



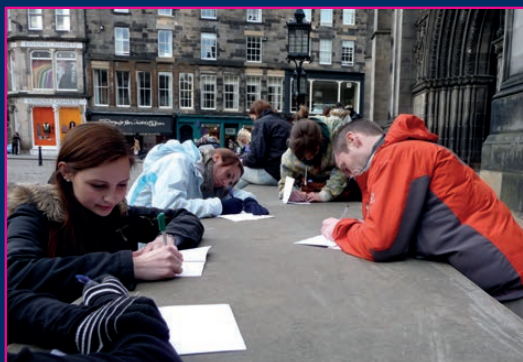
# Outdoor Journeys in Secondary Schools

[www.outdoorjourneys.org.uk](http://www.outdoorjourneys.org.uk)



## What is Outdoor Journeys?

- Outdoor Journeys is a pedagogical approach that enables pupils to learn about the people and place in which they live.
- The programme encourages pupils to generate and answer questions about the socio-cultural and ecological 'story' of their local landscape.
- By allowing pupils to plan and undertake local journeys in their community they are able to learn across the curriculum in a manner that is active, holistic and contextualised.



## How does it work?

Outdoor Journeys involves three phases that can repeated over and over:

**Questioning**

**Researching**

**Sharing**

**Questioning** – Pupils begin by going on a journey outside the classroom. The purpose of this journey is to generate questions about the socio-cultural, physical and environmental nature of their schoolgrounds and local surroundings. Jotters and digital cameras are useful for making notes and taking photos about items to be researched. The questions can be posted on the classroom walls.

**Researching** – Pupils search for answers to their questions. They can use a variety of sources, such as the internet, books, historical documents, museum catalogues, and photographs. They can invite local experts in to the school to provide first-hand knowledge. Quite often, pupils may need to go on another journey to answer their questions.

**Sharing** – Pupils share the knowledge they have gained in a variety of creative ways. Examples include drama, dance, song, art, poetry, podcasts, presentations, and posters. They can share with their peers, whole-school or local community.



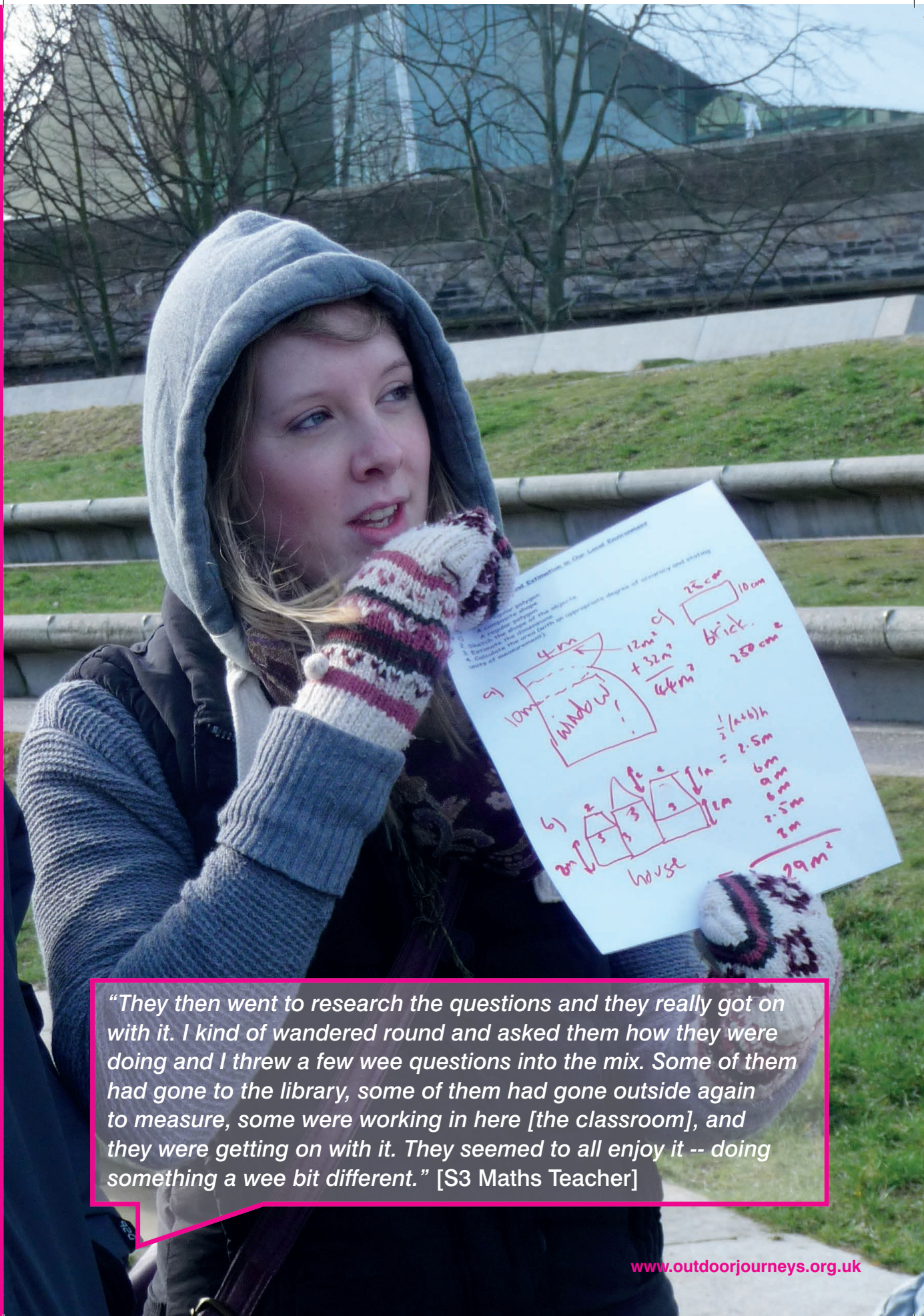
Outdoor Journeys can be introduced through a progressive, two-phased approach.

- 1. School Grounds** -- Teachers can start in their immediate outdoor space within the time they have available.
- 2. Local Community** -- Teachers can move on to longer journeys within the community once they are confident with the approach and have negotiated longer blocks of time away.

## Top tips from secondary teachers:

- Although it sounds like the pupils are doing most of the work on the Outdoor Journey, you must be proactive in planning, structuring and facilitating their learning throughout.
- Give clear guidance about behaviour, boundaries and expectations when outdoors during the Questioning phase. The lesson is created with educational intentions and is not a recreational activity.
- The pupils will probably require an explanation of high quality questions, with some examples of good and bad questions and perhaps a few 'starter' questions. Encourage them to have a variety of different types of questions, too – all of which should be very specific.
- Think about the curricular area you want the pupils to cover and explain this to them before they start generating questions. It is possible to focus on specific Experiences & Outcomes or to leave it open, where pupils can ask any kind of question about their 'place'.
- Ensure the pupils are working on their own or in small groups during the Questioning phase. If not, they tend to move around *en masse* and distract each other.
- Once the questions have been posted for all to see, pupils can answer their own questions or you can select a range for them to choose from.
- Consider how you are going to manage the Research phase and keep the pupils on track. While the Questioning can be done in co-operative groups of four, the Research phase is often more effective in smaller groups; perhaps split the original group into two pairs.
- Ensure that the pupils have enough resources for the Research phase. For example, they will need easy access to computers (and specific websites), books, maps, historical documents, and they may want to contact local experts.
- An initial structure that works well is 40 minutes for Questioning, two 40 minute sessions for Researching, and 40 minutes for Sharing.





*“They then went to research the questions and they really got on with it. I kind of wandered round and asked them how they were doing and I threw a few wee questions into the mix. Some of them had gone to the library, some of them had gone outside again to measure, some were working in here [the classroom], and they were getting on with it. They seemed to all enjoy it -- doing something a wee bit different.” [S3 Maths Teacher]*



## Case Study 1: Perth Academy (S1-S3) and the Community School of Auchterarder (S1-S3) – Maths Outdoor Journeys

### Some questions:

- What is the area of the astro turf?
- How many blades of grass are on the rugby pitch?
- What kind of triangle is the outdoor stage?
- How much paint would you need to paint the school building?



### Quotes from teachers:

“It made them more aware that maths isn't just inside the classroom, as some of them kept asking me if they had to be maths questions, and I'd say 'no, they don't have to be, but obviously I want you to think about the school as a whole, being outside and how that can relate to maths', and then they were like 'do we have to be inside the classroom?'. I'd say, 'no we are going outside to see what is there', and I think that was a total alien idea to them --'that they can actually go outside and do some learning and see what maths is like.

It was nice to see them thinking for themselves, as normally [when] they are on the Pythagoras topic they are going to solve problems using Pythagoras. But this time they all had different problems to solve and they were all on different topics, so that is quite good. That is preparing them better for life and preparing them better for their exams as well.



## Case Study 2: Breadalbane Academy (S1-S3) – Geography Outdoor Journey

### Some questions:

- Why do some plants and trees shed their leaves in winter?
- Why does it snow on one side of the valley and not the other?
- Why do we plant trees on the hill but not on the highest quarter?
- Could all rivers freeze over in winter?



### Quotes from teachers:



*We did our Outdoor Journey in winter time, so no matter what topic I gave them -- I gave different classes different topics on farming and landscape -- most of the questions came back to snow. So, the time of year is important and how you tie it into your curricular areas.*

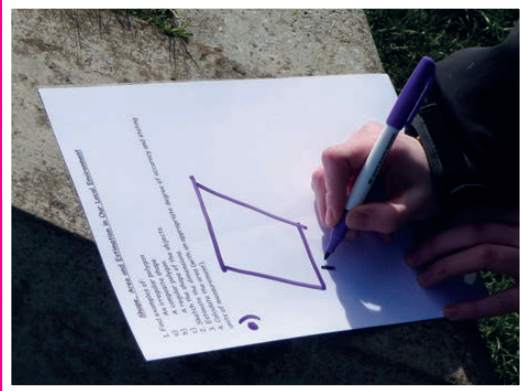
*Curriculum for Excellence lends itself to this -- it's meant to be about giving pupils some freedom and there is an opportunity here for kids to choose what they want to study. You can keep it within a sphere and we kept most of it related to agriculture and farming.*

*I only ever did one walk with each class and in all cases we came up with these 30-40 questions. So I think we can generate enough in that time and I think the kids came up with some really good stuff, once they got their head into it.*

*For geography it is not a big thing to go outside as we do take them out of the class regularly, so it wasn't a huge step away from what we have done in the past. It is just the focus of it was very much in their hands, which took a wee bit of time for them to get used to. I wasn't giving them information; they had to find it and so they were asking if this was a good question or a bad question. I think the outside thing is good as pupils like going outside, and it starts them off in the right positive frame of mind.*

*It is about developing a range of skills; it's not just geography. For example, they are doing presentations too, which is a co-operative exercise. So, in their groups they have to decide who is doing what and they all have a shared responsibility there.*





Outdoor Journeys is one effective way that the curriculum can be delivered through a combination of indoor and outdoor learning. This integrated approach encourages regular, low-cost, meaningful, cross-curricular outdoor learning within the constraints of conventional secondary schooling. No expert staff, special equipment, and expensive buses are needed.

### Continuing Professional Development

If you are interested in learning more about bringing curricula alive through Outdoor Journeys, then please email us and we can discuss running a CPD session for you.

**Simon Beames** – [simon.beames@ed.ac.uk](mailto:simon.beames@ed.ac.uk)  
**Beth Christie** – [beth.christie@ed.ac.uk](mailto:beth.christie@ed.ac.uk)

### Information and Resources

Please visit our website for more information and downloadable resources.

[www.outdoorjourneys.org.uk](http://www.outdoorjourneys.org.uk)

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