

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience






Head of Centre's report on progress in 2014



The Centre is managed by FSC for, and on behalf of, the City of London

Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Committee on progress at the Epping Forest Field Centre in 2014. I recommend that the report be RECEIVED.

Criteria	2014 Targets	2014 Performance at end of first quarter
Learner experiences	22,000 (aspiration)	On target
Volunteer days	350	On target
 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE	Maintain standards for IIP. [Externally assessed in 2012]	Maintaining standards and seeking continuous improvement
 Quality Badge awarded by Council for Learning Outside the Classroom	Maintain standards for the Quality Badge.	Maintaining standards and seeking continuous improvement, especially in relation to QB Assessor recommendations
 NorthgateArinso employer services Safety Shield Gold	Maintain standards for the Safety Shield.	Maintaining standards
Meet or exceed service user expectations	> 90% of service users to record 'yes' on feedback forms	On target
Increase environmental understanding of service users	> 90% of customers to record 'yes' on feedback forms	On target

Staffing

One of our Team Leaders left in April after nearly ten years at the Centre to take a senior role at FSC Malham Tarn. As an interim step we have replaced her with a new member of our education team so that we can continue to deliver courses without disruption. The summer term would not be an easy time to train a new Team Leader it would deflect our attention from high priority work. I and the remaining Team Leader will share all of the leadership and management until there is an opportunity to address this matter more fully.

Our Bursar/Administrator leaves on 9 May.

Facilities

Further remedial works arising from the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) undertaken in the summer of 2012 should take place in the near future (order 601319). The Contractor has indicated that they will shortly come on site to plan and schedule the work. This should address most outstanding FRA remedial actions. The possible exceptions to this relate to the testing of the lightning conductor and also to the advice to install emergency lighting in the adult toilets. The intentions regarding these are still unclear to me at the time of reporting.

The boilers for the main building were taken out of commission on 17 January when they were declared unsafe by contractors. Whilst the support from the Superintendent and his team (temporary use of the Visitor Centre and a supply of portable electrical heaters) has been much appreciated the absence of appropriate heating has created a number of issues:

- negative impacts on customers - especially on cold and wet days
- cumulative negative impacts on staff of working in frequently very low (office) temperatures and supporting cold customers
- increased energy costs and negative CO2 impacts
- power outages due to circuit overloading
- the negative impacts of power outages on the ICT network server which ultimately appear to have led to the complete failure of server and the need to send it off for data recovery with disruption arising from a lack of access to data and time spent on data transfer and setting up a new network server

These difficulties for Centre staff have also been compounded by the present arrangements for maintenance. Whilst some maintenance receives exemplary attention and our direct City staff contacts are always very helpful, it is sometimes difficult to understand why other maintenance issues are dealt with in a protracted way where there seems to be a considerable lack of clarity regarding process and intended outcome and where many people seem to be involved in resolving things that would appear to be resolvable in a less time consuming and complex manner. I raise this as comment and not complaint and in the context that I have reported appreciation at previous meetings for the City's efforts in ensuring that the facilities are of a high standard. I am hoping that the comment will be helpful at all levels.

Progress

In recent months we have:

- hosted a webinar for SEEd on 'Biodiversity in the new Science Primary Curriculum'
- delivered a workshop for 15 trainee teachers from the Consortium for School Centred Initial Teacher Training (West Essex)
- delivered a 'biology in the new curriculum' CPD workshop for teachers
- had an article relating to curriculum change, by our team leaders, published in 'Primary Science'
- introduced a new ICT related adult course 'Wildlife in the Cloud'
- caught up with some intended improvements to core course materials
- produced a new look with new content for the 'Associates' website; membership was up from 763 in 2013 to 849 at the end of the first quarter and continues to rise.

The final phase of the Learning for Biodiversity project has just been concluded. A series of short videos using 'footage' taken by staff and children during the project with stop motion animation is in the final stages of edit. This will be used on the website to help to promote the innovative activities and programme developed through the project.

Although this has been a challenging time for the Centre team I am hopeful that we will have a more settled future going forward and that we will stay on target for another very successful year.



Outdoor learning can help children flourish in science and across the curriculum — THE FSC TAKES A LEAD

Key words: Learning outside the classroom
Types of activities

Hannah Rose and Anneke Kempton of the Field Studies Council explain why the outdoors is such an important place for teaching and learning and how the FSC helps schools to deliver it

We cannot hide from evidence supporting the value of outdoor learning. George Monbiot's article for the *Guardian*, "The problem with education" (Children aren't feral enough) (2013), reminds us that this value is not just about academic learning, but also about providing students with opportunities to develop personal skills that can aid their willingness and ability to learn. The recent explosive growth of the Wild Network (see *Whiteley*), which exists to champion and support connection with nature and wildness in children and young people, suggests that there is a groundswell of support for getting young people outdoors. Taking children to outdoor education centres has many benefits: the suitability of the locations, the health and safety hoops jumped through for you, the specialised facilities and enthusiastic educators who know their stuff about the natural environment (Figure 2). But we should not see one visit to such a centre during the child's primary career as "the box ticked"! Howard Gardner (1999) talks about "naturalistic intelligence"; we would argue that this intelligence is often more instinctive for some, but that it can be acquired through exposure to the natural world. Similarly, *Crippin-Andrews* (2007) discusses the power that the outdoor environment can have in children's learning and argues

12 PRIMARY SCIENCE 132 March/April 2014



New permanent markers for orienteering courtesy of volunteer Andy



A common lizard on the reptile mound recently renovated by volunteer Gary



Workshop for teachers

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