

News story: Activity 'passport' to inspire schoolchildren and boost resilience

Primary school children will be challenged to go on a nature trail, visit a local landmark or make a treasure map through a new 'passport' of activities launched by the Education Secretary to encourage more family time and help build children's character and resilience.

Endorsed by organisations including the Scouts, Girlguiding and the National Trust – as well as children's charity Action for Children – the list of activities is intended to support parents and schools in introducing children to a wide variety of experiences and fulfilling activities like flying a kite, learning something new about the local area or putting on a performance.

The list of activities was inspired by the Education Secretary's visit to St Werburgh's Primary School, in Bristol, where every child is encouraged to take part in a list of tasks and experiences, with key achievements for each school year to tick off. The list will be sent to schools in January for teachers to adapt to meet the needs of their pupils and local communities, helping young people to build their personal skills and qualities during the school day and at home.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

When I first became Education Secretary, almost a year ago, I went around asking everyone I met what they wanted for their children. The instinctive answer that came back was never about the curriculum or qualifications, vital as these are – what they wanted first and foremost was for their child to be happy and healthy. As a father that's what I want for my children and as Education Secretary that's what I want for all children in this country.

I regularly hear from teachers that it's important that children have the chance to try things out, to get a taste of the world around them, to see and do things that they wouldn't normally do, or go to places they wouldn't normally go. Experience is a great teacher and can equip children with valuable skills that prepare for any challenges life may throw at them. What's on the inside – someone's character, drive, resilience, and the ability to stick to a goal – is just as important as their academic achievements.

As the New Year approaches, we inevitably think about our resolutions for the year ahead – getting fit, spending more time with our families, or taking up a new hobby. Within this list of activities children may find something they want to come back to

again and again, but I hope that, whatever they do, they will enjoy and learn from them.

The 'My Activity Passport' list is part of the Education Secretary's vision for every child to have the opportunity to enjoy new and varied experiences, no matter their background – comprising of key areas: drive and tenacity; sticking at the task at hand; understanding how to work towards long term goals when reward might be a long way off in the future; and being able to pick yourself up and bounce back from life's challenges.

Matt Hyde, Chief Executive of the Scouts, said:

We know how much young people get out of enrichment activities like these: broadening their experiences, having fun and developing skills for life. Not everything can be taught in a classroom, so it's great to see DfE recognising the value of extra-curricular activities and encouraging young people to build confidence, resilience and get involved in their communities as well.

These activities will inspire children's ability to problem-solve, provide opportunities to see or visit new places and develop wide interests in new subjects.

The activities are designed to be accessible so that every child and family can get involved and include milestones for each primary school year group. Tasks that schools and families can set children include:

- Painting a self portrait
- Posting a letter
- Looking at the stars on a clear night
- Playing a board game
- Writing and performing a poem
- Going hiking
- Planning and cooking a meal
- Interviewing someone

Among the list of activities will be opportunities for children to engage in social action that helps them make positive changes for themselves and others. Schools will also be able to adapt the list to meet the needs of its pupils and local communities.

Hilary McGrady, Director-General of the National Trust, said:

Connecting children to nature and the great outdoors is at the heart of the National Trust's mission. We know those first experiences such as skimming a stone or watching butterflies encourages an early love for nature which is more likely to stay with them into adulthood. Our 50 things to do before you are 11 and three quarters has been enjoyed by thousands of children across the

country already, and we support the Department for Education's efforts to engage even more children with our amazing natural world.

Emma Dixon, member of the Girlguiding Advocate panel, made up of members aged 14 to 25, said:

We believe all young people should have opportunities to build their confidence, raise their aspirations and have adventures, both inside and outside the classroom. The activities in our new programme, launched in July, already benefit hundreds of thousands of girls each week, and we hope even more young people will be able to enjoy and learn from the activities included in the new passport.

Julie Bentley, Chief Executive of Action for Children, said:

Every day at Action for Children, we see families struggling with the ups-and-downs of everyday life. Parents want to do everything they can to help their child feel ready to cope with life's challenges when they arise.

Through programmes such as the Department for Education's 'passport' of activities and our Build Sound Minds campaign where we provide advice and activities, parents can find ways to improve their child's resilience and emotional well-being.

Anna Feuchtwang, Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau, said:

Our research has shown that significant numbers of children grow up suffering poor mental health. Part of the remedy lies in developing a firm foundation of wellbeing and resilience in children and young people, both at home and at school. We welcome this effort to immerse children and young people in activities that can build their confidence, develop their curiosity and support their growth beyond academic attainment, so they can enjoy emotional wellbeing throughout their lives.