

## Real world learning

There was a time when going on a school visit was the norm, but fewer children now get the opportunity to leave the classroom and learn about the world at first hand. Andy Simpson describes an English campaign to reverse the trend.

With the increasing demands of league tables, literacy and numeracy targets and school inspections, not to mention increased fears of litigation, out-of-classroom learning is being squeezed out of the timetable. It is not seen as a priority to deliver against the National Curriculum, yet it is one of the most effective forms of education. It broadens children's outlook, improves their motivation and personal and interpersonal skills, as well as helping youngsters keep fit and healthy, physically and mentally.

The Real World Learning campaign is working to get children out of the classroom to discover the world around them. The campaign is a partnership between RSPB, Field Studies Council, National Trust, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and PGL Ltd. It is seeking a commitment to school visits from each political party in their election manifestos. If the current ethos of not taking children on school trips is to change, it is essential that the government provides clear guidance and support.

The campaign has already achieved a significant profile. More than 170 MPs signed an Early Day Motion which acknowledged the importance of field visits and urged the government to make out-of-classroom learning an integral part of every child's education.

The partners have also held face-to-face meetings with education spokespeople from all the major political parties, and the signs are that the issue is moving up the agenda. So much so, that the Education and Skills Select Committee last year convened an urgent inquiry to investigate out-of-classroom learning. Publication of its findings is imminent.

The campaign will continue post-election, irrespective of outcome, and partners will continue working with MPs and teaching unions to help more children benefit from school trips.

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*More information about the campaign, and RSPB's work, is at [www.rspb.org.uk/policy/education/realworldlearning/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/policy/education/realworldlearning/index.asp)*