

Education Secretary calls for children to spend summer outdoors

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has today (Friday 19 July) launched #SummerOutdoors which will suggest free or low-cost options to keep children entertained and spark interest in character building activities during the summer break, rather than being distracted by video games, boxsets or social media.

Children and families will be encouraged to explore the outdoors during the summer holidays, as a series of fun tips and events for kids happening across the country will be signposted each week.

This comes after the Education Secretary has placed a greater emphasis on the development of character and resilience as young people grow up, which has seen the development of 'My Activity Passport' for primary school children – which has been downloaded more than 43,000 times since December last year – and setting out the 5 Foundations for Building Character in a speech in February.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

We will all have fond memories of the summer holidays – adventuring and playing out with friends. But all too often these days the temptation is for children to play video games, binge on boxsets or only socialise online. I started this year with a resolution to spend less time on my phone – the summer provides the opportunity to repeat this pledge and redouble my efforts.

Character and resilience are the qualities, the inner resources, that we call on to get us through the frustrations and setbacks that are part and parcel of life. School plays a key role in helping to develop these traits but the activities that young people do over the holidays are also key. They can mean that the child going back to school in September is a little more confident, more willing to give something a go and possibly more likely to bounce back from life's knocks.

I really want to inspire children and families to explore the outdoors and understand that keeping children entertained during the summer break does not have to cost an arm and a leg. Getting out and about – whether that is going on a walk, playing a sport or building a den – can bring a range of benefits, from families spending time together to keeping an active body and active mind.

This summer campaign comes as the Education Secretary announces new steps to support schools identify opportunities that help their pupils build character and resilience. A new framework developed by school leaders and other experts will be published in the autumn and will include a series of benchmarking questions for schools to assess their delivery of character education. The questions will be based on the following themes:

- Leading and establishing a climate and ethos of character development;
- Developing character through the curriculum and teaching for character;
- Developing character through activities in the 5 Foundations for Building Character;
- Ensuring character education is for all pupils, including the disadvantaged;
- Reviewing and refining the existing offer with a view to making good work even better; and
- Developing staff and increasing capacity to deliver.

In recognition of the work in schools to help young people build character and resilience, the Department for Education will be relaunching the Character Awards, which highlight innovative or outstanding programmes that develop a wide variety of positive character traits. Schools will be able to enter in October, ahead of the awards ceremony in March 2020. Nominations will be considered in the following categories; school culture and ethos, curriculum and teaching; collaboration; a character champion; or delivering against the 5 Foundations for Building Character.

The 5 Foundations encompass an extensive list of activities, which through team work, trying new things, and opening minds, can help young people build character. They are:

- Sport – which includes competitive sport and other activities, such as running, martial arts, swimming and purposeful recreational activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, orienteering, yoga or cycling.
- Creativity – this involves all creative activities from coding, arts and crafts, writing, graphic design, film making and music composition.
- Performing – activities could include dance, theatre and drama, musical performance, choir, debating or public speaking.
- Volunteering & Membership – brings together teams, practical action in the service of others or groups, such as volunteering, getting involved in the #iwill campaign, litter-picking, fundraising, any structured youth programmes or uniformed groups like Guides, Scouts, Cadets and Duke of Edinburgh.
- World of work – practical experience of the world of work, work experience or entrepreneurship. For primary age children, this may involve opportunities to meet role models from different jobs.

Dame Julia Cleverdon DCVO CBE, Co founder of the #iwill campaign and Vice President of Business in the Community said:

The Character Awards announced today by the DfE will give a much needed opportunity to celebrate the brilliant work schools and

colleges are doing to develop character education, spread best practice and showcase innovation and impact. Parents, teachers and employers know that developing character and building self esteem underpins young people's success and happiness in their life, work and contribution to society.

As co-founder of the #iwill campaign, a movement of over 1000 cross-sector partners across the UK, we know that taking part in social action builds young people's confidence, empathy, resilience, voice and values. We hope the Character Awards will highlight how many more young people, particularly from low-income backgrounds, are building character through making a positive difference to their communities.