



House of Commons
Education Committee

**Transforming
Education Outside the
Classroom: Responses
from the Government
and Ofsted to the Sixth
Report of the Children,
Schools and Families
Committee,
Session 2009–10**

**Third Special Report of
Session 2010–11**

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The Education Committee

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Third Special Report

On 1 April 2010, the Children, Schools and Families Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2009–10, *Transforming Education Outside the Classroom*.¹ A response from Ofsted was received by the Chair of this Committee on 28 June 2010; the Government response was received on 20 September 2010. The two responses are published as Appendices 1 and 2 to this Report.

Appendix 1

Ofsted's response to the Sixth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10

Recommendation 5. We recommend that Ofsted include learning outside the classroom provision—as part of the curriculum—in its inspection framework, and that the Department include pupils' access to such activities in the School Report Card. (Paragraph 25)

Ofsted's response

We welcome the Committee's report and are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the recommendation about learning outside the classroom. The Committee will be aware that the proposals for a school report card have been dropped.

We agree with the emphasis that the Committee gives to the importance of education outside the classroom. Our survey report, '*Learning outside the Classroom*'² which was quoted in the Committee's report, evaluated the importance of such learning in primary and secondary schools and colleges. It identified strengths and weaknesses in practice and showed how schools and colleges overcome common barriers that can limit successful learning outside the classroom.

The Ofsted survey report made the following key points.

- When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to the raising of standards and improvements to pupils' personal, social and emotional development.
- Learning outside the classroom was most successful when it was an integral element of long-term curriculum planning and closely linked to classroom activities.
- The schools in the survey relied very heavily on contributions from parents and carers to meet the costs of residential and other visits and had given very little thought to alternative ways of financing them.

1 Children, Schools and Families Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2009–10, *Transforming Education Outside the Classroom*, HC 418

2 *Learning Outside the Classroom*, ref. no 070219 published in October 2008

- The schools and colleges inspected had worked hard and successfully to overcome the barriers to learning outside the classroom, including those relating to health and safety, pupils' behaviour and teachers' workload.

Amongst other recommendations, Ofsted's report indicated that schools and colleges should ensure their curriculum planning includes sufficient, well-structured opportunities for all learners to engage in learning outside the classroom. It is also crucial that equal and full access to learning outside the classroom is ensured for all learners.

The revised school inspection arrangements introduced in September 2009³ require inspectors to evaluate the extent to which pupils' enjoy their learning and achieve well. Education outside the classroom, in its various forms, contributes to an enjoyable and enriching education. When inspecting a school's provision, inspectors are required to evaluate the impact that its curriculum and teaching have on pupils' outcomes. Specifically, inspectors are required to take account of the extent to which a broad and balanced curriculum is designed and modified to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils, and the design, range and depth of the curriculum from the pupils' perspective. Clearly, a curriculum is only likely to have these qualities or attributes if it provides substantial opportunities for pupils to learn outside the classroom.

In addition, since September inspectors have been required to evaluate the extent and impact of a school's external partnerships and links, especially those that impact on pupils' learning. For example, when scrutinising leadership and management, inspectors make a specific judgement about the effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being. They also review the extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, and consider the extent to which all groups participate in physical education and in extra-curricular activities such as dance, sport, music and other constructive leisure activities. Again, this provision is only likely to be evident where there are opportunities for learning outside the classroom.

Appendix 2

Government's response to the Sixth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10

Introduction

1. The Children, Schools and Families Committee published the report of its inquiry into Education Outside the Classroom on 1 April 2010.
2. This is the Government response. It is structured as follows:
 - Section 1 sets out the progress that has been made since the Committee first reported on Learning Outside the Classroom in 2004 and the approach that this Government intends to take in moving Learning Outside the Classroom forward; and
 - Section 2 responds to individual recommendations made by the Committee.

Section 1—Progress since 2004

1. Under the previous Administration, significant progress was made in bringing together organisations with an interest in promoting learning outside the classroom. These organisations have worked together on guidance and support for schools and on the development of the Quality Badge accreditation scheme under the direction of a new Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.
2. The Department for Education had a role to play in bringing the organisations together and pump-priming key developments. However, this Government believes that the time has come, as was always planned, for the Department to withdraw and leave the Council and member organisations to work directly with schools and learning outside the classroom providers.
3. We agree with the Committee about the importance of learning outside the classroom. But we also believe it should be for schools to decide how to teach and what mediums to use to deliver that teaching. This includes learning outside the classroom which, like learning within the classroom, should be a matter for teachers' professional judgement and not something prescribed by central government or imposed on schools through bureaucratic requirements.
4. We are not therefore able to accept those recommendations of the Committee which call for additional resources, government regulation, monitoring or guidance.
5. We want to ensure that schools have the maximum freedom to teach in the way that they judge best for their pupils, including through Learning Outside the Classroom activities, and we are ready to explore how to increase school freedom in this regard by, for example, reviewing the constraints flowing from unnecessary Health and Safety red tape or from teachers' pay and conditions.

Section 2—Response to individual recommendations

1. Learning outside the classroom is important, and the Department must provide adequate funding to achieve maximum impact. We see no reason for the very marked differential in funding levels between the Music Manifesto and the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, and request that the Department provide an explanation for the discrepancy. We believe that the allocation of a comparatively small sum would make an enormous difference to learning outside the classroom, and call on the Department to look again at the resources it has provided for the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and the Quality Badge scheme.

We agree that learning outside the classroom is important. However, we do not agree that more central funding is needed. The Department has supported the manifesto partnership, and more recently the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, with funding of just over £5 million between 2006–2010. This direct funding from the Department was always intended to pump-prime key developments. We believe that the time has now come for the Department to withdraw and leave the Council and its member organisations to work directly with schools and learning outside the classroom providers.

The Department's direct subsidy for the manifesto partnership and for the LOtC Council has been in addition to a range of other funding that has directly contributed to more young people experiencing the world beyond the classroom, for example:

- Over £1 billion (up to 2011) has been made available to local authorities and schools to develop and deliver sustainable extended services including after school activities.
- The Strategic Commissioning programme was established in 2003 and exists to support and enrich the learning of children and young people and to promote inclusion through the use of cultural resources in national and regional museums. By 2011, this programme, to which DfE has contributed £1.5m a year, will have seen £32 million of investment.

2. Learning outside the classroom must not become only the preserve of pupils from more affluent backgrounds or from the independent schools sector—all children should have opportunities to experience environments away from their local area, and to visit museums and galleries and other sites of interest, including the natural environment of the English countryside. We call on the Department to ensure that families' ability to pay is not a deterrent to schools offering or pupils participating in school trips and visits. We commend to the Department the principle of subsidies for children from low-income families for school trips.

We agree that all children should have the opportunity to take part in school visits and trips with an educational purpose.

We trust schools to make sensible and sensitive decisions about arrangements for visits which do not disadvantage children from less well-off families. Schools are free to subsidise the costs of educational visits for less well-off families and may not, as a matter of law, charge for any visits that are being undertaken as part of the National Curriculum, or as part of preparing a child for a prescribed public examination. The school may, however, ask for voluntary contributions and may charge to cover the cost of board and lodging.

When a school informs parents about a forthcoming visit, they should make it clear that parents who can prove that they are in receipt of certain benefits are exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging.

3. We are of the view that, to ensure that learning outside the classroom is taken seriously by all schools, there should be an individual entitlement within the National Curriculum to at least one out of school visit a term.

We do not agree with the suggestion that an entitlement to one school visit a term should be built into the National Curriculum. The purpose of the National Curriculum should be to set out what should be taught not how it should be taught. That is why we intend to review the National Curriculum to return it to its original purpose—a core national entitlement organised around subject disciplines—and give teachers the freedom to decide how to teach that core entitlement, including using activities outside of the classroom. Furthermore, learning outside the classroom is not just about one off trips. It should provide young people with a wide range of experiences which progressively build

children's knowledge and understanding of subject disciplines, systematically complementing learning in the classroom.

4. The Department and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency must ensure that the importance of such provision is indicated systematically throughout curriculum-related frameworks and materials.

We think this is unnecessary and is an issue which should be left to the professional judgement of teachers. We have committed to reducing the current amount of guidance to schools so that they can focus on their core purpose of raising standards for all children through high quality teaching and learning. We put our trust in front-line professionals to make the right decisions about the medium of learning for all young people. We know that many schools value the impact of learning outside the classroom and we expect that to continue.

5. We recommend that Ofsted include learning outside the classroom provision—as part of the curriculum—in its inspection framework, and that the Department include pupils' access to such activities in the School Report Card.

We are reviewing school improvement and accountability measures, including the inspection arrangements. It is important that school inspection focus on the core elements of school performance such as standards, quality of leadership, and behaviour and safety. The quality of a school's learning outside the classroom should be judged by the results it helps the school to achieve, not in its own right. We are not pursuing the previous plans for a School Report Card but we are looking at the performance tables with a view to providing parents with a wider range of performance information than is currently available. We expect that many schools will take the opportunity to publish information for prospective parents about their learning outside the classroom activities. They do not need the Government to tell them to do this.

6. The Department should monitor the number and range of learning outside the classroom activities provided by schools. Analysis should include a breakdown by category of school and the socio-economic characteristics of the pupils taking part.

We do not agree that schools should have to provide such information to the DfE, at a time when schools are asking us to reduce bureaucratic and data collection burdens. We are determined to reduce the bureaucratic burden placed on schools and we are committed to a 30% reduction in front-line data collection burdens by 2011/12.

Furthermore, the Council have already undertaken a sampling survey which will enabled them to obtain a baseline picture of learning outside the classroom in schools whilst minimising the burden on schools. This year, the Council has commissioned research to repeat the baseline study in order to measure year on year trends. This will also provide an analysis to further demonstrate the effects and benefits for young people.

7. The delay in getting revised health and safety guidance in place is disappointing. We urge the Department to publish this guidance at the earliest opportunity. Without a further drive to both ease concerns about litigation and root out the use of health and safety as an excuse for curtailing provision, the effort and funding that has been put into promoting learning outside the classroom will be wasted.

We agree that we need to ease concerns about litigation and root out the use of health and safety as an excuse for curtailing provision. We are contributing to Lord Young's current review of health and safety law which is investigating concerns over the application and perception of health and safety legislation and the rise of the compensation culture.

In the meantime, the comprehensive material published by the Department in 1998 and 2001/02 remains relevant in most respects, and we consulted on an update between late 2009 to early 2010. The form and content of new guidance will need to reflect the findings of Lord Young's review, and for that reason is unlikely to be ready before the final quarter of 2010 at earliest.

8. We were impressed by the way in which some schools had found it possible to accommodate the 'rarely cover' provisions through, for example, the reorganisation of the school timetable. We were disappointed to learn that some school leaders seem to be interpreting the 'rarely cover' provisions as an excuse to prevent pupils and teachers from being out of school during the school day. We call on the Department and the teacher unions to provide stronger leadership on this matter and to assist schools in planning their provision in the context of 'rarely cover'.

Schools should be free to organise themselves and that is why we are bringing in measures to give them greater freedoms. As part of this, consideration will be given to provisions relating to teachers' terms and conditions including "rarely cover".

In terms of the current provisions, it remains that these activities should be planned well in advance and appropriate cover arrangements put in place. Every school should publish a calendar of scheduled activities and a timetable setting out the school's provision for teaching and learning to allow another member of staff to be timetabled to take the lesson. This makes planning and consulting with staff and their union representatives on the school's calendar and staff timetables critical.

Any in year changes to the calendar and timetable should only be for sound educational reasons and made as infrequently as possible.

9. Learning outside the classroom has a range of potential supporters and powerful lobby groups to draw on—the science lobby in the universities, celebrity environmentalists, and the farming lobby, to name a few. The sector requires champions who are committed to promoting the educational and social benefits of learning outside the classroom. These champions are limited in what they can achieve without the back-up of sufficient resourcing of related initiatives, learning outside the classroom being made an entitlement within the National Curriculum and being covered in school inspections.

We know that there are many strong and vocal supporters of learning outside the classroom. It was their influence that led the previous Government to develop the Manifesto in 2006 with a vision for it to eventually be driven by the Council, and crucially the sectors and organisations that sit beneath it. We welcome champions for the sector, but do not agree with the recommendation that further intervention from central government would boost their role.

We want to change fundamentally the relationship between schools and the Government, Ofsted and Local Authorities. This means a significant reduction in the number of initiatives from the centre, an increase in school autonomy, and putting our trust in front-line professionals to make the right decisions to deliver high quality teaching and learning for all young people.

10. We believe that each school should have an explicit policy on learning outside the classroom, covering both the educational and health and safety aspects of this provision. Schools should appoint a suitably trained learning outside the classroom co-ordinator to deliver the policy.

There is no need for the Government to impose a bureaucratic requirement on schools to have a written policy on learning outside the classroom. We support the need for teachers to be well prepared to deliver learning outside the classroom activities, particularly when it comes to aspects of health and safety. However, in line with this Government's approach to reducing bureaucracy and putting our trust in teachers, we do not intend to compel schools to follow one policy or one direction over another.

If schools choose, there is support available through Local Authority advisers, working closely with the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel and the Council for LOTC. This approach will allow schools to develop an approach or policy at a local level that works best for them.

11. Learning outside the classroom supports pupils' learning and development. It has the potential to enrich and enliven teaching across all subjects. Teachers need to be exposed to learning outside the curriculum from early on in their career, and this should not be left to chance. We expect to see a clearer and more consistent presence for learning outside the classroom across initial teacher training and early career and ongoing professional development for teachers.

There is already a clear presence for learning outside the classroom within Initial Teacher Training. The Training and Development Agency (TDA) is currently scoping a review of professional and occupational standards for the whole schools workforce, and will be considering how best to reflect a number of emerging policy issues as part of that review. The TDA is already committed to considering the role of LOTC and fieldwork in initial teacher training, particularly in relation to the qualified teacher status (QTS) standards, as part of the review.

The QTS standards require all trainees to be aware of their own rights and responsibilities in areas such as health and safety, and to demonstrate, through the teaching of their subject, that they can establish purposeful and safe learning environments.

QTS standard Q30 states that those recommended for the award of QTS should: "Establish a purposeful and safe learning environment conducive to learning and identify opportunities for learners to learn in out-of-school contexts." The TDA guidance accompanying the standard states that: "Trainees should be able to identify opportunities for children and young people to learn in the school grounds and in out-of-school contexts such as museums, theatres, field centres and work settings. In order to meet this standard, trainees are not expected to undertake out-of-school visits, nor to take sole responsibility for the organisation and leadership of any such visits."

12. We welcome the ‘Teaching Outside the Classroom’ scheme. We call on the Department and the Training and Development Agency for Schools to monitor take up of the scheme among providers of initial teacher training and to address any barriers to their participation.

The providers of this scheme, along with other partners including the Training and Development Agency (TDA), are already well placed to monitor take up through the *Teaching Outside the Classroom* website. As a partner the TDA is best placed to consider barriers to participation and is currently considering the take up data, to identify barriers to participation, and to find ways to address those barriers.