



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water



Council for  
Learning Outside the Classroom

# Waterways, Wildlife and Wellbeing

## School Impact Report

2024



Green Recovery Challenge Fund



The National Lottery  
Heritage Fund



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# Executive summary

## Why nature connectedness matters

A strong connection with nature is key to our sense of wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour. Childhood is the time to begin building this connection, but recent years have seen a significant loss of opportunities for exploration of the nearby natural world. We need to create ways for children and young people to connect with nature, particularly in areas of deprivation where young people tend to experience the greatest health and wellbeing inequalities and often very limited access to green and blue spaces.

### Responding to a need

WWW was designed for schools in areas of disadvantage across the West Midlands, with the aim of supporting teachers to take their learning beyond the classroom (LOtC), and to increase contact and connection with the natural environment amongst pupils. Delivered over an 18-month period the project was designed collaboratively by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) and the Canal & River Trust (the Trust), with advice from University of Derby's Nature Connectedness Research Group.

### The project

It was an ambitious package, which aimed to support a large cohort of schools. **Over 500 schools** were supported to take their learning beyond the classroom through CLOtC membership. **292 schools** received mentoring and training and **56 schools**, and **2,380 pupils** engaged in practical environmental activities. Project reach is estimated at **123,500 pupils**.

A key design principle was to be evidence-led, to measure impact and identify future needs. The project was successful in delivering multiple outcomes, at a large scale, and over a relatively short delivery period that was characterised by challenges related to the Covid pandemic.

### Key findings

Pupils reported a **significant impact** on their learning. Teachers concurred, with **80%** reporting that LOtC had a positive impact on pupil enjoyment of, and engagement in, lessons. **Three quarters** noted a positive impact on behaviour and **two-thirds** reported a positive impact on pupil attainment.

Teachers reported **greater confidence** to take lessons outside, more often. **None** of the teachers reported lacking confidence to deliver sessions outside the classroom after the project, **two-thirds were now** using the school grounds regularly, and **a wider range of subjects** were being taught beyond the classroom.

Embedding LOtC is also an effective practice that positively impacts a wide range of wellbeing, nature connectedness and pro-conservation outcomes for pupils and teachers. Teacher scores relating to 'happiness', 'life satisfaction', and 'feeling things are worthwhile' all **increased**. Pupils reported a **positive** impact on their wellbeing, nature connectedness, and pro-conservation behaviour.

## WWW Report: Executive summary

WWW helped to **overcome the barriers** teachers faced so they could plan, develop, evaluate and embed LOtC practice. The offer of face-to-face support with **mentoring**, the chance to **achieve the LOtC Mark award**, and **practical environmental experiences** for pupils, were strong motivators.

The task of embedding LOtC requires a change of school culture and practice, it requires external support, school ambition and commitment to make it stick. Encouragingly, **90%** of teachers set specific actions into their LOtC Progress Tracker and around **two-thirds** achieved these actions.

It was extremely encouraging that **50%** of teachers reported LOtC was now embedded in their school culture. The qualitative findings revealed that for many schools WWW had been the catalyst for, or had helped support, an LOtC programme that engaged a range of different local partners.

## Next steps

To build on these achievements, the Trust and CLOtC are looking to secure wider partnership support and funding, to provide on-going help for the West Midlands project schools, and to replicate WWW in other areas of the UK to positively impact on the learning, health, wellbeing and nature connection of many more children and young people and their teachers.

An evidence-led approach will prevail. We will promote the findings from WWW to demonstrate how this model can support specific policy commitments related to improving health, wellbeing, learning, and environmental outcomes.

“We are delighted to be working with the Trust to help develop and deliver programmes that enable more children and young people to benefit from bringing learning to life on their doorstep in their own local environments. It’s a great partnership and one we hope to amplify.



**Dr Anne Hunt,**  
CEO, Council for Learning  
Outside the Classroom

The Trust uses its expertise in delivery of engaging, relevant, local activities, and our charity supports schools, nurseries, and colleges to use these activities as a catalyst for sustainable change in teaching practice. Embedding learning beyond the classroom into school practice ensures all students and staff benefit from the wide range of positive health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes that are evidenced to come from regular, high quality, and progressive learning beyond the classroom.”

“As the UK’s largest canal charity, we understand the importance of connecting children and young people with the natural environment and of the benefits of spending time in green and blue spaces, especially given the health and wellbeing inequalities and green space deficit affecting many children. We look after 2,000 miles of canals and river navigations across England & Wales that run through the heart of towns and cities, bringing nature to the doorsteps of some of our most disadvantaged communities, and providing free, open, learning spaces for over 1 million children in local schools. We are delighted to have worked with the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom on the WWW project and to be able to involve these young people in hands-on environmental activities to boost their health, wellbeing and learning. We are looking forward to continuing and extending our partnership.”



**Richard Parry**  
CEO, Canal & River Trust

# Part 1: Introduction

**Waterways, Wildlife and Wellbeing (WWW)** was designed for schools in areas of disadvantage across the West Midlands (WM), with the aim of building teacher confidence to take learning beyond the classroom, and to increase contact and connection with the natural environment, amongst children and young people.

## Working in partnership

The programme was developed collaboratively between the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC), and the Canal & River Trust (the Trust), with advice from the University of Derby's Nature Connectedness Research Group.

CLOtC is committed to ensuring all children and young people can benefit from learning outside beyond the classroom (LOtC) by supporting education settings and LOtC providers to deliver regular, progressive and high quality LOtC experiences. The Trust looks after 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales and is committed to engaging schools with these free to access green and blue open learning spaces, which help to bring nature into the heart of towns and cities.

Waterways, Wildlife & Wellbeing combined CPD training and mentoring opportunities delivered by CLOtC, with opportunities to engage in practical environmental activities, led by the Trust. The project delivery team included staff from the core Trust and CLOtC teams, two dedicated outdoor learning coordinators from the Trust's WM community engagement team and two dedicated part time CLOtC project officers.

## Project funding

Grant funding was secured from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which aimed to support projects that focussed on nature recovery, supporting green jobs and connecting people with nature.

The project was also designed to contribute to the commitments in the Government's 25 Year Environmental Plans to improve connection to nature, and to address recognised inequalities in health and learning. WWW formed part of the Trust's broader nature recovery programme, to maintain canals, and improve habitats for wildlife.



Council for  
Learning Outside the Classroom

**Green Recovery Challenge Fund**



## Part 1: Introduction

## Aims for Waterways, Wildlife and Wellbeing

The design of WWW was informed by evidence on the wide range of health, wellbeing and learning benefits that can be delivered by taking learning outside the classroom into natural environments, and on the barriers that schools face in doing more of this and how to overcome them (Waite, 2016, Natural England, 2022). It was an ambitious package which aimed to support a large cohort of schools with the ability to deliver a wide range of positive outcomes for students by embedding LOtC into daily practice and by creating a legacy of ongoing delivery in natural environments beyond the end of the project.

A set of priority outcomes for teachers and students were defined, that would help to measure and draw conclusions on the impact and identify future needs and recommendations for schools and teaching staff, that would be used to inform policy and practice. These were defined as follows:

### Priority outcomes

- Learning outcomes for pupils
- Teacher confidence to deliver LOtC
- Wellbeing
- Pro-environmental behaviour
- Nature connectedness



## The WWW programme for schools

WWW comprised of an opt-in tiered education and training package for primary schools, with approved purposes / outputs:

- **Tier 1 schools** to receive CLOtC membership
- **Tier 2 schools** to receive membership plus individual mentoring and training, provided by CLOtC
- **Tier 3 schools** to receive membership, mentoring and training, and an opportunity to engage in practical environmental activities, delivered by the Trust

For secondary schools, bespoke careers workshops focussing on green careers working with nature and the environment were delivered. These comprised hands-on activities and Q & A sessions with environmental experts from the Trust.

## Part 1: Introduction

## Target regions

CLOtC membership was available to schools across the West Midlands. Tier 2 and Tier 3 packages were available to schools within seven areas across the West Midlands, all of which comprised a wide range of urban spaces near canals.

- Central Birmingham
- Walsall
- Coventry
- Smethwick (Birmingham)
- Perry Barr (Birmingham)
- Birmingham University District
- Leamington Spa

70,000 children and young people live within the identified areas, many of them places of high deprivation. People in the West Midlands have a shorter life expectancy than nationally and spend more time in poor health (Public Health England health profiles). The Pandemic exacerbated these health inequalities and reduced time children spent in nature (People and Nature Survey 2021), and widened the learning gap between children from high and low income households (NFER 2020). This provided a strong rationale for supporting health, wellbeing and learning outcomes for schools with indices of high deprivation (in line with grant criteria).

## Time frame for delivery

School delivery ran from September 2021 to February 2023.

## Participation: Extent and limitations

To make it as easy as possible to sign up, teachers were recruited during telephone calls, training events or visits from local outdoor learning advisors, as well as online channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn. A target number of schools was identified for each tier:

- 500 schools to receive CLOtC membership,



- (of which) 250 schools to also receive mentoring and training,
- (of which) 50 schools to also receive practical environmental activity.

Schools were invited to send an expression of interest to take part in the project and to choose which tier they were interested in. Eligibility was based on meeting criteria according to indices of multiple deprivation, proximity to a canal and a lack of existing LOtC practice. Schools were selected in order of their level of deprivation and priority given to those within 1km of a canal. This was extended in a stepped manner to fill recruitment for each tier:

- Schools receiving CLOtC membership gained immediate access to online live and pre-recorded CPD (Continuing Professional Development), lesson plans and resources to help them develop LOtC in their own time.

## Part 1: Introduction

- Mentoring was delivered over two terms, with a choice of start dates of January, April, June and September 2022, forming four separate mentoring cohorts. Challenges such as on-going Covid restrictions, staff absences and teacher strike action impacted this delivery timeframe and many schools deferred starting to one of the later cohorts. In addition to mentoring and CPD, Tier 2 schools were also supported to work through the CLOtC Progress Tracker, (a simple tool and framework to audit, plan and develop their LOtC practice), and, should they wish to, to apply for the LOtC Mark to recognise their progress. Other training opportunities included an accredited Visit Leader Training Course, Using Your School Grounds, Developing Nature Connectedness, and Water Safety.
- Pupils in Tier 3 schools were engaged in practical, interactive conservation activities led by the Trust's outdoor learning coordinators, ranging from plastic challenges to bug-house building. The ambition was to deliver these activities outdoors, in local spaces provided by the canals, to encourage schools to use nearby outdoor spaces and involve young people in real life environmental activities. In some instances these activities were delivered in the school grounds.



# Part 2: Measuring success

A comprehensive programme of evaluation, led by the Trust's Insight & Evidence team, was designed to assess the effectiveness of the WWW school package in achieving its aims and objectives, to capture learning during delivery and to provide recommendations.

## Research aims

- To assess whether the project met targets set for membership, mentoring and practical activities
- To capture impact on key outcomes for teachers and pupils (pupil learning, teacher confidence, wellbeing, pro-environmental behaviour, nature connectedness)
- To understand how the project was successful in delivering outcomes, by understanding motivations, identifying and overcoming barriers
- To identify whether schools intend to continue to deliver LOtC and what support they would require





## Part 2: Measuring success

## Methodologies

The evaluation comprised quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A detailed explanation is provided at Annex A.

### Quantitative methodology

Self-report pre and post surveys were created for teachers and pupils. These were designed to track changes in personal outcomes such as wellbeing, nature connectedness and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour, as well as wider teaching and learning outcomes from mentored schools. The number of teachers and pupils completing pre and post surveys are shown below:

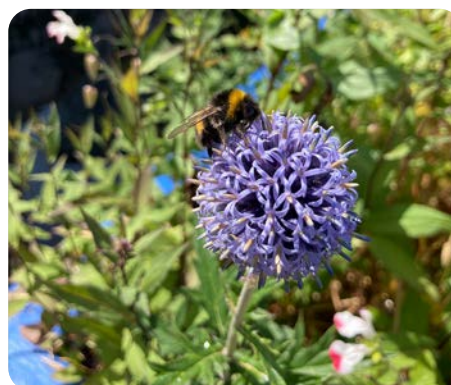
	Pre	Post
Teachers	n= 46	n=31
Pupils	n =606	n=130

Due to the challenging delivery circumstances the evaluation response was low, although still large enough to do statistical analysis on the pupil survey. The survey responses analysed here are all from schools who received CPD and mentoring.

### Qualitative methodologies

The evaluation was augmented by a number of qualitative tools, which provided useful insight and guidance for future provision, specifically:

- Hosting a discussion session for project schools at the CLOtC annual conference,
- Using the LOtC progress trackers to demonstrate and accredit progress,
- Commissioning a series of case study interviews, with five primary school teachers taking part in the mentoring scheme and two secondary school teachers from schools that had received a careers workshop, to illustrate teacher experience.



# Part 3: Headline findings

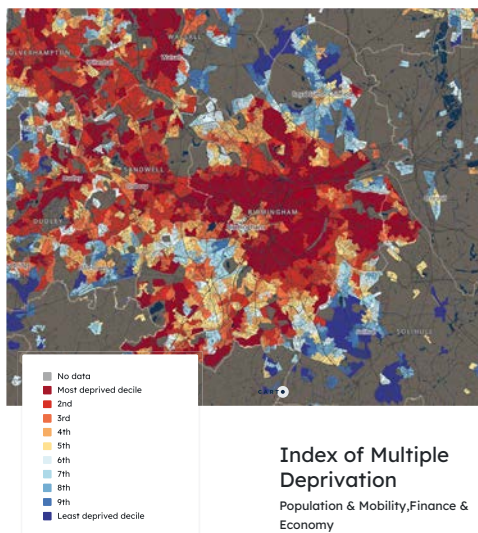
## Delivery of approved purposes

The WWW project was successful in meeting all targets set for membership, mentoring and practical activities. Based on average numbers of pupils in West Midlands primary schools, the project reach was 123,500 pupils.

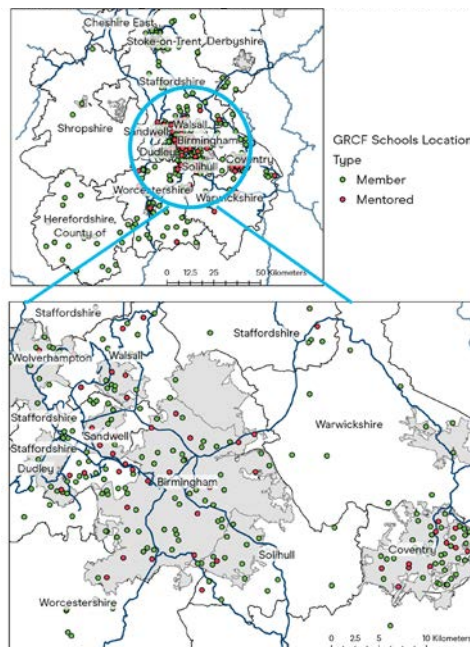
The intention to engage with young people from deprived areas was also achieved. There is a strong correlation between participating schools and areas of highest deprivation across the target delivery areas.

Educational and training package	Target	Achieved
<b>Schools receiving CLOtC Membership</b>	500	<b>519</b> (386 primary, 89 secondary, 3 Independent, 34 SEND and 7 APIs)
<b>Schools supported in embedding CLOtC (mentoring and training)</b>	250	<b>292</b> (75 mentored, 217 offered face to face training/CPD)
<b>Schools engaging in practical environmental activities</b>	50	<b>56</b>
<b>Pupils engaged in practical LoTc activities</b>	1,500	<b>2,380</b>

## Areas of deprivation in West Midlands



## Location of WWW schools



## Part 3: Headline findings

## Impact on priority outcomes for teachers and pupils

### Outcome: Pupil learning

There was a statistically significant improvement on children's subjective learning. The self-report pupil survey results showed a statistically significant increase in learning and wellbeing. Furthermore the increase seen for the learning statements was also statistically significant. ( $P < 0.01$ )

This construct was measured with the following items:

- I learn well
- I do things I never thought I could
- I listen to others
- I behave well
- I help others

The teachers concurred, with a strong shift in the numbers agreeing that LOtC very positively impacts on a range of outcomes related to learning amongst pupils.

Teachers reported that LOtC had positively impacted pupils' **enjoyment of lessons**. The number reporting it to have a very positive impact increased post project.

Prior to the WWW programme, only a quarter of teachers thought LOtC had a very positive impact on pupil **engagement with learning**. This increased after the programme. Also significant was the shift in opinions towards the very positive impact on **pupil attainment**.

There was also a notable shift in the number of teachers attributing a very positive **impact on behaviour** to LOtC. This finding could help to counteract the perception that behaviour and discipline may be compromised when learning is taken beyond the classroom.

A shift in opinions about the **impact on social skills** was even more marked, and is an important message for schools keen to address skills gaps.

The interviews with teachers revealed yet more evidence of lasting positive impact on pupil enjoyment, engagement and behaviour. LOtC augmented learning was attributed to a number of outcomes, including improved vocabulary, increased curiosity and inspiration, building important life skills such as confidence and resilience, as well as improvements to pupil attitudes, moods and behaviours which lasted well beyond the LOtC intervention.

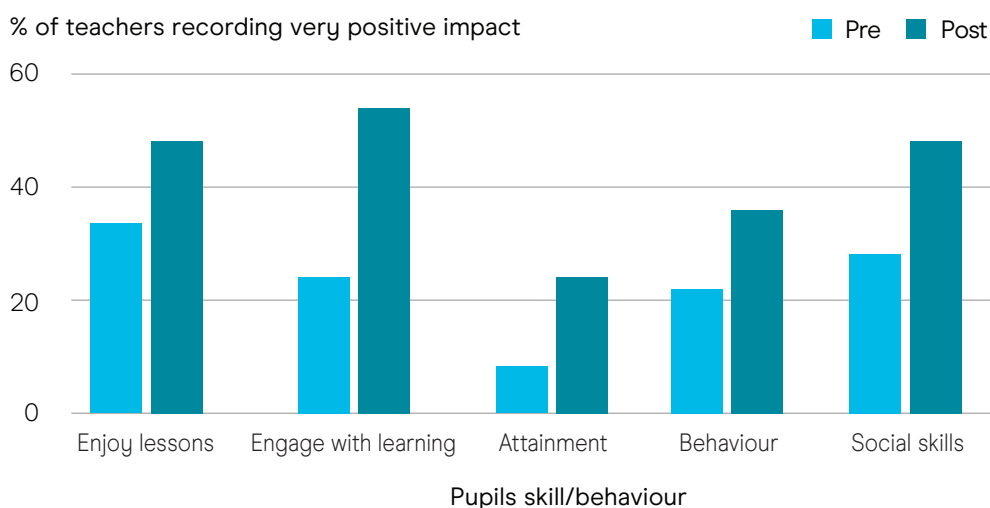
“There's an overwhelming sense that pupils come through the school gates with a smile on their faces. The enthusiasm that started with outdoor projects has now spread to the classrooms.”

“Behaviour and engagement have improved, but the ideas and creativity generated back in the classroom are so much better too.”

“Some livelier pupils seem calmer and engrossed with activities. Some quieter pupils engage with their peers more when learning outside.”

“There is greater enthusiasm and far more interest from pupils who before would not think about participating in any outdoor education.”

### Impact on pupils: Findings from teacher surveys



Part 3: Headline findings

### Outcome: Teacher confidence in taking learning beyond the classroom

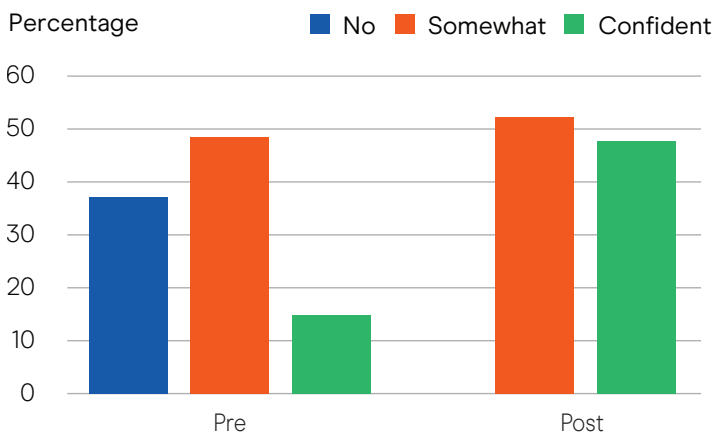
Despite a relatively short and challenging delivery period, whilst about 40% teachers reported feeling a lack of confidence before the project, no teachers reported a lack of confidence after the project.

This transition to greater confidence was further highlighted in the qualitative research.

There were also significant shifts in teacher perceptions of the impact of LOtC on both teaching delivery approaches and CPD. Having participated in WWW, two thirds reported LOtC had a positive or very positive impact on how teaching is delivered and over three-quarters reported a positive or very positive impact on their CPD.

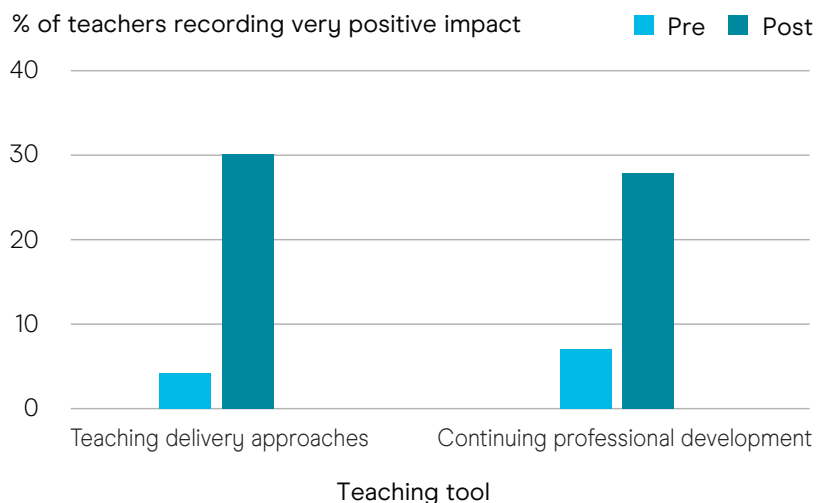


### Do staff feel confident delivering sessions in local natural spaces?



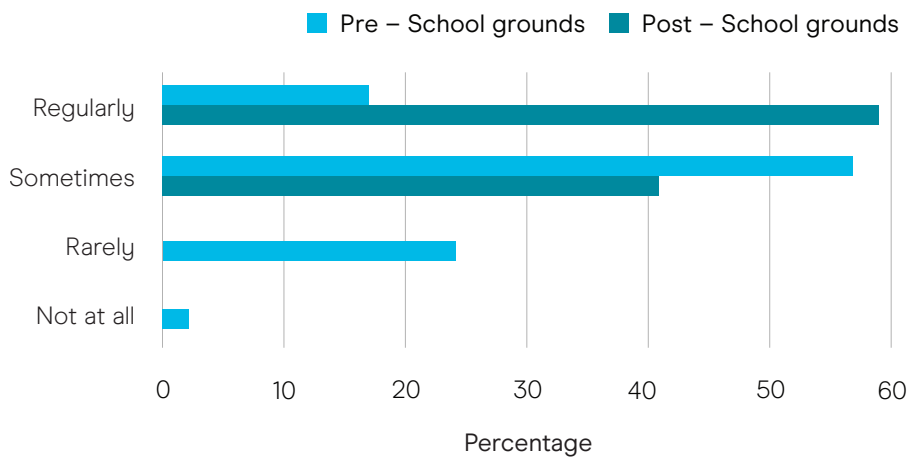
“ We’ve received so much support – from initial training and ideas to helpful tips and advice on monitoring progress. It’s so satisfying to see the whole school adopt this way of working and recognise its value and appreciate its importance. Many more staff are feeling confident around learning beyond the classroom than before the project began. ”

### Impact on teachers



Part 3: Headline findings

Are staff using the natural environment in school grounds?



A large shift towards a very positive reported impact of LOtC on awareness and use of the local area was also recorded.

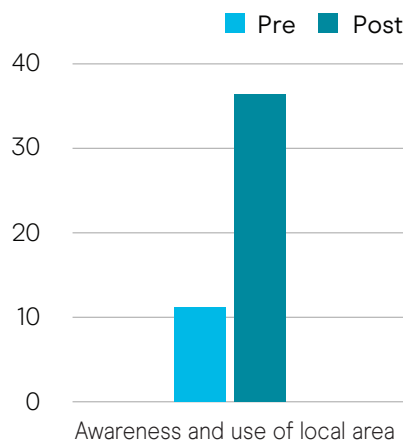
The use of the natural environment in school grounds increased considerably after taking part in the programme. Two thirds of teachers reported they now use the school grounds regularly.

The effect was less marked for the use of the natural environment in the local area/further afield, which could be attributed to staff shortages limiting travel off-site. However, most teachers reported post-project that they now used the local area 'sometimes,' versus 'rarely' pre-project.

It was difficult to accurately compare hours spent pre and post project due to the variable way in which teachers interpreted and answered the question, but research suggests a much higher proportion of LOtC mentored schools deliver activities and lessons outdoors, compared to the national average.

Impact on teachers

% of teachers recording very positive impact



Part 3: Headline findings

## Outcome: Wellbeing

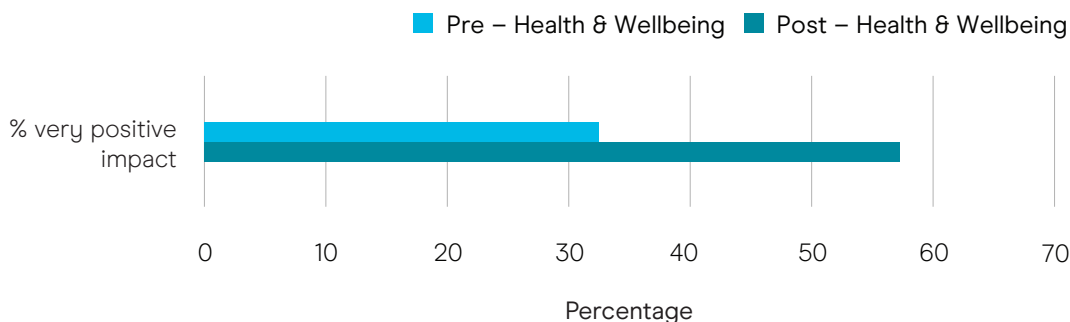
### Pupil wellbeing

The self-reported pupil surveys showed a statistically significant increase in combined learning and wellbeing. The wellbeing statements scores all increased, with statistically significant increases observed for two of the individual wellbeing scale items: 'I feel safe' (P<0.01) and 'I feel confident.' (P<0.01)

Teachers, in their pre and post surveys agreed, with almost every teacher stating LOfC had a positive impact on pupil wellbeing. There was a strong shift in the number recording a very positive impact.



### Impact of LOfC on pupil health and wellbeing



### Teacher wellbeing

For the teachers taking part in the programme, the four subjective wellbeing outcome measures relating to happiness, life satisfaction, and feeling things in life are worthwhile and anxiety were all better after taking part in the project. Post survey scores for the first 3 measures increased to above national average post project, and importantly, the teachers taking part in the qualitative discussions all attributed improvements in their personal wellbeing to taking part in the project.

Teacher anxiety was considerably higher than national average pre project, and although scores dropped slightly post project it still remained high, possibly reflecting the factors

“ Breaking down boundaries to make this happen has been groundbreaking. I feel a sense of satisfaction that I have helped, especially when pupils tell me it is better than anything that happens in the classroom. ”

affecting the teaching profession over this period. Factors such as post-Covid conditions resulting in high staff absences, the ongoing financial crisis, teaching union strikes taking place during the research period could all contribute to anxiety, but without a control group we cannot determine whether the project was able to mitigate any increase compared to teachers that had not taken part.

## Part 3: Headline findings

## Outcome: Pro-conservation (Pro-environmental behaviour)

### Pupil pro-conservation

There was a marginal increase in the pre and post pro-conservation scores reported by pupils and two of the individual scale items showed a statistically significant change. Encouragingly this included the statement 'I talk to other people (such as family, friends etc.) about the importance of looking after nature and the environment'.

### Teacher pro-conservation

A mistake in our surveys meant that teachers were required to answer yes or no to a number of pro-conservation statements.

There was an increase in the proportion of teachers responding positively to all but one pro-conservation behaviours post WWW.

### Case study: Longford Park Primary

"Step by step online training was instrumental in allaying early concerns amongst staff around having time, resources, confidence and knowledge to deliver learning beyond the classroom.

An extensive visits and outreach programme has been developed – trips to nearby parks, museums and farms, local nature walks and river studies plus visits from local authors, influencers and even a horse to inspire creative writing about a highwayman!

PTA and parental donations have funded equipment and outdoor clothing.

Learning beyond the classroom is not just outdoors – it can be in-school, within the grounds and beyond e.g. kitchen is used for Food Tech/DT, quiet reading area, school hall turned into everything from reading dens to Mexican parties and local cemetery has inspired wonderful creative writing.

We must keep up the momentum and keep improving – bring other teachers onboard through CDP and other training opportunities."

### Case study: Earlsden Primary

"We engaged with the project with the aim of promoting a better connection with nature and providing more opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors. Staff have been inspired by the CLOtC training demonstrating how core subjects can be delivered outside the classroom and specialist training on bringing gardening into the curriculum.

Our school has established a link with a Forest School, engaged with a local beekeeper who delivered a talk about pollination, became an Eco School, created vertical gardens (living walls) within the classroom as part of Science curriculum and built a small sensory garden to grow fruit and vegetables.

Pupils have benefitted hugely from visiting the local Botanical Gardens. Going forward they are establishing a lunchtime gardening club, launching a 'Green Week' with workshops and teacher-led outdoor sessions and walking to the canal to develop positive wellbeing.

The project has sparked change and new opportunities throughout the school but the next step is to formalise an action plan and embed this approach right across the taught curriculum as well as through extra-curricular experiences."

Part 3: Headline findings

## Outcome: Nature Connection

### Pupil nature connectedness

The project had a positive impact on nature connectedness amongst pupils. The statements ‘Spending time in nature is important to me’ and ‘I feel part of nature’ were the two that were impacted most.

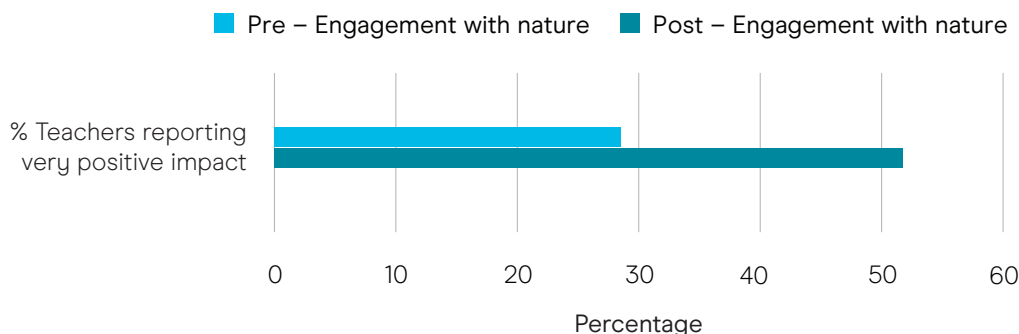
The mean Nature Connection Index scores amongst the pupil cohort increased after taking part in the project. The pupil post score ranked higher than the comparable national average for under 16s (Natural England 2020) and was equivalent to the level associated with pro-environmental behaviour in adults (Natural England 2020).

Over 50% of teachers reported a very positive impact on engagement with and understanding of nature amongst the pupils taking part in WWW.

### Teacher nature connectedness

Amongst teachers, the nature connection scores recorded before the project started were substantially higher than the national average, suggesting an elevated level of existing interest in nature connection amongst the self-selecting teacher cohort. Encouragingly, the average nature connection scores increased further post project.

### Teachers view of pupils engagement with nature





## Part 3: Headline findings

## Understanding how the project was successful in delivering outcomes

### Motivations for taking part in the WWW programme

Motivations were identified through thematic analysis of open-ended comments in the teacher pre-survey and detailed in-depth discussions. Of those highlighted, many were centred on hands-on support for teachers (most people opted for the supported offers), some on benefits to pupils, and others related to a whole school approach, including achieving the LOtC Mark accredited status. The fact that teachers could see such a wide range of potential benefits was a critical driver to their investing precious and stretched resources into the project, and reflects the literature on LOtC delivering multiple co-benefits.

Project schools were also asked to summarise what they were hoping to achieve from taking part. The most important themes for their ambitions and hopes included nature, enhance, curriculum, opportunities, experiences and understanding.

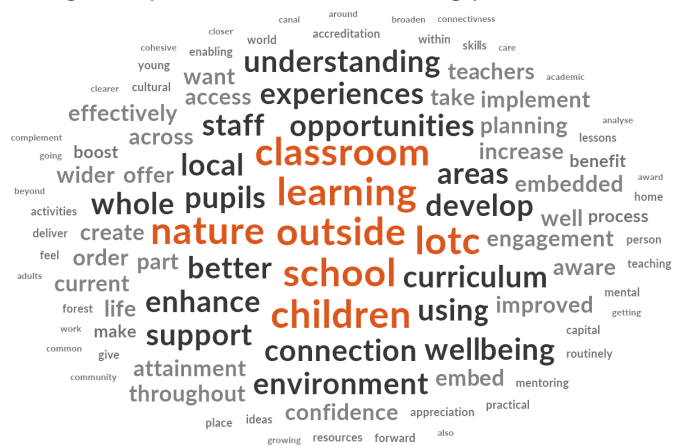
It was evident that many schools had embarked upon some level of commitment to LOtC prior to the WWW project. Half of respondents to the pre survey revealed £500 – £1,000 had been spent on LOtC in the previous year, and two-thirds had made changes to school grounds, over the same period, to develop it as a learning environment.

The aspiration to embrace LOtC was apparent amongst many of the schools at project outset but it was the practical advice and support offered by WWW that appears to have been the catalyst to join the project, to develop and embed LOtC practice, and helped to overcome barriers to taking teaching beyond the classroom walls.

#### Motivations for taking part



#### What do you hope to achieve from taking part?



There was a clear shift in the range of subjects being delivered via LOtC. The list included Science, PE, Geography, Art, Maths, History, English and PSHE, and the subject taught most regularly outside the classroom changed from PE to Science.



We just need to apply a little more creative thinking as to how we tackle certain subjects. We have big plans! We've already started taking Science and History outside, but we want to do so much more. We're looking at ways to link learning and to take advantage of opportunities in the local community where the children can have their learning enriched. There really are no limits! ”

Part 3: Headline findings

### Overcoming barriers to LOtC

The initial barriers to schools starting their LOtC journey were closely linked to local factors such as lack of teacher confidence, LOtC not being valued by staff, lack of lesson plans and resources, curriculum uncertainty and safety concerns.

Encouragingly, discussions with teachers and results from the post surveys confirmed that these initial challenges had been resolved or become less of a barrier after participating in WFW. Nearly three-quarters of teachers reported that the project had been effective in overcoming the barriers they faced and the depth interviews revealed a number of unique strategies that had been employed to build staff confidence, and begin to embed LOtC into teaching practice across the curriculum.

As schools became more ambitious and developed their LOtC provision, other external factors emerged as challenges going forward including lack of funding, a need for extra staff, lack of time and issues surrounding inclement weather. One respondent mentioned that they were not able to embrace LOtC as much as they would like due to external constraints.



These policy barriers need to be addressed in a different forum, eg at national or regional policy level.

The face-to-face, collaborative elements of the WFW programme, including mentoring, training and practical activities emerged as key enablers for staff. The mentoring scheme was particularly valued. 75% of respondents agreed or completely agreed that the programme had helped them deliver the outcomes that the school had established for their participation at the outset, further attributing this to the support, resources and ideas shared through WFW.

### Barriers to LOtC pre and post





Part 3: Headline findings

**Case study: Frederick Bird Primary**

“After several attempts to introduce a programme of outdoor learning, the opportunity to receive formal training helped with developing a dynamic programme to take learning beyond the classroom walls. CLOtC helped the school with risk assessment, stripping away many of the barriers presented by staff and introducing spontaneity into planning and lesson delivery.

The canal was central to the programme and there are now regular trips to the towpath for every

child whatever the weather. A termly litter pick along the canal has also been introduced.

Going forward we are planning surveys at the local shopping centre, counting traffic outside the school gates and identifying wildlife along the canal. Local walks, visits from local businesses and establishing long standing links with the community are all on the wish list. Simple tweaks to the school day e.g. playtimes in the park, are also in the pipeline.”

**Case study: Barford Primary**

“Central to using outdoor learning to broaden the school curriculum was the CDP training and additional monitoring opportunities – this raised awareness of what was possible and demonstrated how to deliver an effective programme providing the confidence to have a go and motivate other staff.

We’ve extended outreach and remote learning opportunities. Reception and Year 1 pupils now go outside every day and this will be extended through all school years.

We’ve started taking Science and History outside and, with a little more creative thinking, other subjects will follow and we are looking at ways to link with the local community where children can have their learning enriched.”



**Case study: Ashton-under-Hill Primary**

“Our school understood the importance of learning beyond the classroom but needed help with increasing the significance of its provision so that it was placed at the heart of planning, teaching and learning. Thanks to training and advice from CLOtC we now have a rich and diverse programme of learning comprising visitors, trips out of school, virtual experiences, lots of creative thinking and time spent making the most of natural resources in the local area.

Moving forward the school will continue to identify new opportunities, address internal challenges and support teachers encouraging them to build on the good work and keep everything going. They now understand the full potential for learning beyond the classroom and want to continue the many ways it can be interpreted beyond going outdoors e.g. just going outside into a bigger environment for an active Maths starter generates great focus back in the classroom.”

# Part 4: Project learning and recommendations

The project was successful in delivering multiple outcomes, at a large scale, over a relatively short delivery period, and in a cost effective way, despite all the challenges.

- It was possible to interest a very large number of schools (over 500) in LOtC through this delivery model.
- Being evidence led from the start ensures project design and delivery is fit for purpose.
- The package of membership augmented by mentoring and practical activities helped schools overcome barriers and to audit, plan, develop and evaluate their LOtC activity and begin to embed it within their school.
- The offer of face-to-face support with mentoring and practical activities are strong motivators and enablers for schools to start to engage in LOtC.
- WWW schools reported much greater confidence to take a wider range of lessons outside, more often. Much of this was attributed to the face-to-face mentoring scheme and there are signs of real shift in school culture.
- The programme positively impacted a wide range of learning, wellbeing, nature connection and pro-conservation outcomes for pupils and teachers. It is extremely rare to capture evidence on this range of outcomes in the same project.
- And there were marked positive shifts in the number of teachers now using local natural environment spaces regularly for teaching, and those reporting a positive impact on teaching approaches and CPD.



## Part 4: Project learning and recommendations



### Project learnings to inform future planning

There were considerable unexpected challenges to delivery that arose from ongoing Covid restrictions, staff absences, the emerging financial crisis, teacher strike action, and snow days. This required constant adaptation of the delivery model, largely to move more delivery online, to move more of the practical activity delivery into school grounds, and to offer more schools to opt for shorter one-off training sessions rather than require commitment to a longer multi-term programme of CPD or mentoring.

The WWT delivery timescale was relatively short and hence unlikely to have captured optimum results from activities and interventions. A full three terms of delivery time for schools would be far more likely to effect a change, and two years may be needed to foster long-term change and properly embed LOtC into classroom culture and practice. Delivery (and evaluation) needed to adapt constantly to meet unexpected factors and changing needs of schools over an extended period. Working in partnership adds considerable value.

## Part 4: Project learning and recommendations

### Next steps: Recommendations

The Trust and CLOtC Partnership plan to:

- Secure wider partnership support and funding (to build on achievements) to allow:
  - Amplification – potential to replicate WWW in other areas of the UK.
  - Contribute to strategic evidence needs by commissioning an independent evaluation to confirm this is a universally available, low-cost intervention that could address learning and health inequalities, and develop pro-conservation behaviours.
  - Provide ongoing support for project schools who are committed to developing LOtC practice, such as:
    - sharing of practice, peer to peer learning and networking between schools,
    - mapping local LOtC service providers, sites and speakers,
    - raising interest and aspiration amongst pupils in environment and conservation subjects and to encourage and develop a succession of young people looking for green jobs.
- Carry out a follow up evaluation with the mentored schools to track progress in embedding LOtC, to add to insight relating to long term change.
- Support mentored schools with practical activities and outdoor visits where there is capacity within the Trust’s current learning programme.
- Extend the partnership between the Trust and CLOtC, for example promoting the mentoring offer to schools taking part in the School Pocket Adoption programme.
- Develop legacy project proposals to support project schools to develop and embed LOtC practice.
- Work with these schools to help to understand how LOtC barriers for schools change over time as their ambition and practice expands, how best to address these barriers, and to increase our understanding of how to support development of nature connectedness and pro-conservation outcomes.
- Promote findings from the project to demonstrate how this model can support the delivery of policy drivers such as the National Education Nature Park, Natural History GCSE and pupil/teacher mental health.



## Annex 1: Detailed methodology

A robust mixed-method evaluation, comprising quantitative and qualitative tools.

### Quantitative methodology

Self-report pre and post surveys were created for teachers and pupils. These were designed to track changes in personal outcomes such as wellbeing, nature connectedness and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour, as well as wider teaching and learning outcomes.

Nationally validated scales, or selected question items from validated scales, were used wherever possible and to enable comparison with nationally representative scores:

- Items from the Child and Youth tool, (developed by the Trust and currently under validation and peer review), was used to measure wellbeing and learning amongst pupils. This measure has been designed specifically for children aged 7-12 years to self-report on wellbeing in the context of the outdoors and their local area.
- For teachers, the ONS4 scale was used for subjective wellbeing (ONS, 2018)
- Nature connectedness was measured in teachers and pupils using the Nature Connection Index for adults and children (Richardson et al, 2019)
- Pro-conservation behaviours in pupils were measured using the Pro-Conservation Behaviour Scales for adults and children (Barbett et al, 2020).



Responses from pupils gathered using an emoji sliding scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, were converted to a 1-5 numerical value to form overall scores. The Nature Connection Index's own validated weighting was also applied to the nature connectedness score. Teacher pre and post surveys were scripted in Survey Analysis Package (SNAP) and distributed and completed online.

We recognise that the evaluation approach had limitations. Nonetheless there are many interesting and useful findings, particularly from the qualitative data analysis, that provide insight and guidance for the future.



Annex 1: Detailed methodology

Pre and post surveys were completed during May to December 2022 and January to March 2023 respectively. Data analysis was conducted March / April 2023. The pre and post survey samples from mentored schools are shown below:

	Pre	Post
Teachers	n= 46	n=31
Pupils	n =606	n=130

The delivery challenges experienced during the Covid recovery period greatly reduced response rates for the post survey, however the sample size meant statistical analysis was possible on the pupil survey results. Given data on all outcomes did not meet normality assumptions, a Mann Whitney nonparametric hypothesis test was conducted on all outcome measures comparing pre with post to determine if any effects on pupils was statistically significant.

Covid-related staff shortages kept teacher response rates low, suggesting these quantitative findings should be treated with caution.

## Qualitative methodologies

To mitigate against the low response, the evaluation was augmented by a number of qualitative tools, specifically:

- Hosting a discussion session for project schools at the CLOtC annual conference,
- Using the LOtC progress trackers to demonstrate and accredit progress,
- Commissioning a series of case study interviews, with five primary school teachers taking part in the mentoring scheme and two secondary school teachers from schools that had received a careers workshop, to illustrate teacher experience.

Qualitative data analysis provided interesting and useful insight and guidance for future provision. Free text questions from surveys and text from discussions/interviews thematically analysed using NVivo software. Word frequency was also analysed to create Word Clouds to visually represent findings.



# Annex 2: Differences made, described by the schools

## Impact on embedding LOtC

**Working with local attractions to enrich subjects in school.**

Kings Norton Boy's School

**Stipulating a specific amount of time children should be outside the classroom.**

Longford Park Primary School



**Budget set aside for transport if needed to the local and wider area.**

Springfield Primary School

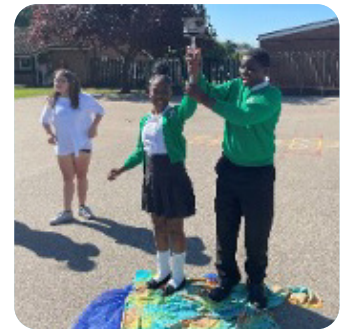


**Whole school focus, staff CPD, increased LOtC lesson time and an outdoor learning lodge.**

Penn Fields School

**Changes to our 'Mission, Vision and Values' statement.**

Templars Primary School



**Activities to create more diverse habitats and outdoor learning spaces.**

Brendon Hill Academy



**Promoting LOtC and all the benefits to parents.**

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

**We are taking part in Generation Wild.**

Bordesley Green Primary School

**Long term planning boost – previously no farm trip; no places of worship other than church; no real nature trips; there were just repeats, and subject leaders weren't involved.**

Birchills CofE Community Academy



Annex 2: School self reporting

## Impact of the project on the staff

Enjoyment, ability to explore new activities and improved relationships with students.

Penn Fields School



Everything I do, I think 'How can I get this outside?' and sharing my simple lesson ideas is inspiring others.

Birchills CofE Community Academy



Enthusied to do more and to develop that further within the curriculum.

Bordesley Green Primary School

Staff have taken onboard CPD and the importance of giving children these opportunities.

Springfield Primary School



Staff have been able to feel like they can be creative when planning lessons.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

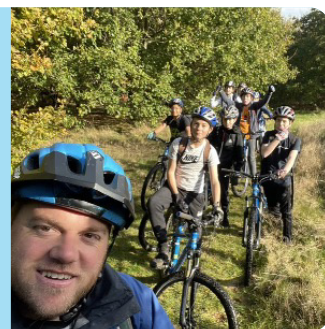


Sharing new ideas, learning from schools in different settings and building connections.

Brendon Hill Academy

Staff now feeling confident to manage risks and taking the learning beyond the classroom.

Templars Primary School



Staff are excited to take the learning outside and want to share the learning with others.

Dovecotes Primary School



## Impact of the project on the students

Parents comment about how much their children are enjoying the LOTC sessions.

Dovecotes Primary School

Students are able to express how they feel about their environment and are more familiar with the area they live in.

Springfield Primary School



Exposure to different professionals, developing wider aspirations.

Longford Park Primary School

Enjoyment, engagement, a positive attitude to lessons and improved health and wellbeing.

Penn Fields School



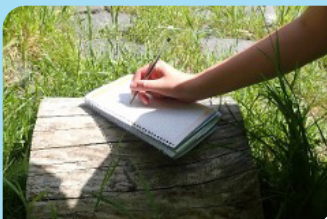
Much wider learning experiences across the school.

Birchills CofE Community Academy



Students have written persuasive letters to our headteacher & school council asking for more opportunities, with positive feedback.

Brendon Hill Academy



Children engaged and enthusiastic about working outside.

Bordesley Green Primary School

Children are enjoying school more and can see the 'fun' in every lesson.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

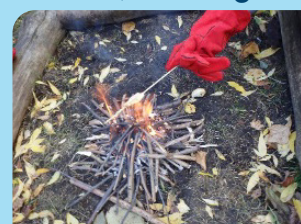


Students have a better understanding of the subject being taught.

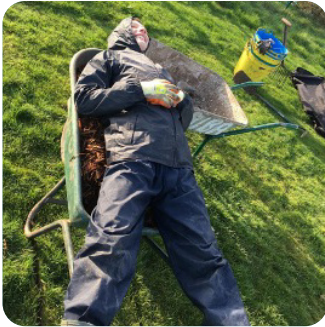
Kings Norton Boy's School

Increased number of children in the focus group finding beauty in nature, treating nature with respect, being happy in nature and feeling part of nature.

Templars Primary School



## Impact on Nature Connectedness



**Having moments of stillness – listening to the sounds we can hear within the environment.**

Dovecotes Primary School

**Standing on the playground and using our senses to listen, see, feel signs of nature.**

Bordesley Green Primary School

**Autumn nature walks, building bug hotels, leaf mandalas, campfire cooking.**

Penn Fields School

**The creation of our tiny forest in the school field.**

Kings Norton Boy's School



**Staff meetings held in the Forest School area.**

Birchills CofE Community Academy

**Children have built hedgehog houses and litter picked and applied for Hedgehog Award.**

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

**Working with local attractions to enrich subjects in school.**

Longford Park Primary School

**Compassion: Setting up an Eco Team to combat recycling, fruit waste and litter in school.**

Templars Primary School



**Year 1 exploring our school grounds and local park – focus on trees and birdwatching.**

Longford Park Primary School





# Canal & River Trust

Making life better by water

**The Canal & River Trust is the UK's largest canals charity, looking after a 2,000 mile network of canals, river navigations, docks and reservoirs across England and Wales. Together, let's make sure they continue to be here for tomorrow and beyond.**

From our countryside to our bustling cities, canals are a place for everyone to connect with nature and our past. However you use them, we all deserve open spaces where we can feel happier and healthier, and where wildlife can thrive. But the future of the nation's canals, other inland waterways and waterspaces and the habitat they support is threatened by changing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall and the tests of time. Together, we can make sure they continue to be here for tomorrow and beyond.

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Council for  
Learning Outside the Classroom

**The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) is a national charity that champions all learning that happens beyond the classroom (LOtC), inside or out, near or far.**

Learning beyond the classroom is unique in delivering multiple co-benefits to health, wellbeing, and learning. So, CLOtC supports education settings (such as nurseries, schools and colleges) and organisations who offer education experiences, by providing the quality assurance and support they need to take their learning beyond the classroom confidently and effectively. We believe every child should have the chance to experience the wide range of health and learning benefits that learning beyond the classroom offers.

    [enquiries@lotc.uk.uk](mailto:enquiries@lotc.uk.uk)

[www.lotc.org.uk](https://www.lotc.org.uk)