and extend the possibilities outside;
- Create opportunities for children to make decisions that have clear consequences. Group challenges or team-building activities can help;
- Have seating and shelter available. Children need to feel comfortable outside;
- Provide extended opportunities to be outdoors and have lots of multi-sensory experiences.

Responsible

- Create a collaborative learning environment, indoors and out, that enables children to have and take responsibility for themselves, resources and the environment;
- Encourage children to keep the grounds well maintained, organised and litter-free;
- Develop routines around going outside that encourage responsibility, for example involving children in the planning of work outside, including risk benefit assessments and learning how to manage in different situations (traffic, communication etc).



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professional development skills and contexts living links national and international perspective

4.6 Developing the Young Workforce and learning in local greenspace

Learning in local greenspace can prepare children and young people for learning, life and work. Pupils can be given opportunities to develop interests, strengths, skills and aspirations through a range of experiences in your greenspace.

They can also learn about a variety of jobs. A range of **partners** may be able to support this, including the land manager; Local Authority staff (e.g. Planner; Access Officer; Biodiversity Officer); **Countryside ranger**; local interest groups, e.g. bird watching group, local history group; recreational users, e.g. walkers, cyclists; the tourism industry; and conservation groups.

Depending on your space and your pupils, you might also learn from gamekeepers; gillies; groundsmen and estate managers; the **Royal Highland Education Trust** (who run Farm and Estate Visits; Farm to Fork Initiatives); or **Countryside Learning Scotland**.



4.7 Educational Initiatives and learning in local greenspace

There are many educational initiatives and **drivers** with which you could link your learning in local greenspace work. This would help you 'tick more than one box' and demonstrate interdisciplinary learning and **partnership working**. It could also help **convince colleagues** that this isn't an added extra but something that integrates well with and adds value to what they already do.

Through learning in local greenspace you could:

- ✓ raise attainment – see **research** and the **National Improvement Framework**;
- ✓ realise pupils' entitlement to **Learning for Sustainability** – e.g. outdoor learning; understanding interdependence; community partnerships; critical thinking; local to global and cooperative, collaborative and active learning;
- ✓ develop interests, skills, strengths and aspirations for life beyond school – see **Developing the Young Workforce**;
- ✓ strengthen home-school links by engaging **parents**;
- ✓ bring a community element to EcoSchools;
- ✓ engage new **partners** and make links with the school **community**;
- ✓ take part in **Citizen Science**;
- ✓ carry out an enterprise project;

Learning in local greenspace could be a context for:

- ✓ most subjects in the primary and secondary school;
- ✓ Personal and Social Education; it can develop character, resilience, confidence and a sense of self and belonging;
- ✓ Mindfulness;
- ✓ an **Award** for pupils;
- ✓ **practitioner enquiry**;



4.8 Award Schemes

Through learning in local greenspace schools and pupils could achieve a number of awards, including:

- ✓ EcoSchools
- ✓ John Muir Award
- ✓ RSPB Wild Challenge Award
- ✓ Woodland Trust Green Tree Award
- ✓ Archaeology Scotland Heritage Hero Award
- ✓ JASS Awards

Numerous awards are available; the Awards Network has an [award search](#) to help identify the award(s) that best suits your learners' age, needs, interests and ambitions.

Education Scotland's [Review of Youth Awards in Scotland](#), considers how youth awards contribute to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.





+5 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Routemap to 2020 Priority Project 6: Taking Learning Outdoors

+5 Menu

5.1 The Learning in local greenspace project

5.2 Greenspace Audit

5.3 Questionnaire to inform action plan

5.4 Action plan template



5.1 The Learning in local greenspace project

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy [Learning in local greenspace project](#) worked with some of the schools serving Scotland's most disadvantaged areas to improve the access to and quality of local greenspace and build confidence in teachers to take learning outdoors.



The Learning in local greenspace worked in the following areas:

City of Edinburgh: contact Neville.Makan@nature.scot

Dundee City: contact Penny.Martin@nature.scot

East Ayrshire: EAC LOST via Sue.Munro@nature.scot

Falkirk: contact Neville.Makan@nature.scot

Fife: contact Sharon.Cunningham@nature.scot

Glasgow: contact Sue.Munro@nature.scot

Highland: contact Nathan.Mclaughlan@nature.scot

North Lanarkshire: contact Neville.Makan@nature.scot

South Ayrshire: contact Sue.Munro@nature.scot

South Lanarkshire: contact Sue.Munro@nature.scot

West Dunbartonshire: contact Sharon.Cunningham@nature.scot

West Lothian: LtL Scotland via Sharon.Cunningham@nature.scot

A number of [tools](#) have been developed for participants of the project, which can be used and adapted by any school: [Greenspace Audit](#); [Questionnaire to inform action plan](#) and [Action plan template](#).



5.2 Greenspace Audit

When commenting, you may wish to rank each consideration from 1(dire) to 10 (brilliant). Remember that many things are not permanent; think about how easily changes could be made to improve an aspect for safety or learning. A [Greenspace Audit you can type on](#) is available online.



I SITE APPRAISAL – ACCESS Its suitability for use by your setting.	
Consideration	Comment
Is there a safe assembly point within or just out with the greenspace? Are there any locked gates, etc?	
Is there a network of paths? If not, how easy is it to walk across the area, especially for young children?	
Think about the ground cover – is it very boggy, or are there too many “inhibitor” plants such as brambles and nettles? Remember, this will change with the seasons.	
Think about the terrain – you want safe but with options for challenge. If the space is sloped, when will the sun reach it or will it be in shade during your session?	
Are there natural or fixed boundary features, e.g. a line of trees, a hedge, path, fence etc?	

ii SITE CHARACTER & LEARNING POTENTIAL

Ideally your site should have a feeling of “wildness” about it – but do remember that even small places can feel wild and isolated for a young child. Remember too that variety is the spice of life – varied vegetation and terrain will bring varied opportunities for learning.

Consideration

Comment

Mix of trees: young, mature, fallen, stumps, different species.

Mix of shrubs, plants, mosses, fungi.

Mix of terrain: dips and hollows, stones, rocky outcrops etc.

Evidence of wildlife. Opportunities to watch wildlife.

Presence of water, e.g. stream, river, loch, bog/wetland, ditches – and safe access to it.

Availability of loose materials on the ground: sticks, stones etc.

Traffic noise.

Historical evidence, e.g. old walls, buildings, ditches, tracks.

Multi-sensory variety: sights, sounds, smells, shapes, colours.

A variety of places: enclosed; open; to hide, roll, sit; to have physical challenge; to be quiet; to have a good view, etc.

iii POTENTIAL HAZARDS

Think about whether the hazards are manageable and the level of risk posed. What can be done to enable visits to go ahead? Bear in mind the risks may also be seasonal. Think about 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' when looking for hazards at different levels.

Consideration

Comment

Litter, including drug paraphernalia and sharp objects.

Standing dead trees or dead wood in trees.

Water.

Steep drops.

Animals, e.g. excessive midges, livestock, dogs & dog mess, nesting birds.

Quantity and type of potentially harmful plants – ask owner or environmental professional for advice, if needed.

Security of the area – think about whether structures and children's creations are likely to remain or be removed/ destroyed. How important is this?

The amount and type of passers-by/other users and degree of seclusion needed.

Informal toileting options – seclusion, ability of the site to cope with waste.

Power lines and electricity substations.

Site work by landowner eg tree felling, footpath improvement.

Is there wifi and mobile phone coverage? Do you notice any blackspots?

iv ANY OTHER THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS

A large empty rectangular box for writing comments.

Based on a resource developed by Creative STAR Learning Company and Forestry Commission Scotland, 2014

5.3 Questionnaire to inform action plan

Initial questionnaire/checklist to inform the development of a bespoke **Action Plan** for learning in local greenspace. A [questionnaire you can type on](#) is available online.



1	Establishment name	
2	Local Authority	
3	Name position of person responding on behalf of the school	
4	Email address	
5	Number of teaching staff in your establishment	
6	Date questionnaire completed	

ABOUT OUTDOOR LEARNING IN YOUR SCHOOL GROUNDS

7	Do the staff use your school grounds for learning? (delete as appropriate) If yes, go to Q8. If no, go to Q9	Yes / No
8	Approximately how many of your staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – use the school grounds for outdoor learning on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month)? – use the school grounds for outdoor learning on an occasional basis (i.e. at least once a term but not more than once a month)? – rarely/never use the school grounds for outdoor learning? 	(enter number of staff for each)

ABOUT OUTDOOR LEARNING IN A LOCAL GREENSPACE

9	Do the staff use any local greenspaces within walking distance of your establishment for outdoor learning? (delete as appropriate) If yes, go to Q10. If no, go to Q13	Yes / No
10	Which site/s do the staff use? Please try to describe where they are in relation to the school, using nearby street names etc. or draw a simple sketch	
11	Approximately how long does it take to walk to your local site?	
12	<p>Approximately how many of your staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – use a local greenspace for outdoor learning on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month)? – use a local greenspace for outdoor learning on an occasional basis (i.e. at least once a term but not more than once a month)? – rarely/never use a local greenspace for outdoor learning 	(enter number of staff for each)

OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING OUTDOOR LEARNING

13 What, if anything, would encourage/support you to use local greenspaces near your school [more often]? (tick all that apply)

If we had school/LA support
(please state the sort of support you'd like below)

If we knew learning outdoors was worth the effort

If we knew where to go

If the place was nearer

If we knew who owned/managed the place

If we had support from the owner/manager
(please state the sort of support you'd like below)

If the place was better (please give details below)

If we knew what to do there with pupils

If there was more to do there with the pupils

If our pupils had suitable clothing/footwear

If we could get enough adult helpers

If the place was safer (please give details below)

Nothing

Other (please give details below)

Comments

14 Please tell us if and how any local organisations or businesses have supported you to use your grounds or local greenspace with your pupils.

15 Any additional comments

5.4 Action plan template

Your [questionnaire to inform an action plan](#) gave an insight into the frequency of outdoor learning in your school, where it is being conducted and the main areas of support required. You could create a summary of the results of this questionnaire below and revisit it at a later date to see if there have been any changes.



Consider the answers in parts B to D of the template when creating bespoke key action points for learning in local greenspace in part E.

An [action plan you can type on](#) is available online.

A LEARNING IN LOCAL GREENSPACE PROJECT			
Action Plan for	School Name		
	Local Authority		
	Version		Date
	Prepared by		

B USE OF SCHOOL GROUNDS FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING	
These questions give greater insight into how embedded outdoor learning currently is in the school.	
Does the school use its school grounds for outdoor learning?	Yes / No
Approximate % of staff using school grounds on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month)	
Approximate % of staff using school grounds on an occasional basis (i.e. at least once a term but not more than once a month)	

Approximate % of staff rarely or never using school grounds	
---	--

C USE OF LOCAL GREENSPACE FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING

Does the school use a local greenspace for outdoor learning?	Yes / No		
Site/s name		Approximate walking distance (minutes)	
Site/s location			
Approximate % of staff using local greenspace on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month)			
Approx. % of staff using local greenspace on an occasional basis (at least once a term but not more than once a month)			
Approximate % of staff rarely or never using local greenspace			

D PERCEIVED SUPPORT REQUIRED TO ENCOURAGE STAFF TO TAKE LEARNING INTO A LOCAL GREENSPACE

(tick all that apply and comment as required)

If we had school/LA support [SPECIFY]

If we knew learning outdoors was worth the effort

If we knew where to go

If the place was nearer

If we knew who owned/managed the place

If we had support from the owner/manager [SPECIFY]

If the place was better [SPECIFY]

If we knew what to do there with pupils

If there was more to do there with the pupils

If our pupils had suitable clothing/footwear

If we could get enough adult helpers

If the place was safer [SPECIFY]

Other [SPECIFY]

Additional comments

Local organisations or businesses who have supported you to use your grounds or local greenspace

E KEY ACTIONS IDENTIFIED TO DEVELOP OUTDOOR LEARNING AT THE SCHOOL

Add, duplicate or delete rows and amend as appropriate. Don't forget to consider how pupils, parents, the local community and local organisations could be engaged in the project. To fully embed learning in local greenspace it should be included in your School Improvement Plan.

Support need identified/ embedding outdoor learning throughout the school and across the curriculum	Action identified	Lead	Supported by	Date to be completed by
If we knew where to go				
If we knew who owned/ managed the place				
If we had support from the owner/manager (add details)				
If we had school/LA support (add details)				
If we knew learning outdoors was worth the effort				
If the place was nearer				
If the place was safer (add details)				
If the place was better (add details)				

If we knew what to do there with pupils				
If there was more to do there with the pupils				
If our pupils had suitable clothing/footwear				
If we could get enough adult helpers				
Other (add details). Consider any additional issues highlighted and how these could translate into actions.				
Embedding outdoor learning throughout the school and across the curriculum (Look at all the suggested actions together. Are these alone enough to instigate change or is there a missing factor/incentive that needs to be considered?)				
Are any additional actions required as a result of your greenspace audit ?				
Date Action Plan/progress to be reviewed		Name		





+6 Resources

+6 Menu

6.1 References and key documents

6.2 Acknowledgements and thanks

6.3 Update summary



6.1 References and key documents

You may find these resources useful in helping you plan for and offer learning in local greenspace.

We are not responsible for external websites. Inclusion of any third party link does not imply endorsement. Please [let us know](#) of anything unsuitable.



General

✓ [Scotland's Biodiversity – a Routemap to 2020](#)

✓ [HGIOS4 and Outdoor Learning](#)

Planning for learning in local greenspace

✓ [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#)

✓ [Scottish Outdoor Access Code: responsible behaviour by educators](#)

✓ [Scottish Outdoor Access Code: responsible behaviour by land managers re outdoor learning](#)

✓ [Risk-benefit assessment](#)

✓ [Going Out There](#)

✓ [Going Out There toolkit](#)

✓ [Teaching in Nature](#)

✓ [Scottish Outdoor Access Code Education Resources](#)

✓ [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Pupil Activities

✓ [Outdoor Learning Directory](#)

✓ [Citizen Science](#)

✓ [Woodland Trust resources for schools](#)

✓ [Nature's Calendar](#)

6.2 Acknowledgements and thanks

We are grateful for the input and support of the following individuals and organisations in the development of this resource:

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6.3 Update summary

We will be updating and reviewing the Beyond your Boundary resource as new tools, case studies and lessons learnt emerge. This section summarises the significant revisions to the resource so that you can see at a glance what is new or has changed since you last visited.



Version	Date	Details
1.0	August 2017	1 st Publication
2.0	November 2017	Links to online versions of forms 5.2; 5.3; 5.4 and page numbers added.
3.0	March 2018	Links to Learning in Local Greenspace films, created by Learning through Landscapes Scotland, added to page 20.
4.0	January 2019	All hyperlinks work. Resource up to date. More films and tips added to page 20.
5.0	December 2019	All hyperlinks work. Resource up to date.
6.0	June 2020	Still current in times of social distancing. All hyperlinks work.
7.0	July 2021	All hyperlinks work. Resource up to date.

