

Edinburgh School gets green funding

The weather no longer prevents pupils at Prospect Bank Special School in Edinburgh from going outside, as a recent funding boost has enabled the purchase of waterproof clothing. The school was awarded £350 from the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) Learning Outdoors Fund to increase participation in outdoor learning and natural play, regardless of the weather conditions.

Supported by Forestry Commission Scotland, the CSGN Learning Outdoors Fund promotes learning and play outdoors and healthier lifestyles amongst the education community.

Susan McLaren, Principal Teacher at Prospect Bank Special School, said: "We are extremely grateful for this much needed financial support from the CSGN Learning Outdoors Fund, which has allowed us to buy a full class set of good quality waterproofs which should last us for many years to come.

"A trip to the woods on a rainy day last year was a great success – the children loved the sensory experience of splashing in the puddles and squelching in mud, but with no waterproofs we had some very soggy children to bring back to school. It's great that we can now continue with our outdoor trips, whatever the weather."

Schools and nurseries across Central Scotland are invited to apply for a grant of between £200 and £350 to develop the outdoor educational space within their grounds and beyond, or to purchase equipment to use for learning and play outside. Funding is also available to support training or other educational resources to enable staff to lead outdoor learning and natural play.

An audit tool, developed in partnership with Grounds for

Learning, enables schools and nurseries to identify potential gaps in their provision of learning outdoors so they can prioritise areas of improvement.

Keith Geddes, Chair of the Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board, said: “Our Learning Outdoors Fund seeks to promote healthy lifestyles by facilitating the improvement of outdoor education spaces, thereby enabling children and teaching staff to spend more time outside.

“Prospect Bank Special School is a fantastic example of how some support can really transform the learning experience for children by allowing them to enjoy the outdoors in all weather conditions.”

Karen Boyd, Education Officer at Forestry Commission Scotland, explains: “Learning outdoors is such an enriching experience for children and can make a real difference to their development. When children learn outside they naturally use their senses to pick up new concepts, and, of course, this energy of being outdoors comes back into the classroom with them and helps concentration.

“The funding can be used for outdoor equipment, like wet weather gear to make sure that weather isn’t a barrier to getting outside, and can take place within school grounds or at local woodlands nearby.

“It can also be used to support training or other educational resources to enable staff to lead outdoor learning. Once you’ve witnessed a group of teachers enthusiastically taking part in an outdoor training session – doing den making and symmetry work – in cold, wet November, you become a firm believer about the positive benefits this type of learning has on children!”

For further information on the CSGN Learning Outdoors Fund, please visit <http://www.centalscotlandgreennetwork.org/Funding/csgn-learni>

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