

Adventurous Learning with an Antarctica Expedition theme

The theme - following the progress of Leo Houlding and his team as they climbed the North East Ridge of Ulvetanna, Antarctica.

The adventure based learning: in parallel to the Antarctica Expedition, year 6 pupils planned and prepared their own outdoor expedition in January gaining first-hand experience of winter adventure on their own doorstep.

Our school (Westfield Community School) has become an accredited Adventure Learning School (ALS). This means that adventurous learning is driven throughout the school with a bespoke curriculum and an adventure based learning programme supported by ALS (Adventure

Learning School's charity), IOL (Institute for Outdoor Learning), who helped to provide training for staff and Wigan Outdoor Education.

Our foundation subjects and some aspects of the core curriculum are driven through CFL (Context for Learning). This provides children with an interesting, motivating and varied curriculum focused around 6 key skills (Communication, Application of Maths, Information Technology, Working With Others, Improve own Learning and Performance and Problem Solving). CFL has enriched our curriculum, helping it to be excellent and enjoyable





through its countless cross-curricular links and experiences. Our curriculum is designed to enhance children's learning, teaching them the life skills they need to flourish within their community. The Antarctica project has provided myriad opportunities to inspire, motivate and enhance our children's learning as they followed the real-life adventures of the world-class climber and adventurer, Leo Houlding and his team as they embarked on their expedition to climb the (previously unclimbed) North East ridge of Ulvetanna in Antarctica.

'Antarctica expedition' became a new context for the year 6 pupils. The project ran parallel to Leo and his team's expedition. The children were introduced briefly to this at the beginning of November so that they could work on a short presentation and prepare questions for Leo Houlding when they were fortunate enough to meet him and work with him at an ALS event at the Chill Factor, Manchester. Following this, they completed extensive background research during the final week of the autumn term. This enabled the children to direct their own



learning and complete research over the Christmas holidays whilst following Leo's blog on the Berghaus website.

At the beginning of the spring term, the children took part in an 'Antarctica'-themed week, where EVERY subject was linked to learning something about Antarctica. They have continued working on this theme within CFL timetabled slots, as well as within any other subjects where a natural cross-curricular link occurred.

In addition, to further deepen understanding of what Leo and his team have done, year 6 have spent time planning their own expedition to Westfield's A.L.P.S. (Adventure Learning Progress Space). The Westfield A.L.P.S. is a large, natural, wooded area, created to provide an innumerable amount of outdoor-learning opportunities.

On Wednesday 23rd January, year 6 completed their outdoor expedition as part of their Antarctica curriculum work. They received first hand experience of what it was like to work in a team (groups of eight), to survive for a 'whole day' outdoors in the harsh January temperatures, in several inches of snow!!

The children's first task was to collect the required appropriate kit, pack it and secure in onto sledges. After successfully securing all their belongings (tents, Trangias for cooking, water, food, etc) they set off on a trek following a map of the local area, pulling (or in some cases, pushing) their sledges. It was fantastic to see how well the groups





worked together when it came to helping each other over the frozen terrain including a few incredibly icy bridges!

After a lengthy hike through the wonderful winter wonderland of the school's surrounding area (Marsh Green) the determined pupils finally arrived at the A.L.P.S. where each group were challenged to set up their base camp. Each group had two three-man tents to store their equipment and provide suitable shelter. One group had a minor problem directing their tent poles the right way, but were able to resolve their issue collectively, demonstrating good communication skills and team work.

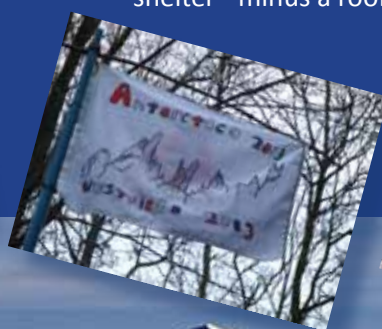
Next, year 6 took part in a problem solving activity. Their task was to find the most effective way to transport their group from one side of the field to the other. Only one child was allowed to be on the sledge at any one time, with one child pulling.



Each team member could only pull once. This challenge finished with an exciting sledge race, where each team worked together to pull a member of staff (who was supervising their team) to the finish line. The children evaluated their team's performance. Congratulations went to Mrs Walton's team for winning and commiserations went to Mrs Lyon's team for 'losing' her along the way (much to the children's and staffs' amusement!).

Following this, the teams began their next challenge.... preparing lunch! All teams successfully cooked their own lunch on Trangias which consisted of a beef burger, baked potato with beans and cheese followed by cake and custard.

As the afternoon approached, the groups cleared away their cooking equipment and re-packed their sledges with everything except their tents. Thoughts about how Leo Houlding and his team had built snow shelters and walls in Antarctica to protect themselves from the bitter winds inspired the next challenge – to build an ice house. A couple of hundred ice bricks later, the children had proudly constructed their very own ice shelter - minus a roof!





As the expedition drew to a close, time was spent reflecting on the successes and difficulties of the day, whilst sitting around an open fire toasting marshmallows and drinking hot chocolate.

The final task was to pack up tents, finish loading the sledges and complete the trek back to school. Once arriving at school, each team unpacked their load and put their equipment away.

Finally, a group of children who had spent the three weeks working as a media team interviewed the children and staff. They planned, created, filmed and edited footage, resulting in the production of Westfield's very first documentary, The Westfield A.L.P.S. Expedition.



The A.L.P.S. expedition has been an amazing experience, one which the children have thoroughly enjoyed and which they will never forget. This memorable, exciting, adventurous opportunity has enhanced the children's learning, developed their self-confidence and strengthened teamwork. First hand experience enabled them to truly appreciate what an incredibly difficult task Leo and his team have experienced, whilst they completed their expedition in the most southern, driest, windiest and coldest continent in the world. ■



Author Biog

Sarah Walton has been teaching Primary children for over ten years. She is currently teaching at Westfield Community School in Wigan, where she is a year 6 Teacher and the Foundation Subject Manager. Since Westfield became accredited as an Adventure Learning School, she has spent time driving outdoor and adventurous learning throughout all year groups.

Photographs: Background photo of Queen Maud Land, Antarctica (area of the range of mountains that were the location of the Leo Holding Expedition) by Anne Fröhlich. All other articles submitted by the author.

