

# YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE CONFIDENT AND WHO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES

Our belief in our ability to achieve what we set out to do strongly affects whether we achieve our goals or not.

Studies show that if young people believe they have control over the things that happen to them, then they are more likely to achieve the things they set out to<sup>19</sup>. Self-efficacy in particular – our belief that we can achieve our tasks and goals – has been linked with better attainment at GCSE<sup>20</sup>.

Every Outward Bound course is designed to stretch and develop a young person’s understanding of what they are capable of. The challenges that our instructors present them with are carefully planned and managed so that each individual is encouraged to face something they’ve never done before. For some, it may be putting their head in the sea for the first time; for others, it may be facing a fear of heights when they climb up a rock face, or carrying a heavy rucksack up a mountain for the first time.

The residential element also offers opportunities to experience new things – for instance eating a meal in the company of others, or sharing a living space with people who are new to them. Many young people challenge their ideas of the type of person they are and what they are capable of, overcoming fears not only of things like swimming in open water, but, perhaps more importantly, of talking to people they don’t know and being away from their families.

**IF YOUNG PEOPLE BELIEVE THEY HAVE CONTROL OVER THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO THEM (RATHER THAN PEOPLE OR EVENTS CONTROLLING THEM), THEN THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE THE THINGS THEY SET OUT TO**

“Pupils were challenged in a completely different way but were supported by excellent staff, valued and encouraged to reflect regularly and plan how they could progress even further to achieve their own goals.”

**Pamela Sneddon**, Physics Teacher, Braes High School (Falkirk).  
Feedback provided in October 2014, four–six weeks on from the course.



# OVERALL SELF-CONFIDENCE

## KEY INFORMATION

The courses referred to in these sections of the report:

- Education courses – these usually last for five days and are delivered in close partnership with education clients. They focus on developing the attitudes and skills that help to improve students’ engagement and success in learning.
- Skills for Life Award course – this lasts for 19 days and focuses on developing a wide range of attitudes and skills in participants to better prepare them for their transition from compulsory education into Further Education, Higher Education, training or work.

Our evaluations indicate that, after taking part in one of our courses, young people improve their overall self-confidence as well as their confidence in specific situations such as trying new things and meeting new people. Research into our lasting impact is giving a good indication that the effects of a course last well into the future.

We used the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire\* to measure changes to young people’s confidence after taking part in our 5-day Education courses and our 19-day Skills for Life Award course. 51% increased their confidence score at the end of their 5-day course and 60% at the end of their Skills for Life Award.

When we surveyed young people who had participated in the Skills for Life Award six and twelve months afterwards, we found that improvements in confidence recorded at the end of their course had been retained, giving a strong indication that the course has an effect in the long-term.

We also used the Personal Development Scale\*\* to measure improvements in young people’s confidence to do certain things such as try new things. 76% of participants on our 5-day Education course increased their score for confidence to meet new people at the end of their course. On one programme we also measured participants’ confidence to have a go at things that are new to them. 68% improved their score for this at the end of their course and, when we followed up with them six months on, 54% scored higher for both measures of confidence.



Full results can be found in Additional Research, page 61, Figures 1-3; and page 65, Figures 16 - 18.

\* The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire is a psychometric questionnaire used to measure the effectiveness of outdoor learning programmes. It measures the extent to which a person’s actions/behaviour/feelings are effective in managing and succeeding at life. For more information see <http://www.wilderdom.com/leq.html>

\*\* The Personal Development Scale is a questionnaire developed to evaluate a wider range of skills related to working, communicating and interacting with others.

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One of our students has massively improved in his self-confidence. He previously struggled with shyness and awkwardness but the Outward Bound experience has been invaluable for helping him to come out of his shell and speak to people he does not know. Since the course he has even been able to speak in front of the whole sixth form about the experience - something I do not believe he would have been able to achieve before the course. ”

Jacob Bowditch, Student Achievement Manager, Hammersmith Academy (London). Feedback provided in March 2016, four–six weeks on from the course.

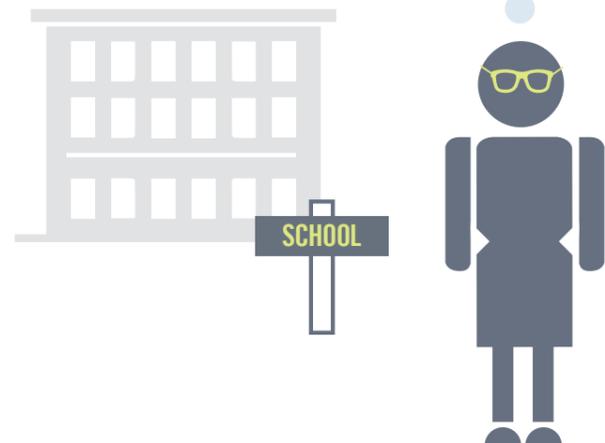
**FROM A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE BACK IN SCHOOL, TEACHERS FIND PUPILS ARE MORE AWARE OF WHAT THEY'RE CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO TACKLE DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF THEIR LEARNING**



The percentage of teachers who reported that their pupils were more **aware of their strengths**. (n=264)

The percentage of teachers who reported that pupils were **more likely to attempt things they believed were difficult**. (n=264)

Full results can be found in Additional Research, page 66, Figure 19.



**KATIE, AGED 15 YEARS, ATTENDED OUTWARD BOUND THROUGH HER LOCAL YOUTH CENTRE. HERE, HER YOUTH WORKER DESCRIBES WHAT DIFFERENCE HER COURSE MADE TO HER TWO MONTHS ON.**

*Katie would always be late for school and would refuse to go some days, instead spending all of her time in her bedroom. Her mum had ended up in court, which resulted in a fine, and still she didn't take it seriously. She wasn't rude to her mum, but just didn't care and had lost her mojo.*

*After a few conversations with Katie about giving Outward Bound a try, I finally encouraged her. She took part and tried all the opportunities the weekend offered her. She was dreading the thought of the wooden cabin in the middle of nowhere, with no toilets or signal for her mobile. But she got on with it and, on reflection, that was one of her favourite times of the weekend.*

*Since returning to normal life she has started to engage with life again, and she spent the summer holidays volunteering at the venture playground where she ran the kitchen for us. She came on trips as a volunteer helping with the younger children. Her confidence grew even more and she made plans with her friends to go out and do things.*

*Since going back to school she has gone every day and also she has been on time. Her mum said she couldn't believe it when she came home from school, sat at the kitchen table and began to do her homework. This is something her mum had never witnessed before and we are only in week two of school, but what a great start. She now really wants to do the week long residential so she can have the opportunity to try many more of the activities.*

Case study provided in July 2016

**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION**

**THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST AND ST. MARK'S ACADEMY, SOUTH LONDON**

**INTRODUCTION**

In 2016, we commissioned RM Insight\* to conduct a Social Return on Investment evaluation of the effects of an Outward Bound course on the academic performance of students at St. Mark's Academy. We are mid-way through the evaluation and present here the findings from the evaluation conducted to date.

**THE PROGRAMME**

St. Mark's Academy is located in a disadvantaged area of South London and the majority of the student population is from an ethnic minority background. The academy is in the top 20% of schools with students eligible for free school meals. Most of those selected for the course were pupil premium students who were achieving below their potential at the academy. A number of them were known for their challenging behaviour inside the academy and offending behaviours outside. A small group were known to be influenced by gang activity in the local area.

The course was intended to develop the social and emotional skills of the students, helping them to become more aware of their own abilities and build their confidence. It is hoped the achievement of these outcomes will lead to better academic performance, particularly in GCSE results the following year in Year 11.

**EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

Standardised measures were used to measure the intended outcomes for the course. Two of these were Rosenberg's Self-esteem scale and the general self-efficacy scale. A questionnaire was completed by students in April 2016 prior to attending the course and again in November 2016 six months afterwards. A group interview with twelve of the students was also used to discuss their experiences on the course, how it had affected them in the short-term, and whether/how it had had any impact in the long-term.

\* www.rm insight.co.uk/

**INTERIM QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS**

Results were positive for both the group as a whole and for individual students, showing strong performance across both measures, in particular for self-efficacy. 97% recorded an improvement in their self-efficacy score six months after the course, and 86% recorded an improvement for their self-esteem score.

	% WHOSE SCORE ↑	% WHOSE SCORE ↓
ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM	86%	10%
GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY	97%	3%

**INTERIM QUALITATIVE FINDINGS**

Students were enthusiastic about the course and felt it had been a challenging experience. They reported that many of the activities were physically and mentally challenging. There were several occasions, they said, when completing an activity had been physically and psychologically challenging and they had had to believe in themselves to continue. This was a new experience for them and one that they felt had had a lasting impact. Most the students in the interview felt that this experience had improved their self-belief and made them more able to take on challenges and overcome difficulties. This applied to many areas of life including the challenges they faced with school work.

The students also generally agreed that the course had had some positive impact on their school work in Year 11. They felt that stronger self-belief had encouraged them to be more applied in their school work and less likely to give up when faced with challenges. A few students reported that their school work had improved, but they acknowledged that not all of this improvement was attributable to the course.