OUTDOOR ADVENTURE LEARNING

COST	EVIDENCE	IMPACT	EFFECT
		0	0.00

Unclear impact for moderate cost based on insufficient evidence.

WHAT IS IT?

Outdoor adventure learning typically involves outdoor experiences, such as climbing or mountaineering; survival, ropes or assault courses; or outdoor sports, such as orienteering, sailing and canoeing. These can be organised as intensive residential courses or shorter courses run in schools or local outdoor centres.

Adventure education usually involves collaborative learning experiences with a high level of physical (and often emotional) challenge. Practical problem-solving, explicit reflection and discussion of thinking and emotion (see also Metacognition and self-regulation) may also be involved.

Adventure learning interventions typically do not include a formal academic component, so this summary does not include forest schools or field trips.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The current evidence base on outdoor adventure and academic outcomes is very weak. While the studies that do exist show positive impacts, the limited evidence base means that an impact in months progress is not communicated.

2. The evidence in the Toolkit is primarily focused on academic outcomes. There is a wider evidence base indicating that outdoor adventure learning may have positive impacts on other outcomes such as self-efficacy, motivation and teamwork. Outdoor adventure learning may play an important part of the wider school experience, regardless of any impact on academic outcomes.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE APPROACH?

The limited number of studies mean that there is not enough security to communicate a month's progress figure. While the studies included have positive impacts, none have been independently evaluated.

It is important to remember that this is not evidence that outdoor adventure learning has "no impact" but that there is an absence of secure evidence of what the impact might be.

Outdoor adventure learning studies report wider benefits in terms of self-confidence and self-efficacy. The searches in the Toolkit look for studies that include an academic impact, so there may be a greater number of studies that focus on non-academic outcomes.

CLOSING THE DISADVANTAGE GAP

Outdoor Adventure Learning might provide opportunities for disadvantaged pupils to participate in activities that they otherwise might not be able to access. Through participation in these challenging physical and emotional activities, outdoor adventure learning interventions can support pupils to develop non-cognitive skills such as resilience, self-confidence and motivation.

The application of these non-cognitive skills in the classroom may in turn have a positive effect on academic outcomes. However, the evidence base linking non-cognitive skills and pupil attainment is weak and schools should therefore carefully evaluate the impact of outdoor learning interventions on pupil achievement, if this is the intended outcome.

HOW COULD YOU IMPLEMENT IN YOUR SETTING?

Outdoor adventure learning approaches vary widely. A potential mechanism for impacting pupil outcomes might be through the development of non-cognitive skills such as resilience, self-confidence and motivation. When implementing outdoor adventure learning schools might consider including:

- Activities that challenge pupils physically (and emotionally).
- Opportunities for collaborative learning, problem-solving and explicit reflection on thinking processes and emotions.

- Support for pupils to overcome challenges and experience success.
- Building on the relationship between adult and pupils once everyone is back in school

Given the limited evidence base, it is particularly important to monitor impacts where outdoor adventure learning is used as a method of improving attainment.

Outdoor adventure learning interventions range in duration. They include shorter courses run within school, or at local outdoor centres; regular sessions over a prolonged period; or more intensive residential courses typically delivered over the course of one or two weeks.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Costs vary with a 10-day adventure sailing experience costing about £1000 and an 8 day Outward Bound course about £450. An adventure ropes course costs about £30 for a day. Costs are estimated at £500 per pupil per year and are therefore moderate.

Implementing outdoor adventure learning will require a moderate amount of staff time compared with other approaches. Outdoor adventure experiences should be delivered by well-qualified staff with appropriate safeguarding in place to manage any physical risks to pupils.

Alongside time and cost, school leaders should consider how to maximise the positive impact of outdoor adventure learning on pupil's non-cognitive skills in the classroom. When introducing new approaches, schools should consider implementation. For more information see **Putting Evidence to Work – A School's Guide to Implementation.**

HOW SECURE IS THE EVIDENCE?

The security of the evidence around Outdoor Adventure Learning is rated as extremely low. For topics with extremely low evidence, a month's progress figure is not displayed. Only 9 studies were identified that met the pre-specified inclusion criteria. None of these studies were independently evaluated.

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