



Step outside of the classroom and bring your lessons into the great outdoors

With brighter days and better weather on the way, it is much easier to make use of your outdoor spaces around the school. Bringing the classroom outdoors has been proven to provide many benefits to students and teachers alike, with rich learning opportunities available to all.

The *Learning Outside the Classroom* manifesto, published by DfES UK, claims that these experiences “help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behaviour, lifestyle and work. They influence our values and the decisions we make. They allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa.”

Bringing lessons outdoors can:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments.
- Make learning more engaging and relevant to young people.
- Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment.
- Nurture creativity.
- Provide opportunities for informal learning through play.
- Reduce behaviour problems and

improve attendance.

- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation.
- Develop the ability to deal with uncertainty.
- Improve young people’s attitudes to learning.

These benefits can be difficult to quantify but given the increasing use of electronic devices at home and school, every moment spent outdoors counts. As the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) states, it is true to say that “a rich experience of different aspects of the curriculum outside the classroom adds enormously to the relevance and effectiveness of children’s learning”.

Furthermore, children can grow in confidence by occasionally leaving the confines of the school and surrounding areas and exploring contrasting natural and urban environments with adult guidance and support. Going further afield to gardens, farms, theatres, museums and galleries can create valuable moments of curiosity and creativity.

Engaging activities

At Scoilnet, we have plenty of fun and

engaging outdoor activities linking to several curriculum areas including maths and science, from junior infants up to 6th Class. Some of these outdoor lessons include:

- Maths trails and measuring activities
- Nature scavenger hunts and studies
- Phonics lessons
- STEM projects and tasks
- Creative writing prompts
- Poetry ideas

For 5th and 6th class, there is also the option of using Scoilnet Maps **maps.scoilnet.ie** to measure distances and discover the history of the locality, comparing and contrasting between past and present, and predicting what changes might occur in the future.

All of these links are designed to help your students benefit from spending time in the great outdoors. You can find our collection page using the QR code (right).

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Free summer courses for teachers

The PDST and the PDST Technology in Education are providing a number of summer courses through education centres and online during periods in July and August. All courses are approved for EPV days and are delivered and supported by PDST TiE tutors.

Five of the courses will be delivered face-to-face in education centres:

- Using an Online Platform to Create and Use Digital Resources
- Using Tablets to Support Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Embedding Digital Technologies in the Primary Classroom
- Digital Storytelling in the Primary Classroom: Filmmaking
- Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality in the Primary Classroom: VR/AR/MR

To check availability and enrol contact your local education centre.

Meanwhile, PDST Technology in Education is providing a newly designed online course: *Multimedia Projects on Climate and Sustainability*.

The course focus is on using digital technology to teach about climate action and sustainability in your classroom. Drawing on high quality resources from Scoilnet’s hub for Education for Sustainable Development, this course provides inspiration and ideas to bring these topics to life.

Participants choose either the July or August course and enrolment closes when all places are taken. For more information, go to the online courses section of the PDST Technology in Education website: bit.ly/pdstcourse.