

## Out of the Classroom: Into Hearts and Minds

*This document is aimed at stimulating discussion regarding out-of-classroom learning (OOCL) in the context of the Government launching the Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom in autumn 2006. As well as identifying the benefits of OOCL (including those reaching beyond formal education), this discussion paper presents various policy options for increasing participation in OOCL and estimated costs. The recommendations and targets identified are likely to be revised later this year following the launch of the Government's Manifesto.*

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## **A. Executive Summary**

Learning experiences in the real world add significantly to pupils' education, including their appreciation of the natural environment. Efforts to ensure a quality educational experience, such as those by the RSPB, deliver benefits including deeper and improved learning across all curriculum subjects. Specifically, fieldwork can improve long-term memory and enable higher-order learning. Out-of-classroom learning gives children a more powerful grasp of, and confidence in, the natural environment. In addition to helping educational attainment, contact with nature is associated with:

- Improved children's behaviour, self-discipline, and mental health,
- Enhanced emotional development in school children, and
- Reduced crime and aggression, and improved community integration.

Direct contact with nature fascinates children, and they increase their physical activity levels when outdoors. Physical activity is an essential element to combating public health problems. Out-of-classroom learning can play a role in improving public health and well being, and combating the likelihood of future generations becoming inactive and obese adults. In return, schoolwork and cognitive functioning are improved by physical activity.

The RSPB hosts 61,000 pupils per year on out-of-classroom learning visits. We employ 130 specially trained part-time field teachers, in a ratio of one field teacher to 15 children as far as practical, to ensure good quality teaching. The RSPB aims to be hosting 100,000 pupil visits per year across up to 50 sites in the UK within the next 10 years.

The RSPB believes that every child should be entitled to regular out-of-classroom learning (OOCL) in the natural environment throughout their time at school. However, not all children have the opportunity to learn outside the classroom due to fear of accidents and litigation, increasingly busy timetables, costs and low prioritisation.

## **Costs Summary**

Government policy options to promote out-of-classroom learning include:

### **1. Funding out-of-classroom education for disadvantaged pupils and sustaining out-of-classroom learning/educational visit coordinators in schools.**

- Out-of-classroom education often relies on funding from parents, so children from poorer backgrounds are disadvantaged. Each out-of-classroom visit could be subsidised with c. £25 (£10-15 for transport, and a similar amount to cover provider and site costs). For the 1.1 million children eligible for free school meals in England to have one day-visit per year would cost **£28 million**.

- Organisation of out-of-classroom learning in schools should be paid for by a salary top-up to an individual member of staff acting as the educational visits coordinator (EVC). The EVC role should be defined as qualifying for Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments, to be paid by schools from School Development Grant funding in line with the existing system for allocating teaching responsibilities. It is estimated that the total cost across England's 22,500 schools would be around **£26 million** per year.
- The Government should revise safety guidance for teachers and outline the implications of the Compensation Act, in order to address teachers' safety concerns and reticence to organise visits. In addition, including hands on experience of organising out-of-classroom learning and undertaking risk assessments in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) would set a precedent for teachers' careers at a cost of **£3.4million** per year.

**2. Make out-of-classroom education a recognised, Ofsted inspected, teaching method.**

- Out-of-classroom (particularly off-school-site) education experiences should be made an officially recognised method for teachers to deliver the curriculum.
- In line with this, adding out-of-classroom education to the list of features inspected by Ofsted would raise its status. In the context of Ofsted's self-evaluation and spotlight inspection methods, this would represent **negligible additional cost**, or could be funded from within their existing £220m budget. Costs to schools of reporting via self-evaluation would also be minimal if completed by their educational visits coordinator.
- The Government should benchmark the availability of out-of-classroom learning destinations and should encourage a positive planning and funding attitude to new sites of all types, for example new nature reserves in areas lacking accessible natural green space.

**The total cost of these measures would be up to £58m per year.** This can be met by reallocating existing resources so does not require additional Government spending. In response to such spending, those running sites at which out-of-classroom learning takes place, such as voluntary sector organisations, would proportionately increase the funding they use to support out-of-classroom learning.

The RSPB believes that this expenditure would provide significant educational benefits and represent good value-for-money to taxpayers, and is proportionate to current education funding.

## Recommendations to Government & Actions Required

### 1. Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

- i) Provide specific funding and guidance to schools and local authorities regarding the provision of OOCL to pupils.  
*EITHER:*
  - a) Emphasise in the *Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom* and *Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review* the role that OOCL can play in personalising learning and the appropriateness to support OOCL through the £1,150m (2006-08) provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant (£565m) and School Standards Grant for Personalisation (£585m).*OR:*
  - b) Provide up to £28m of specific funding to enable the 1.1 million children eligible to free school meals in England to have one OOCL visit each year.
- ii) Assess whether local authority outdoor education advisers (OEAs) and school educational visits coordinator EVCs are adequately funded and supported, by:
  - a) Defining the EVC role as qualifying for Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments, to be paid by schools from School Development Grant funding at an estimated cost of £26m per year.
  - b) Establishing and maintaining a national database of EVCs (working with OEAs), to ensure that every school has an EVC.
- iii) Address teachers' concerns about risk management roles and responsibilities, by:
  - a) Issuing revised safety guidance alongside the manifesto, including the fair treatment by schools of staff organising visits.
  - b) Explaining the implications of the Compensation Act (2006) in the manifesto, including defining OOCL as a 'desirable activity'.
  - c) Engaging in discussions with the teaching unions to revise guidance to their members regarding OOCL.
- iv) The final framework guidance for Sustainable Schools should be revised to specifically emphasise the importance of experiencing, learning about, and connecting to, the natural environment.

### 2. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) / Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)

- i) Include OOCL in the list of activities that trainees should experience during their initial teacher training (ITT) at an estimated cost of £3.4m per year.
- ii) Feature OOCL in all teachers' continual professional development (CPD) – in parallel with current revisions to teachers' professional standards and support staff standards.

<b>3. Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)</b>
i) Include out-of-classroom learning in the list of issues Ofsted inspect via schools' Self-Evaluation Forms and spotlight inspections.
<b>4. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)</b>
i) Add out-of-classroom learning to the curriculum as an optional, but recommended, process to aid the delivery of personalised learning.
ii) Imbed OOCL in schools, for instance through the Key Stage 3 curriculum review.
<b>5. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) / Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)</b>
i) Benchmark accessibility and quality of existing OOCL facilities as part broader green space availability and planning.
<b>6. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) / Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)</b>
i) Encourage a positive attitude from planners and funders towards new sites which increase OOCL at natural heritage sites.
<b>7. HM Treasury</b>
i) Indicate through the Comprehensive Spending Review that they support the DfES allocating their resources to OOCL (as above).
ii) Recognise the considerable levels of financial support currently given by providers of OOCL (such as voluntary sector organisations) and their willingness to match and support future Government action.

## **Target for Government**

*'Out-of-classroom learning in the natural environment should be an integral part of every child's education.'*

To manage this objective better in the future the Government should aim to have robust baseline data on the number of OOCL visits to school-level by the end of the 2008-09 academic year. This should include data on participation by year-level and types of visit (e.g. residential or day). There should be consistency across the data whether derived from local authorities, school co-ordinators, or Ofsted inspections.

## **B. Introduction**

Learners of all ages can benefit from effective out-of-classroom learning (OOCL) (Rickinson et al, 2004), and Ofsted has recommended that all students experience the benefits of outdoor education (Ofsted, 2004). There is growing concern that opportunities for outdoor learning by school students in England have decreased in recent years, and that fieldwork opportunities are severely restricted (Rickinson et al, 2004). In February 2005, the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee recommended that DfES issue a *Manifesto for Outdoor Learning* which they suggest should attract £30m of funding (a similar level to their *Music Manifesto*)(House of Commons, 2005). DfES have subsequently developed and consulted on a draft vision and key aims for a *Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom*, which is due to be published in autumn 2006.

This note calculates rough costs for England as a whole. The English state education system contained 7.60 million pupils aged 5-18 in 2006, at 22,500 schools with 448,400 teachers (DfES, 2006a; 2006b). The budget for DfES will be £64 billion in 2007/08.

The organisations behind the Real World Learning Partnership<sup>1</sup> host approximately 1.5m pupil-days<sup>2</sup> at their sites each year, which may involve 500,000 – 600,000 different pupils, representing 6.5-7.8% of all England's schoolchildren aged 5-18 years. The Government believes there are approximately 7 million pupil visits each year (DfES, 2005a). This averages as nearly one visit per pupil in the primary and secondary education system in England. However, if the ratio of pupil-days to individual pupils is the same across all out-of-classroom learning providers as within the RWL Partnership (2.5:1), then this might involve 3.1 million - only 40% - of pupils.

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<sup>1</sup> The Real World Learning Partnership, comprises the RSPB, Field Studies Council, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, National Trust, PGL Travel Ltd, The Wildlife Trusts, Association for Science Education, Geographical Association, Historical Association, and Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

<sup>2</sup> One pupil-day is one day on which a child makes an educational visit to a site. It does not equal the number of children due to repeat visits and multi-day activities (e.g. residential courses)

## **C. Benefits of OOCL**

### **Educational and Social Benefits**

Out-of-classroom or *real world* learning is one of the most effective forms of education. It can simultaneously contribute to a range of curriculum topics, and develop pupil's personal skills. Despite our modern technology, sophisticated teaching practices and lifestyles, there is no substitute for a child getting out of the classroom to experience nature and culture first hand for themselves. Real world learning stimulates senses and minds, boosting a thirst for learning that will repay itself, in terms of educational achievement, personal development and positive participation in society, many times over. It can link to and help achieve many Government objectives within the *Every Child Matters* agenda (DfES, 2006c), such as children's health, citizenship, reduction of deprivation, crime and unemployment, and achievement of social inclusion.

Making OOCL available to all can help provide pupils with stimulating contact with the natural environment in which all aspects of the curriculum can be taught in integrated and innovative ways. A review of outdoor learning has revealed substantial evidence that well-organised fieldwork adds value to everyday learning experiences in the classroom. Specifically, fieldwork can improve long-term memory and enable higher-order learning (Rickinson et al, 2004). Outdoor education can make school a more engaging experience, making pupils keener to learn and boosting educational attainment. Residential settings for fieldwork aid individuals' development of social skills (Rickinson et al, 2004).

In addition, it is also socially inclusive. Early evaluation of a Government initiative, London Challenge, suggests that out of classroom experiences allow excluded young people or those with learning difficulties to excel and realise their potential because they are conducted in a non-classroom environment (Amos and Reiss, 2004). This is particularly true of those children growing up in economically deprived or inner city areas.

Outdoor education gives depth and meaning to the curriculum. Children gain a more powerful grasp of environmental issues through self-exploration of the natural environment (Thomas and Thompson, 2004). There is evidence that children are losing connection with the natural environment (*ibid.*). Unresolved, this may compromise our society's ability to understand and deal with environmental challenges in the future, such as climate change. OOCL makes an important contribution to building a knowledge economy grounded in creativity and inquiry and helps provide an understanding of the world around us.

It can also distract young people from anti-social behaviour. For example, recent evidence shows that properly organised angling activities can play a cost-effective part in reducing youth offending, anti-social behaviour and truancy (Environment Agency, 2006). Research by Ofsted (2003: 5) also found that '*where pupils feel*

*responsible for their environment, incidents of vandalism have decreased.'* In addition, a recent study has shown that children who understand and care about their local environment, community and cultural heritage and are active within it, are far more likely to engage as active citizens in a democratic society later on in life (Peacock, 2006).

## **RSPB Education for Schools**

In 2005/06, the RSPB employed 130 part-time field teachers to host 61,000 pupils on educational visits to 36 sites. In addition to knowing about the specific ecology and features of reserves, the field teachers are trained in current thinking on learning styles and group leadership strategies. The RSPB's standard is to provide a ratio of one field teacher to every 15 children for the duration of the entire visit. This ensures that each child gets a high level of interaction with the environment and the field teacher. The field teacher's specialist knowledge, and small group sizes, both contribute to good quality teaching (Ofsted, 2004). The RSPB aims to be hosting 100,000 pupil visits per year across up to 50 sites in the UK within the next 10 years. The RSPB supports a quality educational experience for all pupils (for instance, see box on *Wildlife for All*).

Out-of-classroom learning programmes are backed-up with a wealth of resources from the RSPB's wider youth activities. The RSPB has been supporting schools for over 100 years in bringing birds and nature to life in the classroom. Beyond the formal setting, the RSPB has over 60 years' experience working with young people through its Wildlife Explorers club – one of the largest environmental clubs for young people in the world.

### **Social targeting through *Wildlife for All***

Schools are usually attracted to RSPB sites through general advertising. However, in London, the joint RSPB and the Royal Parks Agency *Wildlife for All* initiative (which ran from 2002-05) was proactive in approaching specific schools with high levels of low income families. This helped overcome a common barrier that many schools are not aware of the available facilities and want to be asked to visit. The sessions were offered free of charge and schools were targeted within walking distance of the park; thereby ensuring that no cost was passed onto the children and their families.

By working with schools in close proximity to the Royal Parks and through the provision of training to the teachers on delivering environmental education, it was envisaged that the schools would continue to make use of the parks as a teaching resource after the project is finished. From 2006 (through to 2009) this partnership will be running *Wild in the Parks* – similar to *Wildlife for All*, but in addition to working in The Royal Parks, the new project will also work in a variety of parks across four London Boroughs (Barking & Dagenham, Brent, Croydon and Hammersmith & Fulham).



The RSPB provides in-service (INSET) and initial teacher training (ITT) based on the activities and programmes available at its sites. This contributes to teachers' knowledge and practice of teaching preparatory work and the design of carefully structured learning activities. These factors are known to result in more valuable educational experiences (Rickinson et al, 2004).

## Health

Of the broad range of social benefits associated with OOCL, one of the more critical concerns children's mental and physical health. The strong links between public health and the natural environment are analysed in an RSPB report, *Natural Fit* (Bird, 2004). This report identified that 16% of children in the UK aged between 2 and 15 are obese, and there has been a 50% increase in obesity in children over the last 10 years. Up to 60% of fat children become fat adults. Obesity is a symptom of physical inactivity. The overall cost of inactivity to the NHS is currently £8.2bn/yr (*ibid.*). Within this, obesity costs the NHS around £1bn, with a further £2.3bn to £2.6bn cost to the wider economy as a whole (BBC, 2006).

There is a link between inactivity and obesity: less active children are more likely to have excess fat. Activity programmes have resulted in clinically significant decreases in body fat and body mass index in obese children. In *Natural Fit*, Dr William Bird identifies that:

- Children increase their physical activity levels when outdoors and are attracted to nature. Contact with the elements of nature - sunlight, fresh air, soil, water, plants and animals - is a fascination for children, encouraging them to go outdoors where they are more active.
- Schoolwork may be improved by physical activity. A major review found that there is a positive relationship between physical activity and cognitive functioning that includes concentration, memory and language.
- Specifically, contact with nature has been associated with improved symptoms among children with attention deficit disorder, and improved self-discipline among inner city girls.
- Contact with nature enhances emotional development in school children.

*Natural Fit* suggests that access to OOCL experiences can play a role in improving public health and wellbeing, as:

- There is strong evidence that by the time children leave secondary school their attitude to exercise is highly predictive of whether they will be physically active as adults. The strongest relationship is between the quality of exercise they have experienced as opposed to the quantity of exercise.
- Children's inactivity is helping to create a future generation who are more likely to become inactive and obese adults.
- Contact with nature has been shown to reduce crime and aggression and improve community integration and children's behaviour.

- Recent research from the Netherlands (RMNO, 2004) supported these arguments, finding that *it is plausible that the cognitive, motor and socio-economic development of children can benefit from varied, regular and direct contact with nature (ibid.: 19).*

OOCL introduces children to outdoor exercise, which if maintained through childhood, is more likely to remain with them into adulthood. Dr Bird has suggested that children be offered the chance to do conservation work or gardening as a way to provide some children with physical activity instead of, or as well as, formal sport. There is also some evidence that school grounds educational projects increase children's motivation to eat healthily and take exercise (Rickinson et al, 2004).

By recognising these health benefits and making an appropriate investment to support OOCL, the Government would also complement and support the £220 million committed to improve school meals and pupils' health (DfES, 2006d).

Research currently being finalised for the RSPB by Dr William Bird, *Natural Thinking*, has also found that contact with nature, such as through OOCL, can also have a significant positive impact on children suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD (Bird, forthcoming 2006). Over one-third of children suffering from ADHD have been excluded from school (ADDISS, 2006). By providing OOCL experiences to those suffering from ADHD, not only would they reap direct educational benefits (and reduced exclusion from school), but the negative social and familial impacts of ADHD would also be reduced.

## **D. Costs of Increasing OOCL**

A number of actions are available to Government to boost out-of-classroom learning:

### **Funding OOCL Visits**

The Labour Party's 2005 General Election manifesto made a commitment '*to enhance our children's understanding of the environment we will give every student the opportunity to experience out-of-classroom learning in the natural environment.*' There is a lack of baseline data on OOCL against which this commitment can be quantified and measured, and against which any expansion could also be measured. This makes estimating the costs of increasing OOCL difficult.

A suggested minimum total cost for an OOCL visit is c. £25 per pupil: £10-15 for transport, and a similar amount for site costs to the provider. For this second element of costs, schools may be expected to pay c. £5 per pupil for the face-to-face time with field teachers, while further learning programme management costs are often met by the site or visit provider. At this level of funding, **supporting one OOCL visit in the natural environment per pupil per year would require £190 million.** Funding 2.5 million OOCL visits per year would provide each pupil aged 5-16 with four OOCL days during their time in education (one at each Key Stage, based on 6.86m pupils in 11 year groups, or 623,000 pupils per year group, DfES, 2006a). 2.5 million OOCL visits per year would cost £62.5 million.

The additional impact of general funding for OOCL visits could be low, as it would largely displace the funding already provided by parental contribution. However, spending could be targeted to increase OOCL. Schools are obliged to ensure that all children can attend any trip during lesson time, regardless of ability to contribute to its costs. However, schools may be discouraged from arranging trips at all if they can't expect a significant contribution from parents, and have to foot a significant part of the bill.

Therefore, visits at least in part are funded by, and often rely on, parental contribution. This creates a barrier to experiencing OOCL for pupils from less-well-off backgrounds. The standard measure of pupils in this group is those eligible for free school meals. There are 1.1 million pupils eligible for free school meals in England (DfES, 2006a). Using the estimated average cost of a visit of £25 (£10-15 for each element of transport and site costs) **for 1.1 million children eligible to free school meals in England to have one visit per year would cost up to £28 million.**

This funding could be added to the schools grant, and could be tied in some way to the number of OOCL visits, as measured through self-evaluation with Ofsted (see further discussion below).

A significant amount of alternative funding (£1,150 million for 2006-08, including an additional £585m announced in the 2006 Budget) could be used by schools for OOCL

(HM Treasury, 2006). The funding is in recognition that '*schools can and do tailor their teaching and the wider support they offer to their pupils so that they can meet all their different needs*' (TeacherNet, 2006a) – so-called '*personalised learning*'. One of the three priorities for this expenditure is '*to help learners from deprived backgrounds to access after school and year-round activities*' (TeacherNet, 2006b).

This financing is to be provided to schools through two separate grants. The additional £585m announced in the Budget will be paid exclusively through the School Standards Grant for Personalisation (SSG(P)) and is intended for spending on pupils in Key Stages 1-4. The remaining £565m is already provided to schools by local authorities as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and is targeted at Key Stages 1-3 (DfES, 2005b). For both grants, over one-third of the allocation weighting is based on the number of pupils in a school eligible for free school meals, and a further half of the weighting relating to the proportion of low prior attainment. The funding is therefore to be targeted at exactly those schools where lack of finances present a significant barrier to participation in out-of-classroom learning, and where a range of significant benefits may be reaped.

However, without specific guidance from Government, and leadership from within these schools, the opportunity to utilise these funds for real world learning is likely to be missed. The Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom is the obvious platform for the Government to address this. The current *Teaching and Learning in 2020* review was set up '*to present to the Secretary of State a vision for personalised teaching and learning in 2020 which enables every child to achieve higher standards; and to make recommendations which would support delivery of that vision*' (DfES, 2006e). **This review and the manifesto should emphasise the role that OOCL can play in personalisation and that it is appropriate to utilise the SSG(P) and DSG for this.**

### **Outdoor Education Advisers and Educational Visits Coordinators**

It is currently regarded as good practice for educational visits to be supported by an outdoor education adviser (OEA) within each local authority and an educational visits coordinator (EVC) within each school (DfES, 2002). The OEA should have an overview of visits undertaken within their area, and support school EVCs on issues like training and health and safety. The formal recognition of the coordinator function will help the school fulfil its health and safety obligations for visits. The school EVC should be involved in the planning and management of educational visits including adventure activities led by school staff.

Both local authority advisers and school coordinators should monitor educational visits. The lack of national data on OOCL visits suggests that the monitoring system is not functioning, which may reflect a lack of priority given to these roles within the educational system. **The Government should assess whether OEAs and EVCs are adequately funded and supported.**

Providing adequate funding for the educational visits coordinator in each school would help uptake of OOCL by giving sufficient priority to organising (e.g. risk assessments) and planning (e.g. identifying locations) OOCL visits. It would also raise the profile of OOCL and serve to imbed it as a route to personalising young people's learning. **The EVC role should be defined as qualifying for Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments**, to be paid by schools from School Development Grant funding in line with the existing system for allocating teaching responsibilities. From September 2006 the minimum such payment for each teacher with a TLR is £2,306, although this payment can be made to cover more than one responsibility. Given DfES guidance that an EVC should be a senior member of staff, it is likely that they will have at least one other responsibility, and it is fair to assume that half of the TLR cost could be attributed to being an EVC. **This would give a total cost to the Government of £26 million per year for the 22,500 state schools in England to have an EVC.**

Working with OEAs, **the DfES should establish and maintain a national database of EVCs.** This would help ensure that every school had an EVC and assist in collecting national data on OOCL visits.

### **Addressing Teachers' Concerns**

Teachers have identified the perceived litigation culture as a significant barrier to organising OOCL. This reticence has been compounded by some teaching unions providing guidance to its members not to organise such visits. As a consequence of the current lack of clarity over teachers' responsibilities and a perceived litigation culture, overall school insurance premiums (not just for OOCL) have increased by 20% per year to cover compensation claims (Thomas and Thompson, 2004).

Alongside the Compensation Act 2006 (see box), the Government has also previously committed to produce new detailed guidance covering the fair treatment of school staff (DfES, 2005a). This is a key concern of teaching unions. The guidance is expected to make clear, and seek to ensure, that;

- Staff who take reasonable care, and follow employer guidelines are, in the event of any unfortunate accident, protected by the law, and
- By carrying out straightforward, compulsory safety checks school staff can protect both pupils and themselves on a school visit and minimise the risk of litigation.

The guidance will also make clear that employers must treat staff fairly when a pupil gets injured and that parents are expected to respond fairly too. **The Government should ensure that this revised guidance is published alongside the Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom.** Teachers' concerns that they would be liable for incidents that are genuinely unavoidable accidents would be reduced. However, there would remain strong incentives for teachers to act responsibly and to work with reputable providers of out-of-classroom learning, and to exercise the necessary cautions (e.g. risk assessments). At the same time, **the Government should engage**

**in discussions with the teaching unions to revise guidance to their members regarding OOCL.**

### **The Compensation Act (2006)**

The Compensation Act received Royal Assent on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006 and offers a number of positive measures to address the perceived compensation culture and risk aversion of today's society. Whilst largely containing details about the regulation of claims management services (so-called 'ambulance-chasers'), the first part of the Act has two clauses particularly pertinent to OOCL:

1. *A court considering a claim in negligence or breach of statutory duty may, in determining whether the defendant should have taken particular steps to meet a standard of care (whether by taking precautions against a risk or otherwise), have regard to whether a requirement to take those steps might—*
  - (a) *prevent a desirable activity from being undertaken at all, to a particular extent or in a particular way, or*
  - (b) *discourage persons from undertaking functions in connection with a desirable activity.*
2. *An apology, an offer of treatment or other redress, shall not of itself amount to an admission of negligence or breach of statutory duty.*

Whilst not defining 'desirable activity', both clauses should serve to allay teachers' concerns around organising OOCL, and fears of litigation if an accident does occur. In addition, **defining OOCL as a 'desirable activity' in the DfES Manifesto would be a further significant step.**

For full details of the Act, see [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga\\_20060029\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060029_en.pdf)

## **Initial Teacher Training & Continued Professional Development**

At present, experiences of OOCL during initial teacher training (ITT) occur by chance. This depends upon whether schools hosting training placements, or taking on new teachers, organise out-of-classroom learning. This may exacerbate the problem of access to OOCL for schools in deprived communities: if new teachers have not experienced OOCL, they are unlikely to introduce it themselves, so will not learn about it if it is something their school does not already do. For schools where OOCL is not part of the culture, new teachers trained in leading OOCL experiences are needed to break this cycle.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) submitted advice on its review of standards for classroom teachers to the Secretary of State in April 2006. The TDA have acknowledged that '*out-of-classroom learning brings many benefits including providing inspirational experiences that teachers can build upon and improving children's motivation and personal skills*'<sup>3</sup>. The revised standards reflect this, and include the requirement for teachers at all career stages (including Newly Qualified)

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Graham Holley, Interim Chief Executive TDA, to Anthony Thomas, Chairman Real World Learning Partnership, 28 March 2006.

to identify and use opportunities to personalise and extend learning through out of school contexts (TDA, 2006a: 18).

This obviously places a significant requirement on providers of initial teacher training to ensure all trainee teachers are capable of arranging and undertaking OOCL. In addition, given the TDA requirement applies to all professional levels of teachers, it will be necessary for **OOCL to feature in all teachers' Continual Professional Development (CPD)**. The outcomes from the recent TDA review of initial teacher training (ITT) requirements should reinforce this, as should the upcoming reviews of standards for both school leadership, teaching/classroom assistants, and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs).

### **Research into Initial Teacher Training and Out-of-Classroom Learning**

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has recently been commissioned by the DfES, the Countryside Agency, and Farming and Countryside Education to carry out research to identify the types of training offered by ITT institutions on OOCL. The research aims to find out what proportion of ITT providers cover OOCL, the range of topics and depth in which they are covered, or how OOCL is delivered within the ITT curriculum. This study will be exploring the current levels and range of OOCL training offered by ITT establishments. A final report will be published in November 2006, and is expected to recommend that there is a need for induction training and Initial Teacher training to ensure all Newly Qualified Teachers were more confident in organising OOCL (NFER, 2006).

One opportunity to imbed OOCL in ITT would be through a requirement for every trainee teacher (of which there were 33,750 in 2005 (TDA, 2006b)) to be taught specific elements of organising and undertaking OOCL visits. These should then be applied with hands on experience during time spent on placement in schools. The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) are currently developing *Educational Visit Group Leader* training, and a one-day course of this type would address the pertinent areas. Whilst costs are likely to vary between local authorities, the estimated average participation cost is £100. For every trainee teacher this would give an overall total annual cost of c. **£3.4million**. This would ensure that **Out-of-classroom learning would be included in the list of activities that trainee teachers should experience during their initial training (ITT)**.

### **Inclusion in Ofsted Inspections**

Inclusion of OOCL in Ofsted inspections would increase its status within the education system. The additional costs of doing this would come from:

- Adding one more issue to the list of factors inspected by Ofsted.
- Schools' self-evaluation in relation to OOCL (see box, below).
- In depth spotlight inspections specifically of OOCL at a selection of schools (in keeping with the current inspection style).

The total costs of these actions for Ofsted is predicted to be well-below £100,000, which should be easily accommodated within Ofsted's budget of £220m (Ofsted,

2006). Regular spotlight inspections across a sample of schools would not only provide information on the quality of OOCL being undertaken by schools, but also a reliable proxy indication of the overall participation level, complementing data from school SEF reporting. **Ofsted should include OOCL in the issues included in a school inspection.**

### **Ofsted Self-evaluation Forms and Out-of-Classroom Learning**

The self evaluation form (SEF) is at the heart of the new Ofsted inspection arrangements – it serves as the main document when planning an inspection with a school, and is crucial in evaluating the quality of leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve. It is a school's responsibility to complete a SEF, and it is recommended that this be done so annually as part of the normal cycle of review and planning. Ofsted provides a standard template form and once OOCL was included in this template, there would therefore be no additional cost to Ofsted of inspecting OOCL via SEFs.

Part B of the SEF contains statistical and other factual information about the school. A simple table here could record the participation levels by Year group in OOCL (also recording the mix of residential or day visits). This data would be readily available to the school's educational visits coordinator (EVC), through their requirements to have knowledge of the monitoring and feedback system for visits, as well as their evaluation (DfES, 2005c). The cost to the school of completing this data in terms of time and money would therefore be negligible, perhaps accounting for a few hours of the EVC's time per year. As a result, Ofsted would be able to provide valuable data on the number of out-of-classroom pupil-days each year in England by collating the figures reported in this part of the SEF. Currently, the exact number of out-of-classroom learning visits is not known.

The actual self-evaluation element of the SEF – Part A – is intended to draw upon information completed by the school in Part B. This evaluates the impact that the school is having on pupils' achievement and personal development. By including OOCL in Part B, schools would also record the specific benefits it was having on pupils in Part A of the SEF.

### **Imbedding OOCL in Schools and the Curriculum**

Beyond Ofsted inspections, there are various other ways for OOCL to be imbedded in schools:

- **OOCL could be weaved into the curriculum as either a requirement or as an optional, but recommended process to aid the delivery of personalised learning experiences.** The first option would guarantee that all school children took part in out-of-classroom learning in a planned and progressive manner. However, without broader adjustments and revisions to the whole curriculum, this would further crowd an already packed agenda.
- In particular, **the current review of Key Stage 3 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, as part of their 11-19 reform programme) presents an ideal opportunity to investigate further the opportunities OOCL offers, and to propose mechanisms through which it can be delivered.**



In addition, the recently launched DfES proposals for Sustainable Schools identifies eight key areas (or doorways) for schools to become models of sustainable development in their communities and prepare young people for a lifetime of learning and sustainable living (DfES, 2006f). While stressing the importance of developing a commitment to caring for the environment, none of the key areas identify how pupils will develop their knowledge and understanding for the environment upon which this commitment should be built. **The final framework guidance for Sustainable Schools from the DfES should be revised to specifically emphasise the importance of experiencing, learning about, and connecting to, the natural environment.**

### **Increasing Access to OOCL Facilities and Green Space**

There is a big gap in equity of access to high quality natural environments between children from different backgrounds (Thomas and Thompson, 2004). Therefore, increasing the number of OOCL visits is likely to require an increase in the capacity of OOCL destinations. In particular, there is a need to ensure that OOCL sites are available and accessible to all schools. Some measurement of the availability of OOCL sites per pupil/school numbers in a local authority area would help benchmark the level of provision. The RSPB is beginning to undertake research into developing such a benchmark. **Further work is needed, and this is likely to be alongside wider studies into overall public access to green spaces.** More suitable OOCL sites would also mean that more use could be made of them to provide CPD and ITT for classroom teachers, as well as training school educational visit coordinators.

#### **Actions by an OOCL Provider: The RSPB**

In 2005/06, the RSPB employed 130 part-time field teachers to host 61,000 pupils on OOCL visits to 36 sites. This activity was supported by approximately £600,000 of the RSPB's own resources. This includes £200,000 of field teachers' time, and further costs in training field teachers, planning visits, and managing out-of-classroom learning programmes. This excludes the costs of developing and maintaining learning facilities, which is funded by grant-aid and by RSPB supporters.

The RSPB aims to increase the number of OOCL visits to its nature reserves to 100,000 per year within 10 years, although this is dependent on our plans for new reserves and OOCL facilities being realised. The RSPB is planning to accommodate the increased number of pupils on OOCL visits in two ways. The first is by realising and/or increasing OOCL capacity at the existing 36 field teaching sites. The second approach is the development of field teaching at newly acquired sites or those where it does not already take place. Each of these contributes about half the planned total increase in provision (i.e. c. 20,000-25,000 visits each).

Increasing the provision of natural heritage OOCL sites may have wider benefits. Natural green space can be created in areas of low wildlife value, where it is currently not available or accessible (e.g. some inner cities, rural areas of intensive agriculture). New environmental sites suitable for OOCL would not only have value

for education, they would also increase overall quality of life for the local community, improving the image of an area and helping residents maintain a healthy lifestyle (RSPB, 2005). **Increasing the availability of natural heritage sites suitable for OOCL can be helped by a positive attitude from planners and funders to new sites in such areas.**

The actions outlined above for Government and other funders would attract considerable match funding from OOCL providers, such as those in the RWL partnership. For example, the RSPB spends c. £10 per pupil on OOCL visits (effectively subsidising state education) with schools providing funding of £5 per pupil. The school funds cover only the face-to-face time between the field teacher and the children. This accounts for the £15 of total site costs previously referred to (with transport costs for the school being a further £10-15 per pupil).

**Through the Comprehensive Spending Review, HM Treasury should indicate that they support the DfES allocating their resources to OOCL. They should also recognise the considerable levels of financial support currently given by providers of OOCL.**

If Government policies and resources can increase OOCL activity and facilities, the RSPB will increase its own efforts and funding in delivering quality OOCL experiences. For instance, the RSPB is committed to continue to fund a proportion of the cost of OOCL visits to its sites, and will increase this funding in proportion to any increase in these visits. The RSPB will also continue to invest its own resources, and attract third party funding (e.g. the Big Lottery Fund, Landfill Tax Credit Scheme) to increase staff and site capacity for OOCL visits.

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