## Project summary

Imagine an outdoor space, alive with adventure, where all could learn and play together, young and older, able bodied and those with disabilities, and people from any race or social background.

That was the challenge for the special school, Red Marsh School. The journey involved many partners; schools, colleges, businesses, funders, experts, designers and the children and young people themselves.

Over three years, we raised funds and created an ethos of learning outside the classroom (LOtC). We created a sensory garden, an imaginative play area, pathways with nature and fitness trail, an adventure trail and new playground.

LOtC opportunities were greatly enhanced; we could now cover all curriculum areas outdoors, greatly improving the scope of pupils’ learning and enjoyment. Staff developed professionally as a result of training. Inclusive practices were developed linking with other schools and colleges.

Children and young people now take part in many diverse learning opportunities both on and off the school site.

From our Great Outdoors (GO) Project we learned that with clear needs analysis, shared vision, careful planning and effective management, we could succeed. The result is a wonderful play and learning environment for many children and young people to enjoy together.

### Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

Enhancing opportunities for teaching and learning outside the classroom, inclusive practice and raising standards of achievement and enjoyment, by creating exciting outdoor spaces and professional development opportunities.
**Aspect of Every Child Matters addressed:**

- Be healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

**What were you hoping to achieve?**

- To create outdoor learning and play spaces to enhance learning outside the classroom opportunities
- To enable teachers and staff to gain skills in providing learning opportunities outside the classroom across the curriculum

In order to achieve this we created a name for our project: The Great Outdoors Project (GO Project).

It aimed to transform a bleak, unimaginative outdoor area between two neighbouring special schools, Red Marsh and Great Arley, to create a high quality, exciting, environmentally friendly learning and play space to share with our community. The area was to become alive with adventure and become a space where young or old, able or disabled would be able to learn from each other. It was to provide a perfect vehicle for family and intergenerational learning.

The new area would comprise a number of exciting zones. Parents, pupils, staff, and people from the wider community were consulted on what they would like. Their views were fed into the draft design. Ideas included:

- Controlled Play zone
- Primary Play zone
- Sports zone
- Sensory zone
- Relaxation zone
- Recycling zone
- Horticultural zone

The Great Outdoors was to be original and imaginative in its design and use of materials taken from nature.

The project was added into the School Development Plan (SDP) and the whole staff, parents, governors, children and young people and the wider community were involved. Some of the success criteria from the SDP were as follows:

- Increase Community use of Magic Garden (this was Phase 1 of the GO Project)
- Community Cohesion through community partners visiting school site, e.g. other schools. We have made a link with a community special school in Burnley and visits have been made to each others’ schools
- Complete GO Project Phase 2
- Complete GO Project Phase 3
- Increased Community volunteers: this has been achieved through a strong link
with the Department for Work and Pensions, DWP Community 5000 programme. This involves a group of 4 or 5 volunteers visiting the school site six times per year to carry out voluntary work, usually involving maintenance of the outdoor areas of the school.

- Extend residential opportunities for KS4, including participation in Outdoor and Adventurous Activities (OAA)
- Install a canopy for EYFS to enable increased outdoor play and learning opportunities
- Create a new senior playground
- Purchase additional outdoor storage for outdoor play and learning equipment
- Purchase new minibus, enabling further outdoor off site learning to take place

As well as all of this we aimed to achieve Learning Outside the Classroom (LotC) opportunities for all our young people as a matter of course throughout the curriculum, using both on and off site locations.

**How did you identify the need for this practice?**

It was recognized by staff from the school that we had relatively small spaces for learning within the school building. However, outdoors, there were large areas of the school grounds, which were unused. From discussions between staff and pupils, including the school councils of both Red Marsh School and the neighbouring special school, Great Arley School, it was decided that we would try to improve the school grounds for learning and play outside the classroom. Along with the improvements to the grounds we would also identify ways in which many curriculum areas could be taught outside. The design work would go hand in hand with what we wanted to create to enhance learning in as many curriculum areas as possible.

The needs of the children were taken into account at every stage.

We surveyed children, parents, staff and the wider community and the results of the surveys were used to write a comprehensive Community Consultation Report.

**Briefly describe the main characteristics of the school?**

- The children of Red Marsh School aged 2 to 19 have SLD, PMLD and ASD. Many are wheelchair users. All have a statement of SEN. The pupil numbers are currently 79, though the numbers are rising with currently a new FE classroom being built.
- The children are largely from low socio economic groups in the Wyre district, including Fleetwood.
- The neighbouring school, Great Arley School, with which we share the school grounds, is a school for children aged 4 to 16 with MLD and ASD.

**What did you do?**

**January 2008**

There was an initial meeting between the Inclusion School Sport Coordinator for the Wyre and Fylde School Sport Partnership, who is also a teacher at Red Marsh
School, and the Primary Link Teacher (PE Subject Leader) at Great Arley School. The focus of the meeting was how we could work together to improve the play and sports facilities in the schools’ grounds. We arranged 3 visits by playground development companies, who specialized in adventure trail and play equipment.

This concept of sports/ play facilities soon broadened when we began to involve others in the discussions.

**February 2008**
The Inclusion SSCO called a meeting and invited the two head teachers (Red Marsh School and Great Arley School), the PE Subject Leader, Great Arley School and a landscape architect who had experience of working with schools.

From here we contacted a company who specialized in raising awareness and raising funding for community projects. We met with Julie Gyi of The Doing Department, who outlined what she and her company were able to offer and we came to an agreement between us that we would employ the services of The Doing Department on a commission basis (they would earn 10% of any funds raised). The Doing Department would find suitable sponsors/ donors and would write the bid applications as well as help with publicity and awareness raising for the project.

**From March 2008 to 2010**
A working group was established for the project, involving two head teachers, a deputy head teacher, the Inclusion School Sport Coordinator, a landscape architect, a fund raiser/ publicity specialist. A project name was agreed; The Great Outdoors Project (GO Project). This working group has met as required, usually once every half term to steer and manage the project.

**October 2008:** a whole school INSET Day was arranged for Red Marsh staff as well as staff from other special schools. The course provided was the Youth Sport Trust Elements Course, which involves the theme of “Air”: the theme was how to use the outdoor environment for teaching and learning for pupils with PMLD/ complex needs.

**November 2008:** Red Marsh School won the Granada TV Big Lottery People’s Millions award of £50,000 to develop our Magic Garden, a sensory garden; this was Phase 1 of the project.

**February 2009:** we were awarded a Big Lottery Awards for All grant for outdoor education activities/ LOtC

**March 2009:** we employed the services of an educational consultant with specialism in outdoor learning for children and young people with complex needs. Anne Cradock visited the school to work with staff and pupils on how to better use the outdoors for learning across the curriculum.
May 2009: we were granted a capital funding grant of £68,000 from Lancashire Extended Services. This was to improve sports facilities in the school grounds. This has been put to good use to improve the playing fields and surrounding areas.

June 2009: Lancashire County Council Adviser for Learning Outside the Classroom, Susan Cooke visited the school with a film crew to create a film of good practice in LOtC. This was to be used at the LOtC Conference.

October 2009: we received a £30,000 grant from the Bailey Thomas Charitable Trust, to purchase active sensory outdoor musical equipment for our Magic Garden area, which was installed in April 2010.

November 2009: Lancashire Healthy Schools Programme Flagship Status achieved: this involved progress in levels of physical activity involving LOtC.

December 2009: The Inclusion SSCO/ PE Subject Leader from Red Marsh School spoke at the National Special Schools PE and School Sport Conference at Nottingham on our GO Project and how to develop LOtC opportunities for children and young people with SLD/ PMLD.

March 2010: The Inclusion SSCO/ PE Subject Leader from Red Marsh School held a stall at the Lancashire Learning Outside the Classroom Conference at Woodlands Conference Centre, Chorley on our GO Project and how we have developed LOtC opportunities for children and young people with SLD/ PMLD in our school setting.

April 2010: we were awarded four capital funding grants totalling over £97,000 from Lancashire Aiming High For Disabled Children, to improve four areas of the school grounds: sensory area, active fitness area, pathways and a new senior playground.

As well as these larger funding grants, there have also been many smaller scale fundraising endeavours, to which many people have contributed, e.g. Hodgson High School pupils did a sponsored fun run to raise funds for our project, our school secretary and a teacher and friends of the school did a sponsored sky dive, a teacher did a sponsored marathon etc. There have also been smaller donations from many other local organizations, many of which have been given coverage in the local press.

Alongside all of this we have been promoting LotC for all of our pupils and students and creating many diverse opportunities for them to learn and achieve outside of the classroom, both on and off site. The school minibus is used every day, and there is so much demand for outdoor learning that we have now secured the funding for a second school minibus, meaning even more off site learning can take place in the future.
Which members of the establishment and/or wider community have been involved and what was their role?

**Two head teachers:** of Red Marsh School and Great Arley School, Deputy Head, Great Arley School, PE Subject Leader, Great Arley School: these people have formed our GO Project Working Group and have managed and made decisions on the direction of the project throughout.

**Professional fundraiser (Doing Department):** to identify suitable funders and write bids in conjunction with the Inclusion SSCO; also to raise awareness of the project and help with publicity

**Two landscape architects (Primary Landscapes and LCC landscape architect):** to design the outdoor spaces and manage the works in conjunction with the GO Project Working Group

**Two school councils, all children and young people and especially a key stage 4 class:** Children and young people have been consulted throughout the process and have been given opportunities to express what they would like and to choose equipment

**Public, local press, Granada ITV, local magazine editors:** there has been significant coverage of our project in various media

**Inclusion SSCO:** to guide and steer the project, bringing all the people together to keep the momentum within the project communication.

**PDM from Wyre and Fylde SSP:** offer support/allowed the Inclusion SSCO time to work on the project.

**Other SSCO in Wyre and Fylde SSP:** support e.g. fund raising events. Many came to Red Marsh School for the filming for the Granada TV report.

**Other Lancashire SSPs:** through the network of Inclusion SSCO, other SSPs in Lancashire have supported, e.g. casting votes via Granada TV to help us win the People’s Millions Competition

**School governors:** kept informed of the project and offered their support; also been supportive of off site visits, e.g. residential OAA visits.

**PTFA:** help with fundraising, held events in aid of the GO Project

Local printer (Munro Print): printed promotional leaflets and a banner for free for us.

**Glasdon UK:** donated £1000

**Other schools:** Garstang High School: regular visits to Red Marsh School to carry
out practical work, e.g. create raised beds, install a garden shed and create a recycling area.

**Beaumont College:** links with Red Marsh School/ visits

**National Special School PE and School Sport Conference:** allowed time to speak at this conference about our project.

**PE/ Learning Outside the Classroom Adviser, LCC, Susan Cooke:** support financially and with raising profile/ film making.

**An educational consultant** with a specialism for PE and outdoor education for CYP with SLD/ PMLD, Anne Cradock; support throughout/ visits to school, promoting project nationally.

### How has the progress of the project been monitored and evaluated?

- Through the regular meetings of the GO Project Working group
- Through governors’ meetings
- Through PTFA meetings

### How has the practice been modified or improved during development?

We sought greater advice from LCC Property, we shifted the project to a LCC project manager, LCC Landscape Architect, who we felt had a better knowledge of schools and access to contractors etc.

From the initial concept of the project we broadened the remit, e.g. Outdoor and Adventurous Activity on and off the school site; canoeing -some young people have achieved Level 1 Paddle Power British Canoeing Union - Rock climbing, recycling, gardening etc.

There are now many more off site visits where LOtC takes place, including residential visits for all our KS4 and FE students to places such as Bendrigg Lodge, Hothersall Lodge and Wingate Centre, Cheshire.

### What has been the impact of the project on pupils’ learning, achievement or enjoyment and how has this been measured?

Teachers plan visits off school site, at least one visit per half term. Outdoor learning on site is now regular practice; children enjoy being outside and thrive on these regular active learning experiences.

Pupils’ learning, achievement and enjoyment is measured by pupils’ P level scores, teacher assessment and evaluations by staff and children and young people. There is evidence in Records of Achievement, pupil progress reports and P level scores.

### What are the next stages in the development process?

To further increase inclusive practice. We have recently forged links with two
schools as part of our community cohesion plans; Ridgewood Community High School, Burnley and a primary school in Mexico. As part of the network of Inclusion School Sports Coordinators, we have made many links with special schools across Lancashire. We also have strong links with several local primary schools and two local secondary schools. We have arranged several visits by other school children and students to our new outdoor learning environment and we plan to expand and develop these links. We will develop work on collaborative projects, for example, in outdoor music, dance and drama and environmental art. We have a good link with Beaumont College and the Environmental Art Department and we will continue to develop this inclusive link with post 19 students with complex needs. We also plan to continue to involve other agencies in maintenance and further development of the outdoor spaces in the school grounds, e.g. we will continue the strong link we have with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Community 5000 scheme and Garstang High School.

What aspects of this practice may be useful for other establishments to consider?

It has been very important to the success of this project to involve the wider community as much as possible. We have created good public relations and made very good use of the media for publicity of our project, through newspapers, magazines, radio and television. We have involved experts, e.g. in awareness raising, fund raising, landscape architects, educational experts and local businesses and schools. We have tried to raise the profile of SEN and disability and demonstrate how outdoor education is so beneficial to these groups in terms of healthy lifestyles and enjoyment. The presentations we gave to the National Special Schools PE Conference, November 2009, to the Lancashire Special Schools Healthy Schools forum, March 2009 and to the Lancashire Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Conference, February 2010 were very good vehicles for communicating our vision for LOtC. The DVD that was produced by LCC LOtC team, as well as many other photographs, were very useful tools for inspiring others and getting our message across in visual form.

Advice we would offer others attempting a similar project would be to involve all the staff and pupils, parents, governors and PTFA. Gather the views of all parties as to what it is you want to achieve. Create a strong vision, then set about realizing that vision. Use whoever you can to help along the way; a high profile in the local media is important. Target funders who have a specific remit to fund your sort of project. Raise the profile of active kinaesthetic learning within the school. Persevere; you may not achieve exactly what you set out to achieve and you may change your direction in the light of what you learn as you go along. Keep the community on board, hold regular meetings with a steering group; share responsibilities and tasks so the project work is shared among those who have the appropriate knowledge and skills. Involve local agencies such as the borough council, the local authority and others. Gain expert knowledge advice along the way. Always keep focused on how your project will impact on young people’s learning, achievement and enjoyment as well as the strands of Every Child Matters.
Any other comments:

In the specific aspect to be accredited section we stated:

“Enhancing opportunities for teaching and learning outside the classroom, inclusive practice and raising standards of achievement and enjoyment, by creating exciting outdoor spaces and professional development opportunities.”

As well as creating the exciting outdoor spaces, we have developed new opportunities for learning outside the classroom off the school site. These include a great increase in the past two years in off site visits for outdoor education. In June 2009 we had our first residential visit for many years to Bendrigg Lodge, Cumbria. Since the success of this visit, we have had a further three residential visits; to Wingate Centre in Cheshire, Hothersall Lodge and Bendrigg again in June 2010. As well as the residential visits we have increased the regularity of class off site outdoor educational visits. These have included several canoeing days on the Lancaster Canal, where in March 2010, seven students achieved the Paddle Power Level 1 Award from the British Canoeing Union; walks at the Wyre Estuary Country Park, visits to farms and other rural locations, including a member of staff’s garden to pick fruit. We have also had at least one visit per year to the school site of a portable climbing wall, where all children and young people in the school have had opportunities to climb; even those who use wheelchairs were able to be hoisted up; these days have been very special and the children, staff and parents have fully enjoyed this fantastic experience.

What we have learned as a result of our Great Outdoors (GO) Project was that with a clear needs analysis, a shared vision, careful planning and effective management involving many people with key skills and lots of perseverance, we were able to achieve our vision. The result is a wonderful play and learning environment for many children and young people to enjoy together.

And still broader than this we have enhanced opportunities for teaching and learning outside the classroom, inclusive practice and raising standards of achievement and enjoyment, by creating exciting outdoor spaces and professional development opportunities.