



Council for
Learning Outside the Classroom

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FORWARD PLAN 2009-2011

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We believe that every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development, whatever their age, ability or circumstances

[Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto]

Learning outside the classroom is about raising achievement through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is not only about what we learn but importantly how and where we learn.

[Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto]

"I am pleased to welcome into being the new Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, which will take over responsibility for the Manifesto and drive forward its aims from April 2009. I see the Council as a key partner for the Department and look forward to working with them as they move ahead with their strategic plan."

*[Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP
Parliamentary
Undersecretary of State
for Schools and Learners]*

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom promotes and champions learning outside the classroom, to enable all young people to benefit from increased opportunities for high-quality and varied educational experiences.

1 Introduction

The Council aims to become the leading voice for Learning Outside the Classroom, influencing and challenging relevant policy and practice. By raising the profile of learning outside the classroom, the Council promotes its benefits and aims to increase the number of quality learning experiences for young people outside the classroom.

These quality learning experiences can take place in the school grounds; local nature reserves and wild places; city farms and parks; streetscapes; field study centres; farms and the countryside; remote, wild and adventurous places; heritage and cultural sites; zoos and botanic gardens; sacred spaces; museums, theatres, galleries and music venues; and on cultural, language and fieldwork visits abroad.

As a new charitable organisation - incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 22 December 2008 and registered as a charity on 30 January 2009 - the Council has to establish itself and plan for the future.

Although the Council itself is new, many individuals and organisations have, over many years, been striving to highlight the value of learning outside the classroom. In November 2006 the Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom was launched by the Secretary of State. Since then the Department for Children, Schools and Families has funded and driven the Manifesto Action Plan forward, together with the key stakeholders as represented on the National Advisory Group and through Sector Partnerships. The Manifesto now has over 1,500 signatories. Although the current stage of implementing the plan is due to come to an end on 31 March 2009, the Council is committed to continuing to take the Manifesto Action Plan forward in partnership with signatories and other key stakeholders.

We define learning outside the classroom as:

“The use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning.”

These, often the most memorable learning experiences, help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behaviour, lifestyle and work. They influence our values and the decisions we make. They allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa.

[Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto]

Much has already been achieved, such as the development of the “Out and About” package which was launched on 2 October 2008, and the Quality Badge scheme which went live on 30 January 2009.

The Council will build on these achievements of the Manifesto partnership. It recognises the considerable value of its stakeholders, and wishes to continue to work with them and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in order that all young people may benefit from high-quality and varied learning outside the classroom.

2 Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto

The launch of the Manifesto came after a public consultation which highlighted the value of learning outside the classroom, and its purpose was to engage with everyone who appreciated the benefits of learning outside the classroom for young people. This included Government, headteachers, governors, teachers and support staff, youth group leaders, parents, local authorities, community and voluntary organisations, curriculum subject bodies, businesses and all those agencies that provide external support to schools and youth groups. By encouraging all stakeholders to work together, the Manifesto aimed to help all young people to benefit, especially those whose circumstances make it more difficult for them to participate.

The purpose of the Manifesto’s vision (which the Council continues to endorse) is to “make a difference”, in particular to:

- act as a statement of common intent that will make better use of our individual and collective resources.
- encourage more widespread use of educational opportunities outside the classroom.
- inspire schools and those organisations that support learning outside the classroom to provide high quality experiences for all young people.
- set out a shared agenda for future activity, which recognises that real progress will depend on the co-operation and collaboration of all signatories.
- make it easier for more organisations and individuals to see how they can best contribute.
- inform the development of government policy.

- call on others in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to work in partnership with us to deliver our aims.

Individuals and organisations were (and still are) encouraged to endorse and champion the Manifesto and to sign up to its vision.

Signatories were also asked to pledge their support by making public the actions they intend to take. The partners that have helped draw up this Manifesto have made their intentions clear by pledging action. These actions include:

- providing all young people with a wide range of experiences outside the classroom, including extended school activities and one or more residential visits.
- making a strong case for learning outside the classroom, so there is widespread appreciation of the unique contribution these experiences make to the lives of young people.
- improving training and professional development opportunities for schools and the wider workforce.
- better enabling schools, local authorities and other key organisations to manage visits safely and efficiently.
- providing easy access to information, knowledge, expertise, guidance and resources.
- identifying ways of engaging parents, carers and the wider community in learning outside the classroom.

At the time of writing at the end of February 2009, there were 1516 signatories to the Manifesto and 269 pledges had been made.

3 Manifesto Action Plan

The considerable achievements in the implementation of the Manifesto Action Plan are detailed elsewhere but summarised very briefly below:

- Development of Out & About guidance on the www.lotc.org.uk website with downloadable CPD modules to support the delivery of high-quality learning outside the classroom and complementary support for providers.
- Establishment of a new Quality Badge which brings together existing “safety” and “quality” accreditation schemes to form an easily

“Educational visits are among the most memorable experiences in a child’s school life. I want to see schools taking advantage of the opportunities that learning outside the classroom provides to bring subjects to life.”

“Quality Badges offer teachers a guarantee that not only is a venue providing the sort of educational value that they can build on in class long after the visit but they also have the appropriate risk management structures in place.”

“I am pleased that the Quality Badge scheme has been welcomed by a wide range of organisations, including local authorities and teacher unions. It is a significant victory in our battle to move away from the misguided perception that learning outside the classroom is a potential minefield for teachers.”

[Ed Balls, 13 Feb 09, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families]

recognised and understood system for schools and other users. Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, awarded the first badges to wide media coverage on 13 February 2009. Under the scheme, organisations will display the badge as a signal to schools that their venue has met the required standard, so teachers do not need to carry out their own quality or risk assessments.

- Promotion of the Manifesto by DCSF and Band & Brown Communications to key influencing audiences, including directors of children’s services, headteachers, governors, parents and Government.

Since the launch of the Manifesto in November 2006 there has been a considerable sea change in thinking about learning outside the classroom. There is no longer such an obsession with risk management, and excessive “red tape” has been removed. The Quality Badge is an assurance of the quality of learning experiences being provided.

The Council will build on the achievements and successes to date in implementing the Manifesto, and continue to work with all interested partners and stakeholders.

The Council will review progress in the implementation of the Manifesto at the end of its first year of operation, and revise and develop the plan as necessary.

4 Council’s Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the Council (as stated in its Memorandum of Association) is:

To promote and champion learning outside the classroom to enable all children and young people to benefit from increased opportunities for high-quality and varied educational experiences.

The Trustees of the Council, and its main stakeholders, have agreed that the responsibilities and activities of the Council are to:

- Develop as a leading voice for learning outside the classroom;
- Influence and challenge learning outside the classroom policy and practice;
- Raise the profile of learning outside the classroom and promote the benefits;

- Consult with and represent the views of the wider learning outside the classroom partnership;
- Act as the consultative body for the development of policy and legislation;
- Maintain the cohesion of the learning outside the classroom partnership;
- Communicate with all stakeholders, including through a website;
- Maintain an overview of learning outside the classroom and act to resolve common issues;
- Improve the quality of learning outside the classroom through a Quality Badge scheme;
- Be the awarding authority for the Quality Badge;
- Provide support, aiming for high quality learning outside the classroom that meets the needs of young people;
- Commission and undertake research; and
- Access funds and generate income to enable more young people to access learning outside the classroom.

These objectives will be further developed and refined during the first year of the Council's operation

5 Working with Others

The Council recognises that the success of the Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom lies not only with the considerable efforts of the Manifesto team but also with the large number of individuals and organisations who have voluntarily supported, promoted and encouraged the development of Learning Outside the Classroom through the National Advisory Group and the Sector Partnerships. These groups have proved themselves as important critical friends and have provided a valuable feedback from the wider partnership. They have been a valuable resource of expertise, advice and help.

The Council appreciates the value of an independent advisory group and has already agreed, in consultation with the National Advisory Group, to reform the group as the Learning Outside the Classroom Advisory Group in order that they might continue to provide the same kind of valuable advice, feedback and support. The Council has also stated that it appreciates the considerable value of the Sector Partnerships and wishes them to continue to develop.

The National Advisory Group elected eight of their own members to form the interim board of the Council which has been taking forward the setting up of the Council. The make-up of the interim board reflects the wide variety of interest and support for learning outside the classroom including that from children's services, teachers' unions, governors and providers.

The Council itself will be a membership organisation and membership of the Council will be open to umbrella organisations, individual organisations and individuals with an interest in and commitment to learning outside the classroom. The Council members will elect eight trustees to the Board (the first substantive elections and AGM are due to take place in December 2009).

6 Strategic Plan Overview

The Council's first strategic plan covers the period from incorporation until the end of March 2014. The first two years of the plan have been developed in detail within this Forward Plan, and over the next year, consultation and research will inform the production of a more detailed five-year development plan.

The Council is currently in a transition period during which it not only has to establish itself but also has to be ready to take over from the DCSF from 1 April 2009. The DCSF has been implementing the Manifesto Action Plan since November 2006, and has recruited and managed a wide range of consultants and contractors. From 1 April 2009 the Council will become responsible for these consultants and contractors, in particular, the contractor who is running the Quality Badge scheme - 4Children - who is contracted for three years until 2011.

This strategic plan is in three sections:

- a) from Jan 09 to end Mar 09 ("transition")
- b) Apr 09 to Mar 10 ("year one")
- c) Apr 10 to Mar 11 ("year two")

The trustees have established the overall framework for the strategic plan as consisting of ten broad areas of activity:

1. Governance (including set-up)
2. Forward planning
3. Quality Badge
4. Out & About package (and website)
5. Research and analysis

6. Training and support
7. Communications
8. Influencing
9. Partnerships
10. Funding

Each of these areas of activity is described in more detail in the section below.

7 Areas of Activity

The following section outlines the major tasks identified within each area of activity, along with any target timescales.

7.1 Governance (including set-up)

Governance will provide a robust framework which covers setting up, developing and managing the systems and processes necessary to run the organisation effectively, efficiently and legally. This includes setting the strategic direction, ensuring policies and procedures are in place to support the work of the organisation, and monitoring progress to ensure that the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom fulfils its aims and remains viable and sustainable in the future. Set-up activities involve establishing the main operational functions of the organisation, and will include, amongst other things, treasury management, mandatory reporting, payroll, audit, etc. as well as recruiting and inducting staff.

7.2 Forward Planning

By looking at where the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom wants to be and what it aims to achieve, the trustees and wider stakeholders can determine how the organisation will get there. Work will begin in 2009 to develop the Council's full strategic plan, a five-year development plan which will enable the organisation to shape outcomes by being proactive rather than reactive. The organisation will consult widely in the course of developing its plan, analysing the external environment to identify opportunities and threats, and working with stakeholders to plan accordingly to take advantage of those.

7.3 Quality Badge

In April 2009, the Council assumes responsibility for managing the Quality Badge contract, and will work closely with the contractor - 4Children - to establish a complaints and appeals procedure; encourage uptake of the Quality Badge scheme with providers; undertake an annual moderation of assessments of both routes 1 and 2; review and develop quality indicators and to evaluate the first year of the scheme, ensuring any recommendations are fed back into the system to ensure continuous improvement.

7.4 Out & About Package (Website)

The Out and About Package and surrounding website has been designed to help professionals working with young people aged 0-19 to provide high quality learning outside the classroom experiences. The Council will work with partners to continually review and develop the site in line with the needs of its users in order to improve accessibility, and to ensure more users visit the site. For example, the "how to" guidance will be modified in the light of the new forthcoming Common Framework. The web development will see the creation of a wider range of vignettes - small, real-life examples of good practice illustrating how teachers design and deliver learning outside the classroom experiences; improved meta tagging, which will improve the accessibility of the site from general search engines; and additional content developed for particular audience groups such as early years and youth leaders, sacred spaces sector, and Teaching Outside the Classroom. The Council's aim is for a vibrant and accessible website with continually updated material to ensure the site is the number one resource used by teachers and leaders of young people's activities in designing high quality learning outside the classroom experiences.

7.5 Research & Analysis

In order to measure the effectiveness of the Council and the impact of learning outside the classroom, it is important to establish baseline research from which to benchmark progress. During 2009 the Council will establish a methodology and baseline for annual monitoring; set key performance indicators for the work of the organisation and undertake a baselining exercise. The Council will also undertake research to fill in any gaps in the existing body of research into the impact of learning outside the classroom. The Council will produce a series of guidelines for a variety of audiences on the impact and effectiveness of learning outside the classroom - these will be generic and not sector specific.

7.6 Training & Support

The Council will seek funding to develop a package of training and professional development for providers and users. The Council will also work in partnership with the DCSF to deliver a range of regional awareness raising conferences in April 2009, targeted at users and providers, which will emphasise the importance of learning and teaching outside the classroom, and the role of the Quality Badge.

7.7 Communications

As a newly established organisation, high quality, targeted communications are essential to ensure the Council achieves its key aims of raising the profile and promoting the benefits of learning outside the classroom. This area of work will include establishing detailed handover plans with the existing communications contractor; the production of targeted communications materials in a range of formats to meet the needs of specific learning outside the classroom audiences; the design and implementation of a PR strategy to target national, regional and local media; building on the success of the awards scheme for schools and establishing this as an annual event; and planning and delivering an annual conference for members to support the AGM.

7.8 Influencing

In order to achieve its primary aim of developing as the leading voice for learning outside the classroom, the Council will seek to exert influence in key spheres of work. By responding to relevant national consultations; speaking at conferences and events; promoting the benefits of learning outside the classroom to key decision makers; and influencing the design of key research tools; the Council will position itself as the champion and consultative voice of learning outside the classroom issues.

7.9 Partnerships

The Council cannot operate in isolation, and relies heavily on partnerships of committed stakeholders across the many sectors involved in learning outside the classroom in order to deliver its aims at grassroots level. The Council will develop a membership strategy and will continue to work in partnership with organisations and individuals, ensuring two-way communication flows exists to continually develop its services to meet the needs of its members. The Council will seek funding to support sector partnerships to deliver its objectives in an appropriate manner within individual sectors.

7.10 Funding

Establishing sustainable income streams is vital to the success of the Council and to ensure the organisation remains viable in the future. The Council will produce and implement a funding strategy to support the delivery of its existing work streams, and to expand these to ensure learning outside the classroom is embedded more widely and deeply to benefit children across the

country. The Council will use a consultant to undertake some research into suitable funding sources and to draft a fundraising strategy.

The DCSF has expressed its commitment to provide core funding for the Council during its first two years of operation. The Council also expects to undertake project work and deliver services for government departments and other organisations. These fees will have a beneficial short-term impact on the Council's finances but they will not secure its long-term financial position.

The Council hopes that its excellent relationship with the Department for Children Schools and Families will continue after year two, and that this will be expressed in some level of continuing funding. However, the Council needs to be prudent in its long-term financial planning particularly in the context of a recession. Therefore, the Council appreciates that it has to decide on the level of service it can provide and through competitive tendering achieve the best possible value-for-money.

At the end of the first two years, the Council aims to be a viable, standalone entity able to attract a wide range of project and other funding.

8 Measuring Performance

The Council will measure not only the performance of its contractors but also its own performance through a set of key performance criteria, the targets for which have yet to be agreed and will be developed as part of this implementation of the Forward Plan. Performance will focus on key areas such as uptake and integration of Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC), numbers of quality badges awarded and renewed, and user satisfaction with LOtC provision. Initial suggestions for broad headline criteria areas are included below. These will be developed and agreed by the Trustees, together with measurable targets for each one.

- a) Increased uptake of LOtC. Targets for teacher-led and provider-led LOtC broken down by sector will be determined after baseline figures have been obtained;
- b) Number of providers awarded a quality badge increasing year on year;
- c) Numbers failing to obtain the quality badge reducing year on year;
- d) An increase in quality badges renewed;
- e) Increased teacher/leader satisfaction with LOtC provision;
- f) Increased integration of LOtC into mainstream teaching and learning; and

- g) Increased integration of LOtC into Initial Teacher Training for new teachers.

In order to measure the Council's performance over the coming years it is essential that a baseline is established as soon as possible. Therefore included within the business plan is a project to establish the methodology for both the initial baselining and annual performance measurement, and then to undertake the actual baselining in September 2009 and the first annual measurement of performance the following September.

9 Risk Management

The Trustees are mindful of their statutory duties and will identify, assess and review the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and establish systems to manage those risks. A risk is described as the uncertainty surrounding events and their outcomes that may have a significant effect, either enhancing or inhibiting:

- a) operational performance;
- b) achievement of aims and objectives; or
- c) meeting the expectations of stakeholders.

"Major risks" are those risks which have a high likelihood of occurring and would, if they occurred, have a severe impact. Trustees believe that focusing on the management of risks enables them to take opportunities and develop the Council with confidence.

Some of the major risks of the Council so far identified are failure to:

- establish the Council (legal entity, staff appointment etc);
- gain commitment from organisations to become members of the Council;
- roll out the Quality badge and thus improve quality of learning;
- engage additional resources/funding to help deliver the business plan;
- develop sharing best practice and networking through national, regional and sub-regional approaches;
- promote the benefits of learning outside the classroom; and
- develop an effective crisis management process including effective responses to the media during such times

As part of its work within the governance activity area of the Forward Plan, the Council is in the process of developing and contingency recovery plan which will address these areas in more detail.

10 Next steps

Working effectively with partners and actively engaging wider stakeholders is key to the success of the Council's Forward Plan, and to the future development of LOtC. The Council is committed to taking forward the Manifesto action plan developed and implemented by an enormous range of passionate and enthusiastic supporters. The Council also looks forward to a close working relationship with the LOtC Advisory Group and Sector Partnerships, to ensure it continues to remain abreast of challenges and opportunities at the heart of LOtC delivery. Developing a membership strategy is a priority for the Council, along with delivering a range of training to support users to enhance the uptake and use of the materials available on the Out and About package. The Council will work hard to develop new relationships and expand its sphere of influence, in order to achieve its overarching aim:

To promote and champion learning outside the classroom, to enable all young people to benefit from increased opportunities for high-quality and varied educational experiences.