



## The Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee

### Personal and Social Education "What should personal and social education sessions be about?"

#### Submission by the Field Studies Council February 2017

#### Background

1. The Field Studies Council (FSC) is an education charity committed to bringing environmental understanding to all. FSC provides informative and enjoyable opportunities for all ages and abilities to discover, explore, and understand the environment. We currently welcome 150,000 visitors every year to courses at our UK network of centres, including our two Scottish Centres at Millport and Kindrogan.

#### The value of residential to personal and social development

1. Personal and Social Education should help children and young people develop the skills that will grow their confidence, self-esteem and determination. PSE should also equip learners with the so called "softer skills" that employers are looking for – team working and building, communication and problem solving. **Outdoor learning, especially residential provides both the opportunities and the context in which children and young people can engage in PSE.**
2. All teacher feedback from FSC's work with City Challenge<sup>1</sup> remarked on the students' increased levels of confidence, team working and maturity. The most immediate effect was on personal development with improved social relations and learners pushing themselves with the support of peers. Outdoor learning provides challenges for learners to overcome and teachers reported on a change in most pupils' persistence in learning and that they had become more confident, willing to have a go, assess and take appropriate risks. Support from peers helped some achieve things that they didn't think possible, thus increasing self-esteem and confidence.
3. Learning and personal development are enhanced by a residential experience, as recently highlighted by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Learning Away<sup>2</sup>. FSC, as a partner delivering residential courses as part of London Challenge, received feedback from teaching staff that a residential provided opportunities and time for relationships to develop. London

---

<sup>1</sup> London Challenge and later City Challenge programmes aimed to disrupt the cycle of underachievement of disadvantaged children in primary and secondary schools in London, The Black Country and Greater Manchester

<sup>2</sup> [Learning Away. Brilliant Residential and their impact on children, young people and schools.](#) June 2015

**FSC Head Office,**

Preston Montford, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 1HW

Tel (01743) 852100 Fax (01743) 852101 Email: [headoffice@field-studies-council.org](mailto:headoffice@field-studies-council.org) Website: [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org)

Patron: His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales President: Prof Tim Burt Executive Committee Chairman: Prof. Des Thompson Chief Executive: Robert Lucas



Challenge students were “markedly less worried about asking for help or about making mistakes<sup>3</sup>” because of better relationships with staff.

4. Outdoor learning, particularly as part of a residential experience, has the potential to deliver team or group activities outside the normal classroom boundaries and creates a learning environment which is impossible to replicate in the classroom. Away from the normal home and school environment, there are opportunities for relationships and understanding to be built across ability, culture and previously established hierarchies.
5. Sharing activities, meals and rooms develops understanding of other cultures which can carry on after the school trip. Teachers reported that during the London Challenge residentials, individual and group issues that are not always apparent in day school would arise and could be dealt with. They reported that dominant students started learning from the quieter ones. Previously marginalised students made new friends and their qualities were recognised. Outdoor learning and residentials, by mixing students from different years and groups, meant that some lost their ‘us and them’ mentality.
6. Communication, teamwork and problem solving skills are highly sought after by employers. Outdoor team building activities and spending time on a residential provides opportunities for teams to build around a common purpose. A strong theme emerged from the London Challenge students themselves as they reported that they found that working in a team can be more productive than working in isolation.
7. FSC residentials provide the time and space for personal development. Feedback from teachers and parents/carers saw a number of improvements in the independence, self-confidence and self-esteem of those who attended a City Challenge residential and all teachers remarked on the increased levels of team working and maturity<sup>4</sup>.

*“A girl who wouldn’t answer the tutor’s questions on the first day spoke in front of everyone in the presentation on the last day. The value of that is just not measurable”<sup>5</sup>*

Field Studies Council  
February 2017

---

<sup>3</sup> [New Views](#): Lessons learned from the London Challenge Residential courses, FSC

<sup>4</sup> City Challenge: An Evaluation Hava Contini and Justin Dillon

<sup>5</sup> FSC City Challenge Residentials: Pilot Evaluation February – June 2008 Ruth Amos and Michael Reiss