Learning Without Limits

The School Trip Index Report 2026



PGL Beyond

THE BREAKTHROUGH NETWORK

PGL nst esto STUDYLINK TOURS



Welcome to the second School Trip Index Report:
Exploring the enrichment benefits of learning beyond the classroom

A welcome from our CEO

"We know inside every young person lies untapped potential. Every day, we see how meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom help young people grow in confidence, build resilience and unlock real-world skills. These qualities, combined with academic achievement, help to shape brighter futures.

The second **School Trip Index Report** brings together research, evidence and expert insight to show how school trips contribute to life outcomes, personal development and future readiness. It considers how schools, providers, partners and policymakers can work together to close the opportunity gap, strengthen the evidence base and embed high-quality enrichment more firmly within education.

The report discusses these findings within the context of the Department for Education's renewed focus on enrichment, highlighting the need for collaboration and practical support to widen access.

For PGL Beyond, enrichment is not a new concept. It sits at the heart of everything we do. Through outdoor adventure, nature-based residentials and cultural discovery, we create transformative experiences that complement classroom learning, giving young people space to discover what they are capable of and build skills and self-belief that can last a lifetime. But the reality is that not everyone has the same opportunities. For too many, these experiences are out of reach.

This report is a call to action. We invite school leaders, teachers, policymakers and partners to recognise that access to enriching activities and experiences should not be a privilege but a given. If we work together, we can build a richer, safer and more inclusive approach, so that every young person, no matter their background, can have experiences beyond the classroom that prepare them for life's challenges and the future that awaits them."

Thank you,

Anthony Jones
CEO, PGL Beyond





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning beyond the classroom: the findings at a glance

School trips are so much more than memorable experiences. They help young people build confidence, independence and resilience; strengthen relationships and wellbeing; and develop the skills that support their future learning, work and adult lives.

This report explores how school trips contribute to young people's long-term development, the barriers preventing young people from taking part and the action needed to make these vital enrichment experiences accessible to all.

* PGL Beyond commissioned research with 1,000 UK parents of children aged 10–17 and 1,000 UK children aged 10–17.



Learning outside the classroom matters

To explore their impact, PGL Beyond commissioned research with 1,000 UK parents of children aged 10–17 and 1,000 UK children aged 10–17. The results demonstrate the value of school trips:

92% of parents said trips away from home can be life-changing for young people.

90% of parents agreed that school trips help children learn skills that are harder to develop in the classroom.

81% of parents agreed that learning opportunities beyond the classroom can influence further education and career choices.

71% of young people said they learn more new things when outside the classroom.

But many young people are still missing out

However, access remains unequal. Around one in six secondary school pupils aged 12 and over (17 per cent) have never been on an overnight stay with school, with cost identified as the primary perceived barrier. The findings reinforce the need to widen access to high-quality learning experiences beyond the classroom and better measure their impact on young people's lives.

WHY LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM MATTERS

Experiences that challenge, connect and change young people

School trips offer young people the chance to broaden their understanding of the wider world and their place within it. They sit at the heart of high-quality enrichment – giving pupils the time and space to practise independence, build confidence and explore future choices in real-world settings. These are not just days away from the classroom; they are breakthrough moments.

79%
of young people say they learn new things when outside the classroom

55%
of young people believe school trips help them build confidence

51%
of young people believe school trips help them develop teamwork

47%
of young people say they help them to practice independence



Breaking down barriers to breakthrough moments

After decades of providing trips and experiences for young people, we've seen first-hand how they unlock potential, support personal growth and shape futures. Yet too many young people are still missing out.[2]

Research suggests **1 in 6 secondary school pupils aged 12+** have never been on an overnight stay with school.

What are the perceived barriers to school trips?

Young people say:



56%
cost of the trip



54%
feeling anxious or uncomfortable



54%
feeling homesick

Parents say:



70%
cost is the main barrier



42%
extra expenses (lunches, kit, etc.)



42%
parental anxiety

Michelle Evans, Director of Product & Marketing at PGL Beyond explains: "Experiences beyond the classroom are playing an increasingly important role in education. Young people need much more than just academic qualifications. They need independence, teamwork, empathy and adaptability to thrive.

"Our latest survey findings reinforce the transformational impact of school trips, demonstrating how these experiences can challenge young people to step outside their comfort zones, connect with others and develop practical life skills that help to support the transition into adulthood.

"By helping young people recognise and build on these skills at school and at home, educators and parents can ensure the benefits continue long after the trip ends."

Parents call for more school trips

73%

of parents think there should be more overnight stays for pupils

Schools and education providers can help to overcome these barriers by offering families access to flexible payment plans, subsidies and funding through partnerships to reduce costs.

Familiarisation sessions, clear itineraries and trusted staff can also help to ease pupils' anxiety and homesickness, while open communication about supervision, safety and support can reassure parents.

Michelle Evans explains: "Affordable options, inclusive programme design and appropriate preparation can all help pupils feel able and confident to participate. At PGL Beyond, breaking down barriers to outdoor learning experiences is central to everything we do. Our **PGL Breakthrough Fund** has helped **over 17,000 children** take part in trips they could not otherwise afford, while our **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inclusive Adventure** programme supports young people with different abilities and learning needs.

"Whether it's through the power of outdoor adventure or educational travel, our ambition is simple: to ensure beyond-the-classroom experiences are woven throughout every young person's learning journey, regardless of circumstance."



IMPACT THAT ENDURES

Learning beyond the classroom creates lasting growth

Our survey findings demonstrate just how much school trips contribute to young people's long-term development, alongside the outcomes that matter most to schools and families – **learning essential life skills, supporting emotional wellbeing and strengthening academic** engagement.

Dr John Allan, Head of Impact and Breakthrough Learning at PGL Beyond, says: "School trips are vital in helping young people develop the essential life skills that can't be taught in the classroom alone. Experiences that take children out of their immediate environment and into new settings safely helps encourage them to build self-confidence and awareness, navigating new places and people while making independent decisions – often for the first time."



Turning experiences into lifelong skills

To understand the lasting value of school trips, PGL Beyond asked parents and young people which skills they help to young people to develop.

Top skills young people learn from school trips

51%
Confidence away from home

49%
Working with others

47%
Finding my way around new places

46%
Willingness to try new things

45%
Looking after my belongings

Top skills parents say their child gains from school trips

49%
Confidence in unfamiliar environments

46%
Ability to function away from home comforts

45%
Independence and organisation

41%
Teamwork

41%
Self-esteem

The outcomes young people carry forward

WELLBEING & BELONGING

Over half of young people **(51%)** say school trips help them work well with other people.

More than a third of parents **(37%)** notice these experiences support their child's emotional maturity.

41% of parents say their child became more confident talking to new people after a school trip.

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

42% of young people say school trips make them feel more confident when things are challenging.

Almost half **(47%)** of parents say their child became more communicative after a school trip.

40% of parents think more overnight stays should be arranged for pupils to aid their educational needs.

Dr John Allan adds: "Multi-sensory enrichment experiences that take children out of familiar environments and into new settings nurture self-confidence and awareness - enabling them to navigate new places and people while making independent decisions, often for the first time."

"Schools and parents can help young people to build on school-trip experiences by encouraging them to reflect on what they learned. These skills can then be reinforced and embedded through classroom projects, new responsibilities and everyday challenges at home, helping the benefits continue long after the trip ends."





WHY IT MATTERS FOR SOCIETY'S FUTURE READINESS

Shaping brighter futures for young people

School trips are vital experiences that help young people to look ahead, connecting education to employment and adult life. Time away from the classroom highlights what they are good at, sparks new interests, and gives them a first taste of the confidence, responsibility and problem-solving they will need in future.



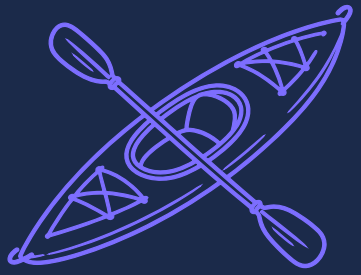
9 in 10

parents say trips away can be life-changing for young people.



8 in 10

parents agree that learning opportunities beyond the classroom impact further education and career choices.



9 in 10

parents agree that school trips help children learn skills that are harder to develop in the classroom.

Building life & career skills beyond the classroom

Parents tell us that school trips play a powerful role in preparing young people for life and work, helping them gain practical skills and attitudes that go beyond exam results.

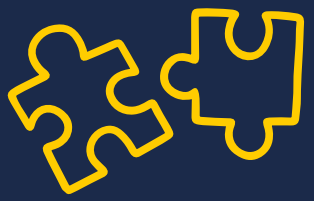
Claire Hamilton, mum to Florence, 16, and Angus, 12, says: "With my children at secondary school, our focus at home has started shifting from purely educational growth towards their future readiness. Being away on a PGL trip hasn't just helped spark conversations about what the future holds; it's given Florence clear insight into her own capabilities, from problem-solving to accountability for her behaviour. She's returned home more confident, mature and inspired."



68%
say trips develop their child's confidence



59%
say trips build responsibility for their child's own behaviour



58%
say trips improve problem-solving skills with others



41%
say practical life skills are easier for their child to obtain on school trips



26%
say their child returned from a school trip interested in careers linked to their experience



PGL Skills4Life:

helping young people build resilience and future-ready skills

At PGL Beyond, we understand how important a breadth of learning can be to a young person's development. We also know young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Without support, this can lead to a cycle of unemployment and poor mental health.

However, resilience can be learned. When young people develop confidence, problem-solving skills, and the ability to adapt, they're better equipped to handle challenges - and these are exactly the skills employers value.

Our recent PGL Skills4Life pilot explored how residential experiences and outdoor learning can support disadvantaged and vulnerable young people aged 14-17. The research, which received ethical approval from Sheffield Hallam University, saw more than 100 young people take part in two-week-long programmes combining outdoor adventures and practical workshops designed to build confidence and essential life skills such as financial management and digital literacy.

Afterwards, participants' resilience scores increased by 10%, wellbeing by 16%, and communication, creativity and collaboration also improved. By blending adventure with life skills, Skills4Life shows how targeted and well-designed residential experiences can give young people the tools to thrive, at school, at work, and in life.

Building care for people, culture and the planet

Alongside future-readiness, our survey highlights how learning and enrichment experiences beyond the classroom help to strengthen young people's respect for the world around them – something that underpins everything we do.

A quarter of parents said they noticed improvements in their child's **cultural and environmental awareness** after going on a school trip, while more than a third **(38%)** said their child returned with a **renewed love for being outdoors.**

Dr John Allan explains: "School trips and outdoor learning help young people develop a deeper sense of empathy and citizenship – for both people and the planet. When they explore the wider world and engage with new people, places and challenges, they begin to see the bigger picture and acknowledge others' perspectives.

"With so much of young people's learning happening on screens, it's more crucial than ever to find balance. Getting outdoors brings powerful emotional, social and physical benefits that no device can match."





Our journey to B Corp™

Being a Certified B Corporation™ reflects our belief that business can be a force for good. It recognises the steps we're taking to put people, purpose and responsibility at the heart of every decision, from supporting and developing our colleagues to widening access to life-changing experiences for young people, strengthening our communities and reducing our environmental impact. It also holds us accountable to keep improving, ensuring we continue to create positive outcomes for young people and the world they're growing into.

We are **proud** to be a Certified B Corporation

Learn more at bcorp.com

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This report provides an important starting point for understanding the contribution of learning experiences beyond the classroom to young people's personal and social development.

Building on the findings

However, there are areas that will benefit from further exploration, including how different groups of young people access school trips and the approaches that could help widen participation. Further evidence is needed to develop a more detailed picture of these issues.

Supporting schools in practice

The report's findings also highlight the importance of supporting schools to translate the benefits of learning beyond the classroom into practice and the barriers to participation that must be overcome. This could include relevant case studies, practical guidance and tools for evaluating outcomes.

Understanding impact

Future work could also explore how schools and providers assess these outcomes in ways that are meaningful and practical, including assessment of outcomes such as confidence, independence and belonging, which are valuable to young people but harder to quantify.



Michelle Evans says: "At PGL Beyond, we are committed to continuing the conversation about learning beyond the classroom and strengthening the case for enrichment across education. Our ambition is to explore the evidence, identify practical ways to widen access and ensure the value of learning beyond the classroom is recognised, measured and sustained."

A closing message from our CEO

Powering great learning beyond the classroom

"The government's focus on enrichment shows that the sector recognises the value of experiences beyond the classroom. The findings of this report reinforce the important contribution these experiences can make to young people's learning, development and engagement.

At a time when more young people are becoming disconnected from education, training and employment, widening access to these enriching opportunities is increasingly important. This report is not an end point; it is just the beginning of a broader conversation and a shared journey.

We will build on the report's findings to deepen our understanding of the opportunities, challenges and support needed to make learning beyond the classroom more accessible.

We invite schools, trusts and partners to work with us to strengthen the evidence base and identify practical ways to widen participation. Together, we can help shape brighter futures for every young person."

Thanks,

Anthony Jones
CEO, PGL Beyond

Meet the PGL Beyond team



Dr John Allan, Head of Impact & Breakthrough Learning, PGL Beyond

Dr John Allan is a leading academic in Sports Pedagogy, Psychology and Adventure Education, with a PhD in Positive Psychology and Building Psychological Resilience through Outdoor Adventure. A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, John brings decades of research and applied experience to PGL Beyond. He is passionate about creating meaningful, evidence-based learning experiences outside the classroom that deliver clear, measurable impact.



Michelle Evans, Director of Product & Marketing at PGL Beyond

Michelle Evans is Director of Product and Marketing at PGL Beyond and has held numerous roles across the business since joining as Head of Product for NST Travel Group in 2008.

Michelle has had a significant impact at PGL Beyond, through her focus to grow our business and reach more young people with the power of outdoor education. From launching The Breakthrough Fund, to leading our enrichment strategy, Michelle is driving forward our purpose to break down barriers and ensure no young person is left behind.



Anthony Jones, CEO of PGL Beyond

Since his appointment in 2020, Anthony has set a clear direction for the business; developing strategic priorities to support our purpose of 'unlocking potential in young people to shape brighter futures. With support from our shareholder, Ares management, and an experienced leadership team, Anthony has guided the business through an exciting transformation, securing investment and driving innovation to deliver exceptional experiences for young people, all to the highest possible standards. As an experienced business leader, Anthony is focused on growing the PGL Beyond network, creating more breakthrough experiences for more young people, and making them accessible to all. Anthony is committed to ensuring PGL Beyond has a purpose beyond profit, leading our journey to achieve our B Corp accreditation and developing industry partnerships for wider social and environmental impact. Outside of work, Anthony is a keen cyclist, challenging himself in various demanding cycling events worldwide.

To learn more about PGL Beyond and our school trips, email **hello@pglbeyond.com**.

METHODOLOGY

The findings in Learning Without Limits: The School Trip Index Report – Volume 2 draw on a combination of nationally representative research, impact measurement and independent secondary sources.

Primary research

Consumer research was commissioned by PGL Beyond and conducted by OnePoll among:

- 1,000 UK children aged 10–17
- 1,000 UK parents of children aged 10–17
- Fieldwork was conducted in April 2026. The sample was nationally representative by age, gender and region.

Secondary research

The report also references publicly available research and policy publications, including:

- Department for Education – Every Child Achieving and Thriving (2026)
- Office for National Statistics (ONS)

References:

1. Indicative estimate based on Department for Education Every Child Achieving and Thriving (2026) and ONS mid 2024 population data for UK 10–17 year olds.
2. Indicative estimate based on Department for Education Every Child Achieving and Thriving (2026) and ONS mid 2024 population data for UK 10–17 year olds.



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