



The Outward Bound Trust  
2011  
Social Impact Report



**THE  
OUTWARD  
BOUND TRUST**



# The Outward Bound Trust

## Social Impact Report 2011

The Outward Bound Trust exists to unlock the potential in young people through discovery and adventure in the wild.

Over a million young people have taken part in an Outward Bound® course since 1941 when The Outward Bound Trust was founded.

Research has found Outward Bound courses to provide young people with significant opportunities for personal growth.

In this, our second Impact Report, we present the results of a continued effort to measure the difference our courses really make to young people. The purpose is not to paint a glossy picture of one life-changing experience after another, but to give an open and honest account of how young people benefit from our courses and of the challenges we continue to face in measuring that consistently.



## Our work - at a glance

**26,493** young people took part in an Outward Bound course in 2009-10.  
**69%** of them received financial support from The Trust in order to attend.<sup>i</sup>

Our courses range from **three days** to **three weeks** but the vast majority of young people we work with experience a course that lasts five days.

We delivered our courses across six centres, located in the **Lake District**, **Scotland** and **Wales**.

**11,650** young people (44% of all those we work with) took part in our Adventure & Challenge course.

We helped develop **1,942** apprentices and graduates.

**469** participants took part in our three-week Classic course and Classic Expedition programme, the longest and most intensive course we deliver.

We worked with **383** schools and **69** corporate employers.

We awarded **1,980** young people with a John Muir Award, in partnership with the John Muir Trust.<sup>ii</sup>

26,493  
young people

383  
schools

# 1942

apprentices and graduates

▶ **69%**

received financial support

## Contents

Foreword	06
Introduction	09
What this report is about	11
Executive summary	13
Our mandate	15
The difference we make	18
A conclusion	36
Our journey of continuous improvement	37
What's next?	38
Appendix: A reflection on our approach	40
Notes & references	42

## Foreword

The notion of personal development occurring through challenge, adventure and exposure to the outdoor wilderness resonates with every one of us. Learning through adventure also has a long and distinguished tradition. Think of Homer's *Odyssey*, Plato's *Republic* and Rousseau's *Emile*. So much so that experience has become the central concept for many educational philosophers and psychologists such as Dewey, Piaget and Bruner.

This links directly to the concept of a 'life script' – the narrative we generate to guide our personal and professional lives. Life scripts evolve as the individual confronts direct experience and adapts and assimilates it with their self. Learning from adventure has the ability to develop a life script in the most immediate way, and this is what The Outward Bound Trust does superbly.

These pages contain many examples of how the Outward Bound experience continues to impact positively on the life scripts of young people. Since its inception, it has been the hallmark of Outward Bound globally to evaluate and continuously refine their programmes in order to provide increasingly powerful learning experiences for their students. It is pleasing to see how The Outward Bound Trust is continuing this proud tradition in their second Impact Report.

**Professor David Hopkins**

Trustee of The Outward Bound Trust





- ▶ Our second Social Impact Report outlines the continuing journey we are taking to both prove and improve our effectiveness as a charity. ◀



# Introduction

This is The Outward Bound Trust's second Impact Report. It outlines the continuing journey we are taking to both prove and improve our effectiveness as a charity. More than ever before, and rightly so, charities are being asked to set aside the glossy Annual Review with its public relations emphasis and to strive to answer the most important question that anyone can ask of a charity, namely "Does what you do actually make a difference to the people you work with?"

I believe that we are working with integrity to try to better answer this question and provide the evidence to back up the answer. It is not easy and the evaluation of outcomes related to confidence, aspiration and well-being is anything but an exact science, whether that be in an Outward Bound context, at school or elsewhere. However, we are taking plenty of advice from external bodies like New Philanthropy Capital in London and the Centre for Confidence and Well-being in Glasgow, and others who have an interest in helping charities evaluate their social impact.

In doing so we are learning how to improve the quality of our work with young people. We are also making a very public declaration to all of those who put their faith in us – either by participating in our courses or by donating money – that we take their trust very seriously and are striving to do the very best job possible. I am extremely proud that we are relatively "early adopters" of this more transparent and open-minded approach to becoming a more effective charity.

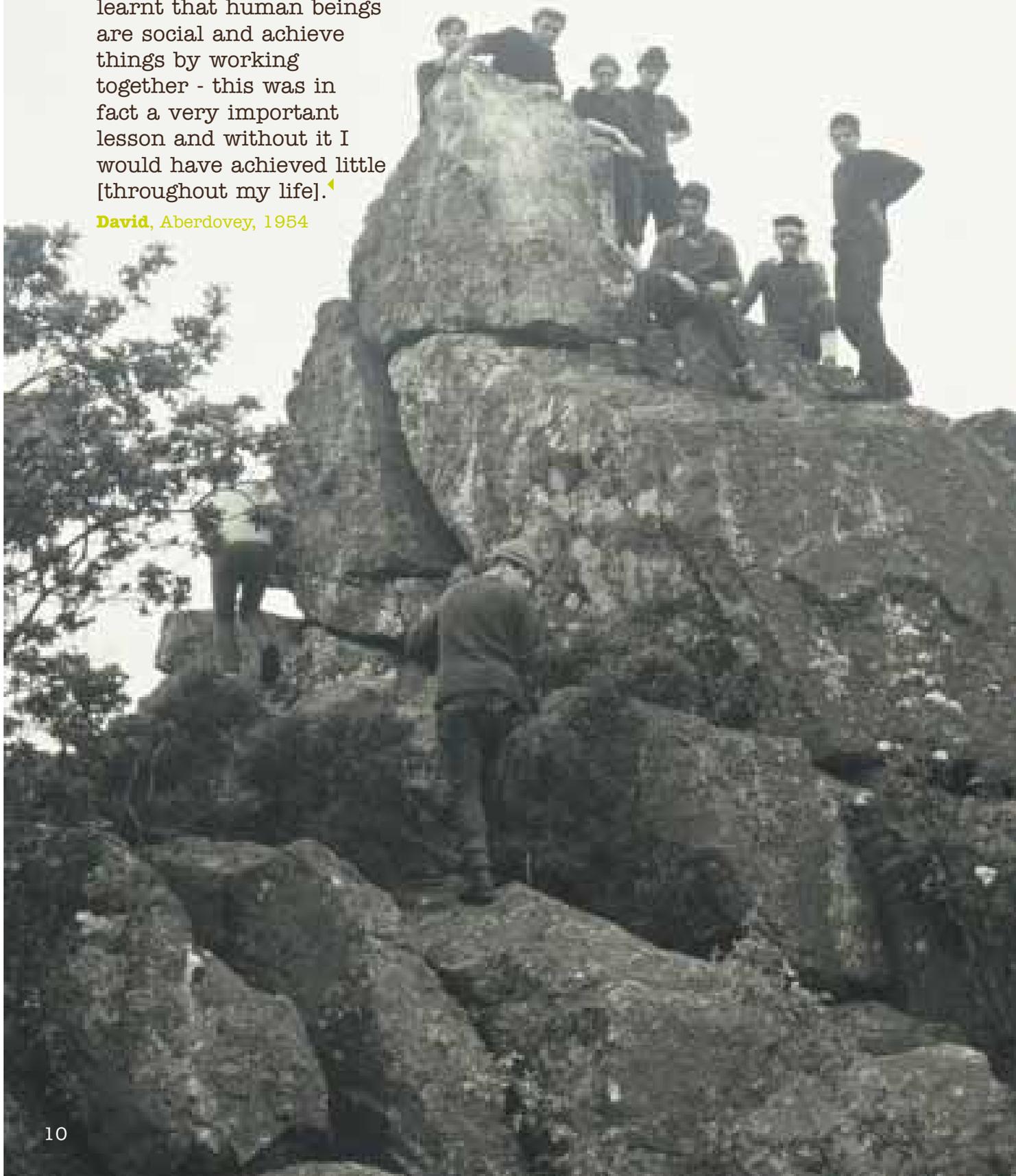


**Nick Barrett**  
Chief Executive



► It's difficult to judge what effect my month at Outward Bound had on me but it is something that I enjoyed and have always remembered. I learnt that human beings are social and achieve things by working together - this was in fact a very important lesson and without it I would have achieved little [throughout my life]. ◀

**David, Aberdovey, 1954**



# What this report is about

There's plenty of research to show that Outward Bound courses provide young people with positive and rewarding experiences that enable them to grow in confidence and self-belief. There's also strong evidence to show that these experiences can in turn benefit young people in many other ways, from improving their social and emotional development to enhancing their performance in school.<sup>iii</sup>

Despite continuing support over the years for what we do, we've put a lot of faith in the outcomes we achieve, without always having the empirical evidence to prove that our courses consistently make a positive and lasting difference to young people's lives. So in our first Impact Report we drew together some of the key findings from several years of external research, and reviewed the strength of our own evaluation to demonstrate our impact. More importantly, we acknowledged that there were gaps in our understanding and raised some important questions about whether all our courses have the positive and lasting effect that we aim for.

**We want our courses to increasingly deliver more positive outcomes for young people. So for us, measuring our impact means being able to use real results to**

**help improve the quality of what we do. Over the last 18 months we've begun to look more critically at what we achieve, day in day out. Our goal is to make sure we're doing the best we possibly can to make every course deliver the deepest and most lasting impact on young people's lives.**

## We wanted to know three things in particular:

- ▶ **Quality:** do our courses have a bigger impact in some areas of learning than others?
- ▶ **Consistency:** do our courses deliver the same learning outcomes for the majority of young people we work with?
- ▶ **Measurement:** can we begin to quantify our impact? What we mean by this is how much do young people gain and are some courses more effective than others?

However, measuring the kind of learning outcomes we achieve is not easy because what young people gain is almost entirely subjective. Increased confidence, better self-awareness, improved self-esteem. How do you set about measuring

these personal and emotional benefits consistently and credibly?

One of the main things we did last year was to introduce more objective measures of our course outcomes, focusing on how our courses impact young people's personal, social and emotional development and on the benefits to their well-being in particular. This gives a useful context for understanding the many different ways our courses impact young people's lives, not just their personal skills and abilities.

The results so far have been positive and even surprising at times. But they've also been a little disappointing in places. While we could spend a lot of time debating the reasons behind a bad result, what matters is that we keep an open mind and continue to learn from what our results are telling us.

**Through this report we share what we have learnt about the real difference we make to young people's lives and set out some of our key aims in building a more robust, effective evaluation of our work.**

## What we did to measure our impact

We've used a number of approaches to measure our impact, with the purpose of gathering a balanced view of how young people benefit from our courses. Naturally, the majority of them focus on the young people themselves. However, we also use observer feedback provided by the teachers who accompanied them on their course. On page 41 of this report we detail our evaluation methodology.

Alongside these results, we've included some stories from the alumni who reconnected with us over the last year. With the benefit of hindsight, these men and women who completed a course several decades ago are ideally placed to tell us how Outward Bound has really influenced them throughout their lives.

Throughout this report, we refer to our Reach Higher programme a great

deal. Though just one of our many projects in schools, we are fortunate enough to be able to explore what effect a sustained Outward Bound programme is having in one school, thanks to funding from Deutsche Bank. For this reason, we often illustrate our results with examples from this programme.

Improved:

**personal and  
emotional well-being**

**social well-being  
connection with the  
natural environment**

**enthusiasm and  
confidence in learning**

# Executive summary

The Outward Bound Trust provides young people with the opportunity to make new friends, to learn new skills and to achieve in new ways. These experiences are directly focused on improving the aspects of young people's lives that underpin their well-being.

The results of our evaluation show that an Outward Bound course provides significant immediate benefits to young people's personal, social and emotional well-being. What this means is that they connect better with others and develop the ability to function better at an emotional and psychological level. These initial benefits continue to provide an enduring sense of confidence that boosts their ability to achieve and to live a more fulfilling life.

Our courses also benefit teachers, schools and employers in a number of

ways. For example, teachers find that they can offer more targeted support to their students as a result of sharing the residential experience with them. We aim to do more in the coming years to measure the real value of our course to these other stakeholders so that we understand more about the wider impact of The Outward Bound Trust.

However, our evaluation has also shown us that our courses don't always achieve the kind of consistent learning outcomes that we would ideally want them to. Some courses seem to make a considerable difference to specific aspects of young people's well-being, while others have a significantly smaller effect. Our challenge as we take our evaluation forward is to understand what influences our results so that we can minimise the factors that prevent us from achieving positive outcomes

for young people, and maximise those factors that enable us to achieve outstanding results.

Over the coming years, we will develop a strategy that enables us to build more credibility into our research practices. In particular, we will:

- ▶ Continue to focus on measuring short-term learning outcomes, whilst building in more longer-term measures.
- ▶ Consider the emotional and physical benefits of spending time in the natural environment, and how this helps to achieve positive outcomes for young people.
- ▶ Expand our research to include the full range of young people who participate in our courses.

## Key results

### Improved personal and emotional well-being

Young people become more resilient and optimistic, and their emotional health and self-esteem improve. 93% of teachers agree that Outward Bound influences their pupils' personal development, in particular their confidence and self-esteem.

### Improved social well-being

The quality of young people's relationships improves, in particular with their friends, family and teachers. 93% of teachers observe better relationships between pupils on return to school.

### Improved connection with the natural environment

Young people's knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the natural environment improve. 72% of teachers observe improved awareness of the natural environment in their pupils on return to school.

### Improved enthusiasm and confidence in learning

Their attitude towards learning improves, and they become more confident, capable learners in the classroom. 60% of teachers observe an improvement in their pupils' performance in the classroom on return to school.





# Our mandate

In 2009 The New Economics Foundation published a report entitled *Backing the Future: Why Investing in Children is Good for us all* and in 2010 The Department of Health published a report entitled *Confident Communities, Brighter Futures: A Framework for Developing Well-being*. Both present convincing economic and social arguments for investing in young people's well-being now.

**To young people, well-being is about feeling confident, safe and able to live a healthy, fulfilling life. It's about feeling positive and effective, valued and supported, but it's also about having the skills and inner strength needed to cope when things aren't going so well.<sup>iv</sup>**

The economic benefits of investing in well-being are clear: the costs of tackling the effects of low achievement, poor physical and mental health, and long-term unemployment roll into the billions of pounds.<sup>v</sup> The social benefits are harder to quantify but no less significant. Boosting well-being as a way of preventing future difficulties is well documented. Increasing young people's emotional well-being, for example, has been proven to help protect them against mental health problems and to correlate with their life chances by the age of 30<sup>1</sup>, and there is growing evidence that building resilience in young people, adults and across communities improves mental health, performance in school and effectiveness at work.<sup>2</sup>

If young people are happy, fulfilled individuals who live with a sense of confidence and purpose, it makes sense that they are more effective members of their community. But research also suggests that they will need to become increasingly more curious, resilient, motivated and team-focused if they are to succeed in life as adults.<sup>3</sup>

**Simply put, well-being unlocks young people's potential to achieve whatever they put their minds to – at school, in work – and helps them to connect better with the communities and environment in which they live.**

It helps to level out inequalities in society, providing young people with opportunities to connect with others and to achieve in ways that many take for granted. It benefits individuals, communities and society as a whole.

► I look back now one year after my course and I am so proud of everything I achieved. I made some amazing friends, developed skills, became more confident and now have an everlasting memory of my time at Loch Eil. I'd do it all over again if I could. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. ◀

**Ashley**, Loch Eil, 2009





## The difference we make

The Outward Bound Trust offers young people the opportunity to make new friends, to learn new skills, to overcome challenges and to achieve in new ways. For many, it's an exhilarating experience that leaves them proud, motivated and energised. For some, the experience is so powerful that it completely changes their outlook on life and transforms them as individuals.

Our courses provide an immediate sense of fulfilment. One of the first things we discovered when we measured the impact of our Adventure & Challenge course was the positive effect it had on young people's overall satisfaction with life.<sup>4</sup> These findings are supported by a compelling number of endorsements that suggest an Outward Bound course provides a strong legacy of life fulfilment that lasts for many years: 30, 40 or 50 years on our alumni describe an experience that has not ceased to guide them throughout their lives.<sup>vi</sup>

**Our evaluation has shown that the experiences provide a significant boost to young people's personal, emotional and social well-being. The skills they learn and the confidence they develop in their own capabilities enable them to achieve in new ways and make them more effective individuals at school and in the workplace.**

The following sections of this report detail what our evaluation has uncovered about the ways we have an impact on young people's lives, now and in the future.



## 1. Better personal and emotional well-being

Young people need to know they can rely on their skills and inner resources to help them make the most of whatever situations life throws at them. For instance, **resilience** is an important part of learning to pick yourself up and carry on when you experience difficulties. The theory is that **with greater resilience, young people are likely to achieve more** through their schoolwork and be more effective in the workplace because they learn not to let obstacles prevent them from reaching their goals.

We wanted to know whether three of our key programmes had a positive effect on young people's personal and emotional well-being.

### Adventure & Challenge course

When we looked at our Adventure & Challenge programme<sup>vii</sup>, we measured immediate **benefits to young people's self-esteem, emotional health and resilience.**<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 presents a summary of these results. Overall, these results provide strong evidence that through their experiences at Outward Bound, young people develop inner resources and skills that help them to function better at an emotional and psychological level.

### Key benefits:

- improved self-esteem
- improved emotional health
- improved resilience

### Reach Higher

Research into our Reach Higher programme supports many of these results. The project enables over half of all students at Battersea Park School to attend a five-day residential course every year and aims to build students' confidence in the hope that it will help improve their self-belief, raise their aspirations and ultimately improve what they achieve

in school. There are many positive indicators to suggest that since the start of the programme, students have increasingly become more resilient and determined to face challenges head on, rather than giving up or failing to try at all. In particular, 87% of students last year said their Outward Bound course had taught them to keep trying when things don't work out, a figure that has steadily improved each year since the start of the programme.<sup>6</sup> One teacher put it this way: "It is hugely beneficial for a student who struggles in an academic environment... take them outside of the classroom into the Outward Bound environment and they become one of the strongest students in the year group."

The research also suggests that there are lasting benefits to the students' emotional maturity and emotional health. For instance, in difficult situations they describe how they can handle their emotions and behaviour better and how their experiences at Outward Bound have made them feel more independent and helped them on the transition towards adulthood.<sup>7</sup>

**87% of students last year said their Outward Bound course has taught them to keep trying when things don't work out**

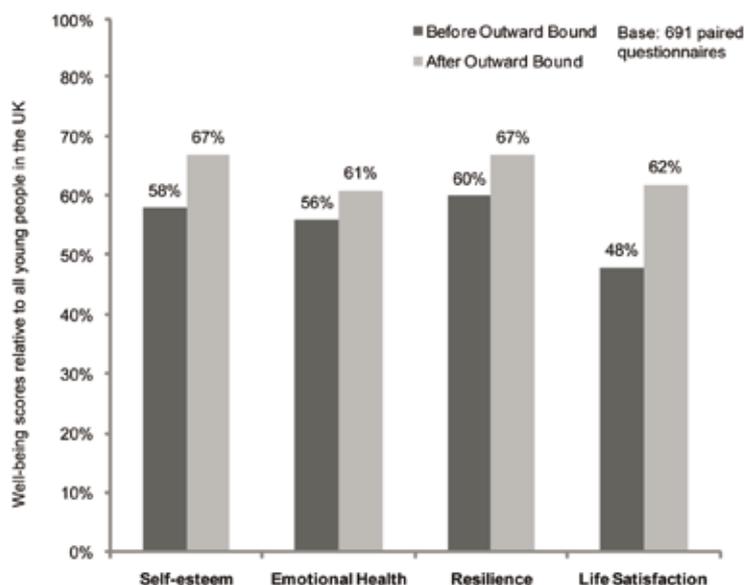


Figure 1: Impact of the five-day Adventure & Challenge course on young people's personal and emotional well-being.<sup>viii</sup> Source: New Philanthropy Capital's Well-being Measure

Our evaluation with teachers also supports these findings. One month on, they describe a lasting benefit to their students' personal and emotional skills.<sup>8</sup> In particular:

**93% said the course had had a positive effect on their students' personal development, identifying increased confidence and self-esteem as the key benefits.**

**71% also said it had broadened their students' horizons, partly by giving them the chance to see their own capabilities but also by introducing them to a new place and new experiences.**

Figures 2 and 3 provide a summary of these results.

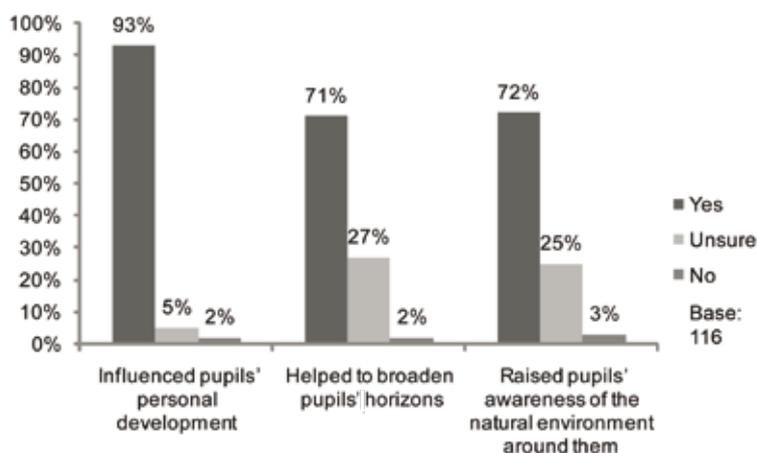


Figure 2: Does the Adventure & Challenge course have a lasting effect on young people's overall personal development?

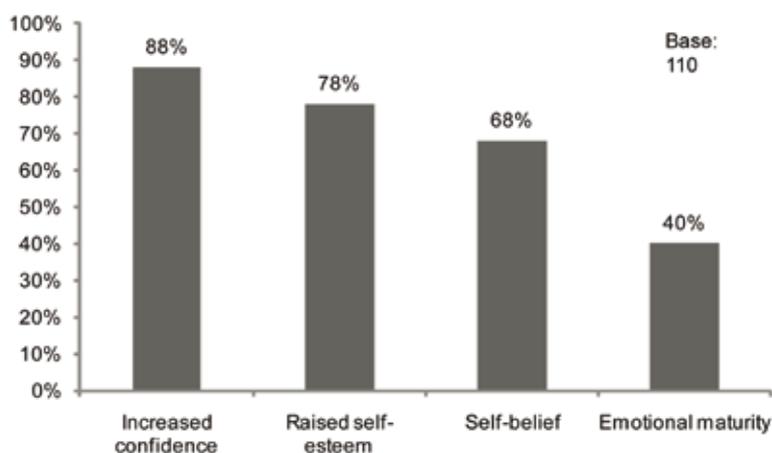


Figure 3: How the Adventure & Challenge course has influenced young people's personal development. Source: Observer (Teacher) evaluation one month after course.

### **The Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award**

This programme aims to develop confidence and leadership in young people so that they can make a real difference in their local community. Following a five-day Team & Leadership Development course, the participants plan and deliver a project in their local community which provides them with a real opportunity to put their learning into practice.

Our evaluation showed that the programme had a lasting effect on the young people's resilience, self-efficacy and optimism, throughout the community project phase and for at least six months after the course.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Classic course**

This course lasts three weeks and we believe it delivers the most significant change to young people's lives out of all of our programmes. We measured similar benefits to the participants' resilience, optimism and self-efficacy<sup>10</sup>, but we were surprised to learn that the outcomes didn't seem to be significantly greater than those on the shorter five-day course, at least not in the short-term. In truth, we expected to see a marked difference in what the longer course achieved, because our own experience, as well as academic research, tells us this should be the case.

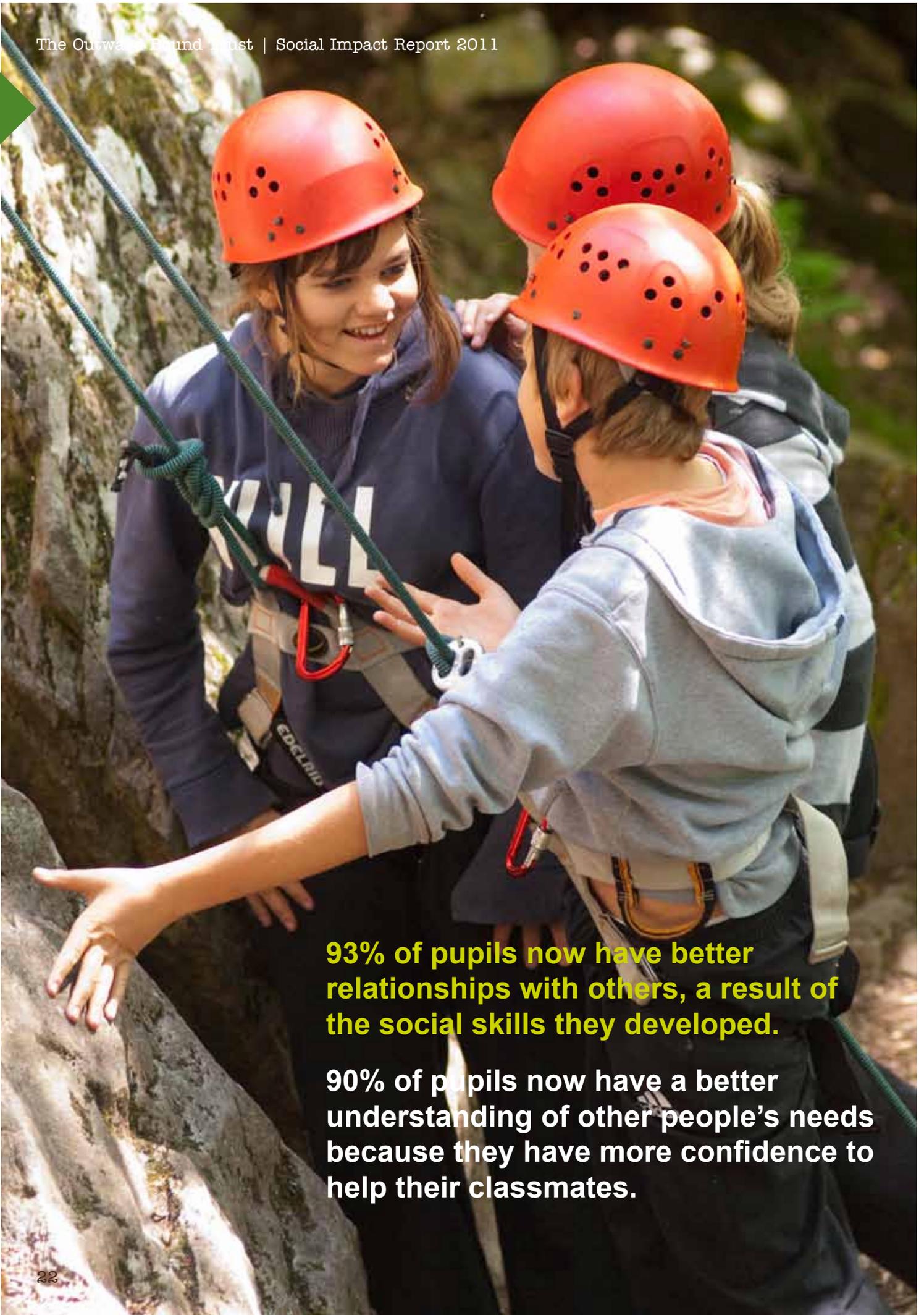
Until we do some more research, particularly around the lasting impact of these courses, we can't do any more to interpret these results, but our understanding is that while many of our courses may achieve similar short-term outcomes, it's the longer courses that are more likely to create a lasting change in young people's self-belief and aspirations.

### **Three key benefits:**

- **improved resilience**
- **improved optimism**
- **improved self-belief**

► It was a massive learning experience that will have a lasting impact on my future. I came out of the course a lot stronger than I was previously. ◀

**Hannah**, Ullswater, 2010



**93% of pupils now have better relationships with others, a result of the social skills they developed.**

**90% of pupils now have a better understanding of other people's needs because they have more confidence to help their classmates.**

## 2. Better social well-being

Research has already shown that at Outward Bound young people develop their ability to build more effective relationships with others, which can have a positive effect on how they experience school and wider activities. An important aspect of social well-being is how young people connect with other people, as it helps them to feel that they can trust others and that they belong.<sup>ix</sup> Friendships in particular add value to young people's quality of life, but they also need to feel that they can trust adults enough to confide in them and to ask for help.

Many of our programmes bring young people together from different schools, expanding their friendship groups and breaking down barriers that exist within their communities. Others focus on building the quality of relationships within school, in particular during periods of transition into Year 7 or Year 12. Our evaluations show that young people highly value the opportunity to make new friends and expand their social networks, often connecting with people they would never normally meet.<sup>xi</sup> What's more, it's the friendships they gain, more than anything else, that continue to provide them with a sense of social well-being and social confidence well after the course has finished.<sup>xii</sup>

**Back in school, teachers observe how the students continue to benefit from these improved relationships with their peers, and even with their teachers.<sup>xiii</sup>**

Figures 4 and 5 summarise these results.

### Reach Higher

Research on our Reach Higher programme shows how The Outward Bound Trust is helping to build social

capital within Battersea Park School in two ways. Firstly, it is creating wider friendship groups that are built on trust and respect for one another. Secondly, it is developing more supportive relationships between teachers and students. Their ability to trust others, their teachers in particular, also appears to increase after their Outward Bound course: 61% of students say their course has helped them to trust their teachers more and 86% also say the course has helped them to understand more about how other people feel, a figure that has been increasing since the programme began.<sup>14</sup>

Our evaluation threw up some surprising results too. We found out that the Adventure & Challenge course also appeared to improve aspects of well-being that we don't directly address. For instance, across a number of groups we measured more positive attitudes in young people towards their family relationships, their local community and their school after their course. This supports what we know anecdotally about the wider impact of our courses and provides some guidance for areas that we can focus our research on in the future.

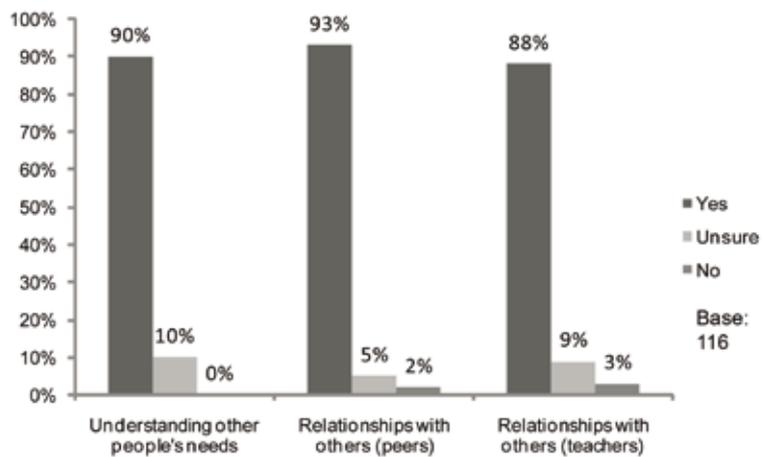


Figure 4: Does the Adventure & Challenge course have a lasting effect on young people's relationships with others? Source: Observer (Teacher) evaluation one month after course.

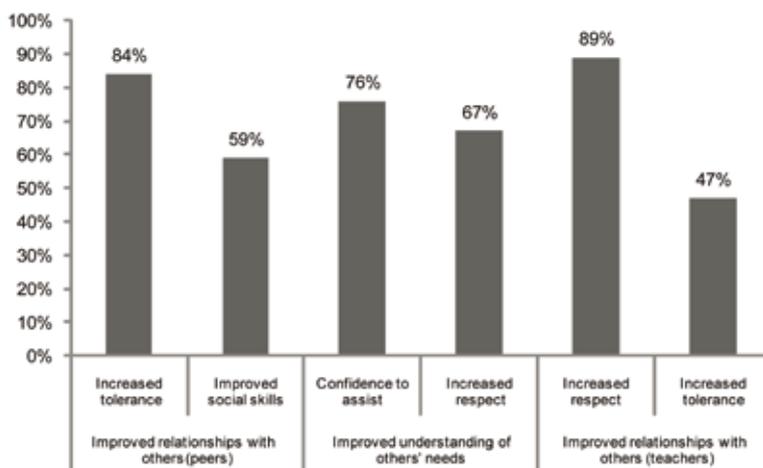


Figure 5: The ways in which young people have improved their relationships with others since their Outward Bound course. Source: Observer (Teacher) evaluation one month after course.

### 3. A new way to connect with the natural environment

There are three main benefits to learning in the natural environment. Firstly, there's the experience itself, in inspiring, beautiful locations that broadens young people's horizons. Secondly, there are the things young people learn about the impact their behaviour and lifestyles can have on an environment that is fragile and needs protecting. And thirdly, there's the intrinsic benefit of spending time in the outdoors and in green spaces.

#### Adventure & Challenge course

Our evaluation has focused on the first two benefits: **72% of teachers agreed that the Adventure & Challenge course successfully raised their students' knowledge and awareness of the natural environment around them.**<sup>15</sup> They highlight four key benefits:

- ▶ It broadens young people's horizons by introducing them to a new place.
- ▶ They gain more knowledge and awareness of the challenges facing the natural environment.
- ▶ They gain greater appreciation for the beauty of the natural environment.
- ▶ They learn to respect and care for the natural environment.

We encourage young people to think about how behaviours like littering and recycling affect the natural environment as well as their own environments, and give them practical ways to make a difference at home and at school. Our evaluation shows that they begin to do more to protect the environment after their Outward Bound course. Teachers describe how their students are more aware of litter in their schools and are enthusiastic about making their school environment more environmentally friendly. Students also describe how they litter less, recycle more, and encourage their families to do the same.<sup>16</sup>

If they participate in a course that is more tailored towards environmental learning objectives, such as the John Muir Award or the Green Outward Bound course, the effect is even greater.

#### John Muir Award

Earning a John Muir Award during their Outward Bound course means that young people have shown understanding and commitment to "discover, explore, conserve and share" through their own experiences of the natural environment. It's a positive indicator of the strength of what they've learnt and last year we doubled the number of young people achieving the award to 1,980.

#### Green Outward Bound course<sup>x</sup>

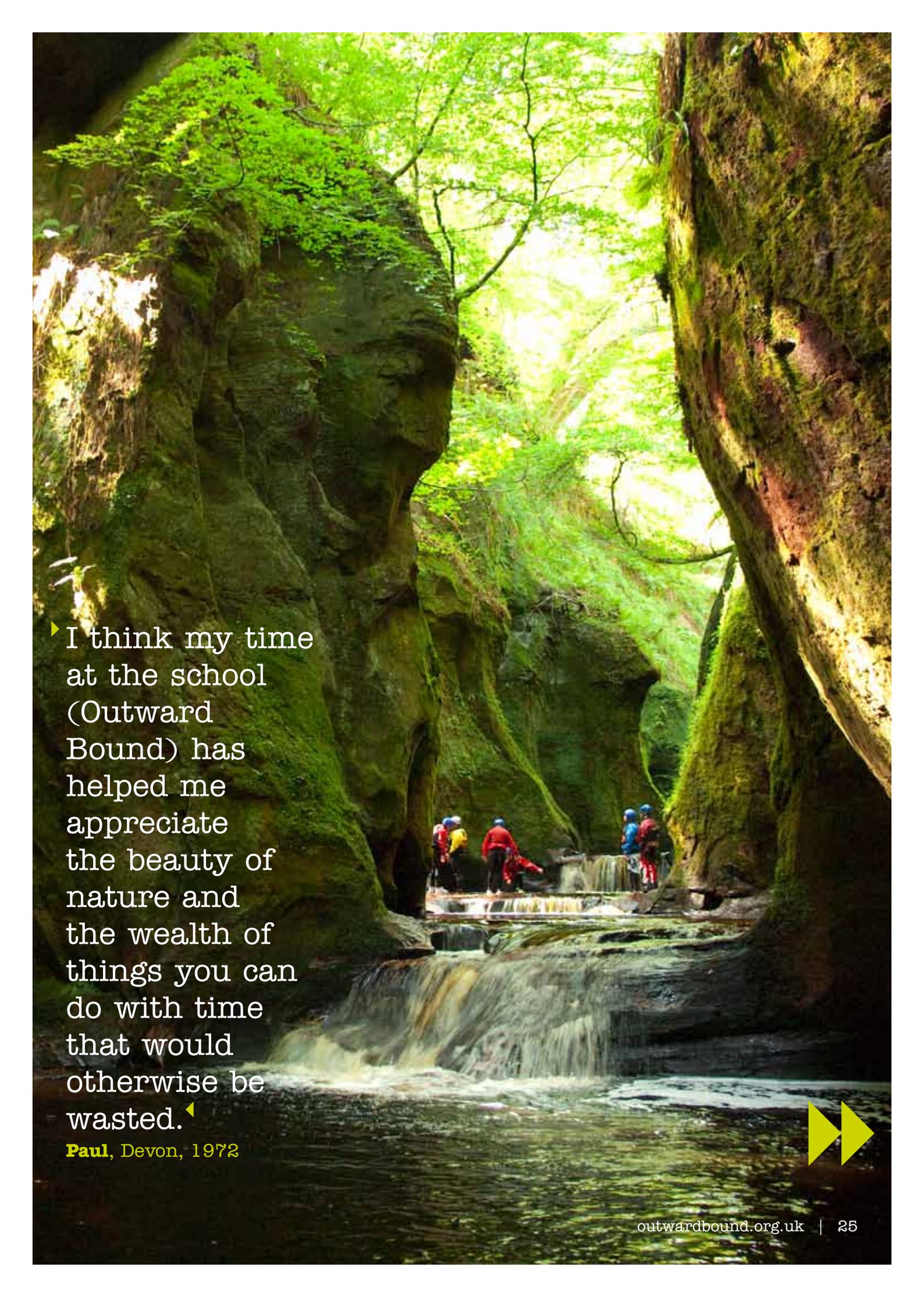
When the course focuses more specifically on engaging young people in the issues surrounding climate change and 'green' living, they learn significantly more about the different ways to reduce the impact our behaviour and actions have on the environment. On one programme, **95%** of students said they understood more about issues to do with climate change and living sustainably and took home practical ideas about how they could make a difference in their

schools and local communities. Our follow-up evaluation shows that they continue to be 'greener' in how they live their day-to-day lives at home and school.<sup>17</sup>

Research also suggests there are significant mental, physical and social benefits to spending time in the wilderness and green spaces. The theory is that young people's experiences in green spaces, especially those that promote physical activity, encourage positive behaviours and more active lifestyles in adulthood.<sup>xi</sup> We haven't yet focused our research on this, but we plan to do so in the future.

'We really have to take care of this environment if we want our kids to have this beautiful world.'

**Emma, Ullswater, 2010**

A photograph of a lush green forest with a waterfall. The waterfall is in the foreground, cascading over rocks. In the background, several people are standing near the waterfall, some wearing colorful gear. The forest is dense with green trees and moss-covered rocks.

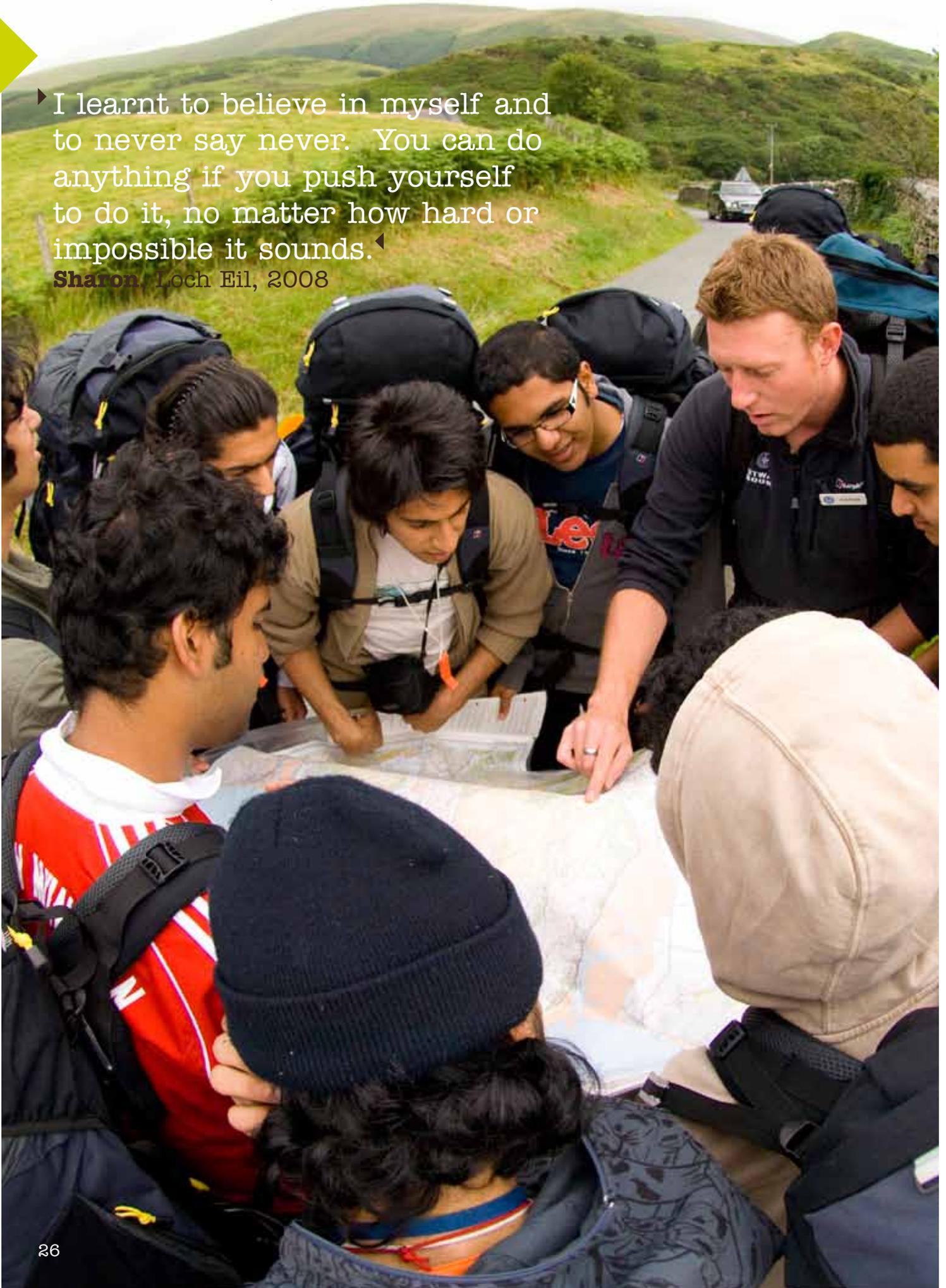
► I think my time at the school (Outward Bound) has helped me appreciate the beauty of nature and the wealth of things you can do with time that would otherwise be wasted. ◀

**Paul, Devon, 1972**



▶ I learnt to believe in myself and to never say never. You can do anything if you push yourself to do it, no matter how hard or impossible it sounds. ◀

**Sharon, Loch Eil, 2008**



## 4. Enthusiasm and confidence in learning

For many of the schools and organisations we work with, the reason for approaching The Outward Bound Trust is the recognition that their pupils' low self-esteem and confidence is holding them back, personally, socially and academically. So for example, if an Outward Bound course can help an individual overcome their shyness and self-doubt, replacing it with more confidence to speak out in class and express their ideas, they will become a more effective, capable learner in the classroom.

**Our results suggest that an Outward Bound course acts as a catalyst for improved learning and behaviour.<sup>18</sup> Teachers describe three key improvements in their students:**

- ▶ The first is in their attitude towards learning, which is driven by their improved confidence. 83% reported an improved attitude towards learning in their pupils.
- ▶ The second is in their skills for learning, in particular their teamwork and problem-solving skills. 77% reported improved personal, learning and thinking skills in their pupils.
- ▶ The third is in their overall performance in the classroom, which was driven by improvements to their behaviour. 60% reported improved performance in their pupils.

Figure 6 provides a summary of these results.

### Reach Higher

Research into our Reach Higher programme supports these results and suggests that The Outward

Bound Trust can make a valuable difference to how young people engage with learning in general. At the start of the programme students would rarely have had the opportunity or indeed the inclination to take part in the outdoor challenges offered by The Outward Bound Trust. But one of the key successes has been the anticipation and enthusiasm it has created within the school. From discussions with teachers, we have learnt that students have become genuinely energised and enthused by Outward Bound and for an experience that promotes learning and adventure. Moreover, 83% said they felt more confident about what they could achieve at school, a figure that has been improving for the last three years.<sup>19</sup>

It's more difficult to determine whether this leads to real academic improvement, but one teacher claims it does for some pupils: "I could name five students who have all been on two or three Outward Bound courses who are much stronger academically and more focused at school."<sup>20</sup>

Having the right mindset is also an important part of achieving your full potential. Research conducted by leading psychologist Carol Dweck shows how many people approach life with a fixed idea about what we can achieve, whilst others are more open

to learning new skills and abilities and believe that through hard work and effort, they can achieve anything they put their mind to.<sup>21</sup>

**We believe that our courses help to shift young people's mindset so that they understand the effect of effort and hard work on reaching their goals.**

For example, when they finish their Outward Bound course, participants quite often express surprise at achieving an impossible task, using nothing but determination and will-power. This experience has the potential to nurture a more positive attitude towards challenge in young people, even an enthusiasm to seek out new opportunities to learn throughout life.

However, when we tried to measure the real change in young people's mindset, the results weren't consistent enough to prove that we had made a difference. They suggested that we need to invest more in training our instructors so that they can guide young people more clearly in understanding how their mindset affects their attitude towards learning and achievement.

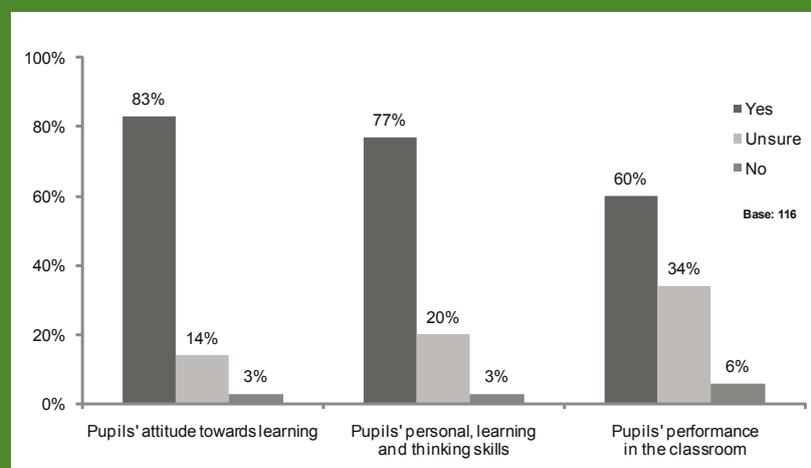


Figure 6: Observer (Teacher) Evaluation Results

## Some stories behind the results

Throughout this report we have tried to provide an open and honest account of the real difference our courses make to young people.

The following stories show the many different ways a course can impact upon an individual. We've presented stories from past and present to illustrate the immediate and lasting effect of an Outward Bound course.

### I feel I'm a changed

**person.** I had some problems at school and I was badly bullied and threatened. At Aberdovey I was challenged to face my fears and get over them. I really enjoyed it, especially getting wet. I think my hardest challenge was climbing a mountain. It was very hard but when I finished it I felt really proud of myself. I believe that bullies aren't really a problem anymore because I can have confidence in myself. The people who worked at The Outward Bound Trust were really supportive. Even when I was at my lowest, they were encouraging me and helping me achieve my goals. I never imagined I was capable of doing these things. I think what I have learned will help me in the future and it will stay with me forever.

**Ryan, Aberdovey, 2010**



### Possibly the most formative experience of my young life to date,

it is one that has never really faded. What I learnt there has stood me in good stead many times and given me an enduring love of the fells which I have been able to pass on to my family. [...] I like to think that the lessons I learned [at Outward Bound] are now passing on to the next generation: my grandsons are showing interest in walking and climbing, and may soon be on the fells. Far more important, though, are the less tangible skills in managing life's little joys and problems.

**John, Eskdale, 1968**



**I set off on what would be one of the best experiences I would ever have in my life.**

The whole course from rock climbing to canoeing to the fantastic relationship of working as a team under the guidance of highly skilled trainers was to me a total privilege. I know that anyone who has been on an Outward Bound course will be far more confident after it. Great memories that will last forever.

**David,** Ullswater, 1959

**Before I went I was a bit shy, very hardworking, and stressing over the pressures at school and family problems.**

I knew that what I really needed was an adventure, something to remind me how to be happy again. So I decided to go on an Outward Bound Classic.

My group was fantastic, the best it possibly could have been! From the start we were natural friends and were more than willing to help each other. There was one evening, on a multi-night expedition, when everyone was asleep in their tents, except me. So I crawled half out of the tent onto a pile of rucksacks, and I lay there staring into the sky, which was full of millions of stars. I lay there for hours, thinking and staring, then, I noticed a small glittering out of the corner of my eye, I blinked and looked again, it was a shooting star, the first I've ever seen.



Now that moment is just a memory, but at the time I remember thinking that I would happily give up one year of my life, just for that moment. It was perfect. The sheer beauty of the Lake District, not to mention the sense of adrenaline and adventure I got from the trip, was perfect for me, and I was determined to go home

with a smile on my face. So I did. And now, although I miss all the friends I made, and the feeling that you get from being in the Lake District, I'm still smiling, and I'll never have to deal with depression or anxiety again. Even if I ever get it again, I know that the cure is Outward Bound.

**Sian,** Howtown, 2010

## When the impact isn't immediately apparent

At the beginning of this report we said we wanted to be open and honest about our results. So it's important to acknowledge that there are aspects of our impact that we aren't yet clear about. We mentioned earlier that we needed to measure the long-term value of our Classic course to young people in order to understand more about the lasting difference it makes to their lives. Similarly, our evaluation shows that for some young people, the value of their experience may not even become clear for several months or several years. Wayne's story illustrates this point.

Most of Wayne's time at The Outward Bound Trust was spent with challenging and disruptive behaviour, but despite several warnings, he just about managed to make it to the end of the course. No-one knew at the time that he had a history of poor attendance at school, had been involved with drugs and was a persistent offender. Two years later it became clear that his course actually had an incredibly positive effect on him. It provided an opportunity for him to open up to his Youth Service Inclusion Worker and it emerged that he had learnt a number of things at Outward Bound. He realised there were people who would do things for him and try to help him, that there were many things he could do which he never thought of, and that it felt good to work with others on challenges and achieve good results. Most importantly, he felt he could start to think positively about his future, and since his course, he has turned his life around and has started a vocational course that he attends regularly.

**Wayne's experience shows that there is a lot that can influence the quality of results we achieve, and that there can be a big difference between our short and long-term achievements with young people. We need to build an evaluation that takes into account these different scenarios.**



Other types of impact:

**responsibility**

**maturity**

**teamwork skills**

**leadership skills**

**listening and**

**communication skills**

**courage**

## Other types of impact

For the sake of length and relevance, there's a great deal that we haven't included in this report: responsibility, maturity, teamwork skills, leadership skills, listening and communication skills, courage and many more. However, we thought it would be useful to mention here the other people and even organisations who are affected by our courses – teachers, families, even whole schools.

## The difference we make to teachers

One of the things we discovered last year was that our courses also made a big difference to the teachers who accompanied their students to The Outward Bound Trust, not simply through the opportunity that the shared experience gave them to support their students better, but through the skills and experiences they gained as individuals.

**77% of teachers reported that they were able to support their pupils in a more targeted way as a result of sharing their Outward Bound experience with them, and 81% of teachers said that they themselves had benefited from it in some way.**

## The difference we make to schools

Reach Higher in Battersea Park School is a five-year programme investing in students' confidence and self-belief. In 2010, Ofsted recognised the value of the partnership between the school, The Outward Bound Trust and Deutsche Bank in providing experiences that would otherwise be inaccessible to students. It described it as exceptional in raising students' aspirations.<sup>22</sup>

Aiming Higher with Outward Bound has been running in North Lanarkshire for more than 15 years, and each year works with over 800 students in order to raise standards of achievement amongst disadvantaged young people. In 2010, North Lanarkshire Council recognised the significant role that the programme plays in fulfilling its Raising Achievement for All strategy, in particular in ensuring inclusion and equality in its services to disadvantaged and vulnerable young people.<sup>23</sup>

## The difference we make to employers and young people's employability

Throughout the 1950s – 1990s The Outward Bound Trust was focused almost entirely on preparing young people for the requirements of the workplace, particularly in industry and the emergency services. We continue to work with a number of employers to help their apprentices and graduates become more confident and effective in the workplace. We haven't yet focused our research on how these courses benefit the young people as well as their employers, but the descriptions given by previous apprentices and trainees suggest that their course was highly effective in instilling the skills, values and qualities that have underpinned a long and successful career.

► The course highlighted the different leadership styles one could use, and how these need to vary according to the circumstances - a lesson I have never forgotten and one I still reflect on 20 years later. ◀

**Andy, Aberdovey, 1988**





## A conclusion

Our results show that Outward Bound courses have an immediate and lasting positive effect on young people's well-being. In particular, they improve young people's personal skills and inner confidence to deal with things more effectively, their social confidence and capability, and they provide a new way to connect with the natural environment. What seems to drive the potential for our courses to have an immediate and lasting impact are three key qualities that young people develop: **their capacity for building relationships, a solid foundation of personal and emotional skills, and a lasting enthusiasm for challenge and achievement.**<sup>24</sup>

Our findings support previous research but they go further in showing us areas that we can improve on and areas to concentrate our evaluation on in the future, in order to understand more about the wider impact of our work. For instance, some of our results suggest that there is room to improve and strengthen our learning outcomes. We don't always achieve the same outcomes with every group, and some courses seem to achieve significantly more than others. Our focus now needs to be on understanding what influences these results, so that we can build on what has the biggest impact.

Despite these challenges, being able to measure these subjective outcomes objectively is a real step forward for us. We can begin to set our own standards for the results we set out to achieve and grow our research to understand more about what drives our impact.



# Our journey of continuous improvement

## What we are doing

There are lots of things we have done over the last year to help improve the quality of the courses we deliver, five of which we have included here.

- ▶ The intensity and inescapability of the experience is what drives learning on our courses. For this reason, we have continued to invest in delivering courses that are more adventurous. This means that we deliver less in the grounds of The Trust's centres and more through linked journeys that take place entirely in the wilderness.
- ▶ Our instructors are at the centre of the learning experience. They, more than anything else, influence the quality of the learning outcomes we achieve. For this reason we have invested heavily in staff retention because we have learnt that a lower turnover results in better trained, more experienced instructors who can have greater impact.
- ▶ We are part of the learning journey for young people and it's essential that we understand more about that journey so that The Outward Bound Trust is not disconnected from what is relevant to them at that moment in time. For this reason, we have focused on developing longer relationships with schools and organisations so that we can work more closely with teachers to help meet their long-term learning objectives.
- ▶ We have started to develop some pre- and post-course materials that schools can use to prepare their students for their Outward Bound programme and help embed some of their learning back in school.
- ▶ We integrated the John Muir Award into 5% of our Adventure & Challenge courses, with the aim of increasing young people's engagement with the natural environment.

## How we measure it

We recognise the following three challenges in achieving meaningful, long-term research:

- ▶ The numbers we have measured still represent a small proportion of the schools and young people we work with, so we need to increase the sample size of our research.
- ▶ We need to look at how we build long-term research into our evaluation.
- ▶ We need to incorporate the young people who experience our courses as apprentices and graduates into our impact evaluation.

## What's next?

Over the coming years we will build on what we have learnt to date. In particular, we will look to do the following:

- ▶ Continue to focus on measuring short-term learning outcomes, whilst building in more longer-term measures. This could include learning more from those who completed a course over the previous decades.
- ▶ Consider the emotional and physical benefits of spending time in the natural environment, and how this helps to achieve positive outcomes for young people.
- ▶ Expand our research to include the full range of young people who participate in our courses. We will look to extend our evaluation with teachers and will also look at ways to integrate parents' views into our evaluation, to measure the difference they observe when their child experiences an Outward Bound course.



## Appendix: a reflection on our approach

When we take young people into the outdoor environment, we do so in order to provide them with planned and purposeful adventures. Our courses are designed to deliver real experiences in challenging environments that enable young people to learn by trusting themselves, trusting their team mates and making mistakes along the way.

The approach we take is supported by sound educational research that shows how experiences like those provided by The Outward Bound Trust have a positive effect on young people's "self-concept" – how they perceive themselves in relation to the world around them.

The experience comes down to three key things:

- ▶ It is immediate and inescapable
- ▶ It is planned and purposeful
- ▶ It is timeless and enduring

### An immediate and inescapable experience

"It was adventurous, wild and tough enough to be a challenge in every way, mentally, physically and emotionally."

Rhianne, Loch Eil, 2010

What makes Outward Bound courses so challenging is the intensity and immediacy of the experience. At the start of the course, young people get to know their instructor, their group and the environment around them, and for the rest of the course, that's all that really matters. By removing many of the things they find comfortable and familiar, and taking them out of their comfort zone, they have no option but to use the resources at hand – the strength of their team, their own skills and their own inner resources.

We tell the participants that their course will be hard, possibly the toughest thing they've ever done, but that if they put in the right amount of effort, the experience will be incredibly rewarding.

### A planned and purposeful learning experience

"I learned as much or perhaps more from my moments of failure, and I like to think that all that I subsequently achieved in my career was due to the determination that the course gave me."

Dennis, Moray Sea School, 1958

The experiences are always planned and focused on achieving a specific learning outcome. The challenges take place in beautiful but often unpredictable environments that set just the right context for exploring and discovering new horizons. With guided reflection provided by their instructor, young people are helped to process what they've learnt so that it takes on real meaning for them.

We also provide young people with practical ways to approach tasks and challenges more effectively. Goal setting, for example, helps them to set their sights on a specific task and to think through how they can achieve it. It gives them the confidence they need to believe that they can reach their goals. Planning and reviewing what they have done helps them to evaluate their progress and learn from what does and doesn't go well. Presenting what they have learnt on their course to their group develops skills in evaluating and structuring thoughts and expressing ideas clearly.<sup>xii</sup>

## A timeless and enduring experience

“It was an enormously valuable experience in the 1960s and I truly believe it will continue to be in the future. The course awoke the adventurer in me, who still persists to this day.”

**Richard, Devon, 1966**

Despite how tough the challenges were, most people seem to remember their course with incredible warmth and fondness. “The achievements attained during that time were without doubt influential in all that I have done since and I will always remember the days, albeit with some pain and stress, with great fondness.”

**David, Aberdovey, 1964**

Young people often describe our courses as “unique” and “a once-in-a-lifetime experience” that they remember vividly for many years afterwards. Many of the young men and women who experienced one of our courses from as early as 1941 share this opinion. Despite the decades that have passed, they have described remarkably similar experiences of adventure, challenge and reward, and their views on how their course has informed their lives support our belief in the long-term value of participating in an Outward Bound course.

## Evaluation methodology

We used the following methods for evaluating our impact:

- ▶ We used New Philanthropy Capital’s Well-Being Measure<sup>25</sup> to evaluate some of the effects of our Adventure & Challenge course. The results are a good indicator of how these courses improve young people’s quality of life and enable them to flourish.

- ▶ We used The Centre for Confidence and Well-being’s Confidence Research System<sup>26</sup> to measure some of the effects of our Classic course and Team & Leadership Development course. The results are a good indicator of how these courses improve young people’s confidence, emotional skills and attitude towards life.
- ▶ We used a survey with teachers one month after their five-day Adventure & Challenge course<sup>27</sup> to measure the lasting change that others have observed in young people.
- ▶ We continued our research into the impact of our Reach Higher programme in Battersea Park School, in partnership with nfpSynergy. This looks at the cumulative effects of an Outward Bound programme within a single school over a number of years.
- ▶ We surveyed course participants across a number of programmes immediately after their course to measure key learning outcomes.

## We would like to thank

Centre for Confidence and Well-being.

Deutsche Bank for funding a significant research project.

New Philanthropy Capital.

nfpSynergy.

All the schools and individuals who have contributed to our ongoing research.

All the funders who enable us to continue to work with so many young people every year.

# Notes

- i. 69% of young people who we worked with through our Education and Individuals work received a bursary.
- ii. This is a nationally recognised environmental award that requires participants to meet four challenges (Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share) with enthusiasm and commitment.
- iii. This research includes Ofsted's 2008 report Learning Outside the Classroom: How Far should you Go? and The National Foundation for Educational Research's 2004 report Review of Research on Outdoor Learning. Both reports outline the benefits of learning in the outdoors and learning through adventure to young people's attitudes, beliefs, social and interpersonal skills, achievement and behaviour.
- iv. The New Economics Foundation has compiled a "science of well-being" which identifies the complex way in which various aspects of young people's lives interact to provide them with a sense of well-being. In its report Backing the Future: Why Investing in Young People is Good for us all, it describes how "children's well-being can be best thought of as emerging from the interaction between their external circumstances, inner resources and their capabilities and interactions with the world around them. This interplay is a dynamic process that gives children a sense of how their lives are going and, as they get older, their hopes and aspirations for the future. All ingredients have a part to play in shaping how children sense their lives are going and as a result, all must be nurtured if positive outcomes in childhood and later life are to be achieved." pps. 29-30.
- v. The New Economics Foundation's report Backing the Future: Why Investing in Young People is Good for us all shows that by switching to a preventative system of care for children and young people, the UK could save £486 billion over the next 20 years.
- vi. Through our Generations Campaign, we have received over 300 stories from men and women who experienced an Outward Bound course over the past, describing the ways in which their course has influenced their lives.
- vii. The Adventure & Challenge course is designed to deliver high adventure, features an overnight expedition and encourages young people to expand their comfort zones through achievable challenges.
- viii. The results are presented at a 95% confidence level, meaning that we can be 95% sure that the results are valid. The results are also set against a national baseline of children and young people's well-being, which is a sample of young people from across the UK. For example, where the results show a self-esteem score of 58%, it means that 58% of the national population has lower self-esteem than the young people included in the results, and 42% of the population has higher self-esteem than them.
- ix. It's important to note that research conducted by the New Economics Foundation shows that 16-24 years olds in the UK report the lowest levels of trust and belonging in the whole of Europe. Backing the Future: Why Investing in Young People is Good for us all, p.6.
- x. The Green Outward Bound course has a strong emphasis on raising the environmental awareness of young people. It helps them learn about practical changes they can make to their behaviour, and teaches them about our shared responsibility to protect the natural environment.
- xi. A number of research reports provide strong evidence to show that experiences in the outdoors and natural environment have a positive effect on physical, emotional and mental health. These include Defra's 2007 report Well-being and the Natural Environment: A brief Overview of the Evidence; The Countryside Recreation Network's 2005 report A Countryside for Health and Well-being: The Physical and mental health benefits of Green Exercise; The University of Essex's 2009 report Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways.
- xii. Many of the skills we aim to develop in young people have a direct influence on their immediate skills for learning and have even been incorporated into mainstream education, for example through the "Learning to Learn" curriculum and the SEAL initiative.

# References

1. Action for Children (2007) Get Happy: Children and Young People's Emotional well-being.
2. Department of Health (2010) Confident Communities, Brighter Futures: A framework for developing well-being.
3. The Young Foundation (2009) The Skills for Success and How They Are Grown.
4. Results from a sample of Adventure & Challenge courses using New Philanthropy Capital's Well-being Measure. For more information on this measure please refer to our evaluation methodology on page 41 of this report.
5. As above.
6. Summary of findings from nfpSynergy's Quantitative Reach Higher Research, 2010.
7. Summary of findings from nfpSynergy's Qualitative Reach Higher Research, 2010.
8. 1-month Teacher Survey, September 2010.
9. Results from Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award Programme 2009-10 using Centre for Confidence and Well-being's Confidence Research System. For more information on this measure please refer to our evaluation methodology on page 41 of this report.
10. Results from Classic course programme 2010 using Centre for Confidence and Well-being's Confidence Research System.
11. Evaluation of Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award programme evaluation, 2009-10 and Classic course programme 2010.
12. North Lanarkshire Aiming Higher Programme focus groups, 2009; Review of evidence from Generations alumni.
13. 1-month Teacher Survey, September 2010.
14. Summary of findings from nfpSynergy's Quantitative Reach Higher Research, 2010.
15. Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award programme evaluation, 2009-10; Individuals programme evaluation, 2010.
16. Follow-up evaluation of small sample of Green and Adventure & Challenge courses.
17. Follow-up evaluation with students on a Green Outward Bound course, 2010.
18. 1-month Teacher Survey, September 2010.
19. Summary of findings from nfpSynergy's Quantitative Reach Higher Research, 2010.
20. Summary of findings from nfpSynergy's Qualitative Reach higher Research, 2010.
21. Dweck, C (2006) Mindset: The New Psychology of Success: Random House.
22. Ofsted (2010) Battersea Park School Inspection Report.
23. North Lanarkshire Council HMIE Inspected Validated Self-Evaluation Report, 2010
24. Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award programme evaluation, 2009-10; Individuals programme evaluation, 2010.
25. This is designed to measure the difference charities make to key aspects of young people's subjective well-being. We took measures in the week before and after the Outward Bound course. The questionnaire measures young people's levels of subjective well-being across eight domains: overall satisfaction with life; self-esteem; resilience; emotional health; quality of friendships; quality of family relationships; satisfaction with school; satisfaction with their local community environment. For more information, please visit [http://www.philanthropycapital.org/how\\_we\\_help/big\\_ideas/wellbeing\\_project.aspx](http://www.philanthropycapital.org/how_we_help/big_ideas/wellbeing_project.aspx)
26. This questionnaire measures young people's levels of confidence and well-being across four domains: resilience; optimism; self-efficacy; mindset. We took measures before and after the Outward Bound course or programme. For more information please visit Centre for Confidence and Well-being, <http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/>
27. 1-month Teacher Survey, developed by The Outward Bound Trust.

► We are all better than we know;  
if only we can be brought to  
realise this, we may never  
again be prepared to settle for  
anything less. ◀

**Kurt Hahn**, Co-founder of The Outward Bound Trust

**The Outward Bound Trust**

Head Office

Hackthorpe Hall, Hackthorpe,  
Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2HX

T: 01931 740000

E: [enquiries@outwardbound.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@outwardbound.org.uk)

**The Outward Bound Trust**

Fundraising & Events

4th Floor

207 Waterloo Road

London SE1 8XD

T: 020 7610 4218

E: [fundraising@outwardbound.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@outwardbound.org.uk)

**The Outward Bound Trust**

Centres

Aberdovey, Snowdonia, Wales

Ullswater, The Lake District, England

Howtown, The Lake District, England

Eskdale, The Lake District, England

Metro, Glasgow, Scotland

Loch Eil, The Highlands, Scotland

Printed by Reeds Printers.

ISO14001: 2004 compliant.

Printed on minimum 50% recycled paper

® Outward Bound and the Compass Rose are each registered trademarks of The Outward Bound Trust. The Outward Bound Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (1128090) and in Scotland (SC040341) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (company number 6748835).  
Registered Office: Hackthorpe Hall, Hackthorpe, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2HX.



**THE  
OUTWARD  
BOUND TRUST**