

Calderhead High School experience of Permanent Orienteering Courses, 22/9/2020

We have recently purchased a package of Permanent Orienteering Courses from STAG Orienteering Club. This included a survey of the grounds, the generation of a proper Orienteering Map, installation of permanent markers, clippers, large variety of courses, and staff training. The crucial part for us was the excellent hands on training provided by ex PE teacher Terry O'Brien BEM. As none of the PE staff had participated in an Orienteering event or used a Permanent Orienteering course, they had a very limited view of the possibilities and benefits to pupils of including Orienteering in the curriculum. The one-hour CPD session opened their eyes to the range of educational opportunities that would be available by using Orienteering as a vehicle to develop life skills. As many of the pupils have little or no experience of using a map to navigate it is essential to provide a safe learning environment to allow them to develop their skills. For us their own school grounds is that safe environment.

The Orienteering resource has been used as part of our extensive P7 transition programme, Core PE, S1 to S6, and as part of the Sports Leaders Award. It was also used on a regular basis during the 2020 lockdown as a core HUB activity for all children. The benefit for each cohort is independence, learning to solve a problem either on your own, with a partner or in a group with a tangible outcome that is intuitively easy to self-evaluate. Orienteering activities and careful feedback, self, peer, and teacher, encourages meta-cognition in that no one is going to solve it for you need to develop learning strategies to successfully complete the challenges. This is especially true if pupils are encouraged to share their learning strategies as the courses become more challenging both in terms of navigation and physical demands.

One of the key benefits for us is the way the P7 pupils really get to know the whole grounds of the school in a controlled and safe environment. After the 90 min session they feel it is now there school and they have a real sense of belonging, this would be very difficult to replicate using another activity.

The Orienteering courses are split into two categories, type A that use the Permanent Markers around the school estate and type B that require clippers to be temporarily deployed. The Permanent Marker courses are used to build confidence and skills throughout the units of work and the clipper course are used as end of unit challenges and can be used to provide an assessment of pupil progress. The staff CPD provided a hands-on demonstration of how easily a lesson can be differentiated depending on the stage of development of the participants.

The feedback from pupils has been very positive and they have certainly enjoyed overtaking what they initially thought were challenge Success Criteria. The PE staff have been pleasantly surprised at how well the units have been received and feel they are now providing a much better pupil learning experience.

Five publications support the design, planning and delivery of a Curriculum for Excellence and Building the Curriculum 4: skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is one of these. Given that there are only five Building the Curriculum documents, one being dedicated Skills for Learning, life and Work reinforces the significance of this aspect of young peoples' learning within the curriculum. By using the Permanent Orienteering Courses and additional Resources as well as the highly developed teaching skills of excellent experienced practitioners we are equipping pupils with the Skills for Learning, Life and Work.

Skills for Learning

- remembering (follow basic instructions);
- understanding (what the map is telling you);
- applying (using the information on the map to make good decisions);
- analysing (is there a better way we could navigate);
- evaluating (am I using all of the information available to me);
- creating (could I design a fair but challenging course for my classmates)

Skills for Life

The four themes of Curriculum for Excellence that are the responsibility of all:

- Literacy; (map reading skills, making sense of an abstract image)
- Numeracy; (optimising the best route, judging distance using a scale)
- Health & Wellbeing; (Outdoor Physical activity in a safe environment, mentally stimulating)
- Enterprise (working with others to complete a challenging task)

Skills for Work

Seven 'softer' employability skills identified in Scotland's Lifelong Skills Strategy:

- effective oral and written communication skills, (working with a partner, listening, negotiating, persuading)
- the ability to work with others, (agreeing the best solution, able to express your opinion)
- the ability to solve problems, (often in orienteering a mistake is made and you must recognise when this happens and then try again from where you are)

- the ability to think critically and creatively, (select best route choice based on a complex data set)
- the ability to learn and to continue learning, (by finding the correct marker pupils are rewarded for success in real time)
- managing time, planning, and organising, (the essence of Orienteering)
- the ability to take responsibility for one's own self development (pupils need to continually dynamically Risk Assess, they need to accept the choices they have made and quickly resolve any issues that arise)

By introducing Orienteering as a core activity, we have found that pupils have a very enjoyable adventure in their school grounds whilst developing their skill set and would highly recommend Permanent Course activities to other schools.

John Robertson,
Headteacher
Calderhead High School