



**The great outdoors** (clockwise from top centre): A Mount Kelly pupil tries their hand at surfing; Dauntsey's students learn about the First World War; Farleigh School youngsters having fun in France; Travellers from Gordon's School pictured during their visit to Sudan; Girls from the Duke of York's Royal Military School visit a war cemetery

# A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

We quizzed a selection of schools on the benefits to pupils of breaking away from the traditional learning of the classroom for exciting school trips at home and abroad...

**F**OR those of a certain vintage, school trips may conjure up memories of constant headcounts, interminable journeys on stuffy coaches and packed lunches made up of stinky sandwiches and tepid drinks.

But scratch beneath the surface and most would admit that striking out from the classroom for museums, theatres and even other countries has long been an excellent means of bringing learning to life.

Alex Foreman, Principal of the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover, explained how getting out and about can be the perfect complement to in-house teaching with the chance to see "the real thing" helping students understand the complexities and impact of

topics discussed in the classroom.

Mr Foreman said: "Seeing the Hadron Collider at Cern to grasp the fundamentals of subatomic particles or visiting the Great War battlefields at Ypres where so many soldiers lost their lives helps students visualise what they are learning."

Carly Skiller, Head of Year Three at Andover's Farleigh School, had a similar answer when asked how getting out of the classroom benefits learning.

Explaining that allowing children to experience active learning in a new environment helps to encourage independent thought, she added: "Children respond to different stimuli away from the classroom, which often helps to consolidate their understanding of a topic."

Reigate's Royal Alexandra and

Albert School has gone to great lengths in acknowledging the fact that the classroom is not always the best learning environment for all of its pupils.

Jo Czerpak, Deputy Head of Curriculum and Community, explained that the school operates a popular "a week without walls" programme to give its youngsters the chance to venture out while learning something directly linked to the curriculum.

He said: "Our pupils spend a week trying different skills such as learning a new sport, working with Gatton Trust on how they look after our 260-acre park and even getting our maintenance department involved to teach children practical skills such as plumbing and electrical work."

Education expert William Wilcox, of Which Boarding School, endorsed the power of leaving the confines of the classroom in enriching pupils' experiences.

William, who works with schools and parents to find the perfect place for each child, said that his first-hand experience has shown that learning and schooling are about much more than covering the curriculum in the classroom.

He explained: "Schools now dedicate a significant proportion of their time to developing life skills and many school trips fall outside traditional curriculum subjects.

"Society has changed and schools are adapting. Millennials value experiences over material ownership and this thinking currently extends into the classroom. »



## AFRICAN ADVENTURE

A TRIP to Sudan isn't usually on most schools' itineraries, but students and staff from Gordon's School spent a week in the capital city, Khartoum.

Gordon's School shares a unique history and connection to Khartoum as it is the national memorial to the British war hero and philanthropist General Charles Gordon and was founded following his death in Khartoum in 1885.

It also houses a statue of General Gordon which originally graced a crossroads in Khartoum, and one of the Gordon Foundation trustees is Tom Gordon – great-great-great nephew of General Gordon.

The invitation for the historic visit – believed to be the first by a European school – came from the co-founders of the Khartoum International Community School (KICS), who discovered Gordon's School when helping their son with a school project on General Gordon.

The trip included a boat trip along the Nile; the Meroe Pyramids; the National Republic Museum; camping in the desert and tea at the British Embassy.

Last summer Gordon's School welcomed the then-British Ambassador to Sudan, Michael Aron and now Gordon's and KICS are determined to develop and maintain links, with an exchange visit already planned.

Student Victoria Wright asked to go as she is keen to work with NGOs in the future. Although admitting Sudan wasn't her idea of a typical holiday destination, she is keen to return. "Everyone we met was so hospitable and friendly and approachable," she said.

David Lelliott, British Embassy Charge d'Affaires in Sudan, has offered support in educational links between the schools and it is hoped there will be further visits as well as placements for gap students from Gordon's, teacher experience and joint Model United Nations activity.



**Up for adventure** (clockwise from top left): Adcote pupils reassemble a car engine; Royal Alexandra and Albert School rugby players have toured South Africa and Barbados; Dauntsey's pupils aboard the *Jolie Brise*; Chafyn Grove students get back to nature

"Parents relish the opportunities to give their children once-in-a-lifetime experiences which will stay with the child forever."

While the focus of any particular school trip – whether a Shakespearean play or a museum exhibition – may provide subject-specific learning, the experience of heading into a new environment holds important lessons of its own, according to Matty Thavenot, Head of Prep Boarding and Science at Mount Kelly in Tavistock, Devon.

From bog runs and camping residentials to care home visits and language trips, Mount Kelly's "learning outside the classroom" provision develops resilience, teamwork, leadership and more.

"All of these skills combine to help develop a well-rounded child who has a greater range of skills needed to succeed in the ever-changing workplace," said Mr Thavenot. "By developing character and curiosity they will be able to find their passion and mould their futures in the direction that they want."

This broader sense of development is also a keen focus of Adcote School, where Headmistress Diane Browne points to a fundamental aspect of human nature as a motivation to break away from more

traditional learning.

"Feelings," she explained. "That, in a nutshell, is a leading reason for the benefits of learning through the outdoors for students today.

"Lessons that tap into all their senses and bring their minds and their bodies alive in the way that an arid, theory-driven, classroom-based experience cannot."

Mrs Browne added that British education has been placing an increasing emphasis on "whole child education" and the importance of building character alongside knowledge – much to the benefit of Adcote's pupils.

"Moving learning from indoors to outdoors is a sure way to teach skills and character because it is a fully immersive experience for young, inexperienced and impressionable children," she said. "Tasks and challenges set beyond the limits of the classroom awaken their senses, all of them, and as a result learning is more vital and lasting.

"Above all it is enjoyable and we all know that student engagement is at the heart of student success."

The value of external visits is appreciated by Chafyn Grove Headmaster Simon Head, who believes their benefits extend beyond formal educational settings.

He explained: "Education out of the classroom always complements what goes on inside it – I instinctively approve of family trips as well as school-organised ones for this good reason.

"Getting out of the classroom not only brings learning to life, it encourages camaraderie and cooperation. The minibus trip is always a big part of any fixture! In addition the simple variety excursions supply keeps the environment fresh and oxygenated for the children."

And for Mark McFarland, Dauntsey's School's Second Master and the man responsible for organising an annual schedule of trips, heading out on excursions is a chance to provide pupils with "magical opportunities".

Mr McFarland believes that whether deepening academic knowledge, stimulating new ideas or pushing youngsters beyond their previous experiences, school trips lead to new friendships, new confidence and a new sense of self.

"Whatever the topic, destination or reason for a trip, pupils visibly blossom," he told us. "Out of their normal environment, they grow in independence and confidence, forging close relationships with >>

their fellow travellers.

“They experience different cultures and ways of life which change the way they think and test comfortable assumptions.

“They return to school with a different level of understanding, not only of the places they have visited and the subjects they have studied, but of themselves and their place in the world.”

**A VARIETY OF VENUES**

From Royal Shakespeare Company performances in Stratford-upon-Avon to exhibitions at the Science, Natural History or National Army Museums, certain school trips have proved an enduring option over many generations.

But the increasing emphasis on whole-child education, combined with the dedication of adventurous staff, has opened up a wealth of new and exciting out-of-class options.

Overseas trips may not be anything particularly new, but today’s pupils are able to collect stamps in their passports from some fairly far-flung destinations. Youngsters at Gordon’s School, for example, benefited from the establishment’s links to Sudan to pay a visit to the African country’s capital Khartoum (see *African adventure, previous page*).

Dauntsey’s School’s schedule for the next academic year will take in an Arctic adventure, a

canoeing expedition to the Swedish wilderness and a visit to Bhutan, while Chafyn Grove’s pupils have been on a trip up Mount Kenya and a choir tour to Barcelona, with a further singing sojourn to Rome planned in 2020. Members of Farleigh School’s choir are equally well-travelled, with a recent tour to Malta being followed with a visit to the Portuguese capital Lisbon.

At the Royal Alexandra and Albert School, sporting tours have taken pupils to South Africa and Barbados to play netball and rugby – with future destinations including Sri Lanka and Canada – while Mount Kelly’s international destinations have included sports fixtures in Jersey, an art trip to the Netherlands, skiing in the Alps and a cricket tour to the UAE.

Of course, students do not need to dust off their passports to make the most of off-campus learning. Duke of York’s Royal Military School pupils enjoy adventure trips in the United Kingdom with the Combined Cadet Force and participate in national ceremonial events including the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.

Mount Kelly offers bespoke trips to pupils in each year, ranging from journeys onto Dartmoor to geography outings to the north Cornwall coast, while Farleigh School makes use of venues including Highclere Castle, Ufton

Court, Butser Ancient Farm, Stonehenge and the Andover Museum of the Iron Age to bring history to life.

The value of these out-of-classroom experiences is apparent in Adcote School’s CLEAR (Confidence, Leadership, Engagement, Achievement and Resilience) learning programme, which aims to build the five key character traits in pupils.

Mrs Browne explained that Adcote views outdoor learning as an important aspect of the curriculum, with the CLEAR programme taking students off timetable to attend ‘challenge days’.

The challenges are usually conducted outside and have included forest skills and technical tasks such as dismantling and reassembling car engines.

Mrs Browne said: “Completing tasks outdoors gives students a sense of space and freedom and enables them to take supported risks and thus their senses are alive.

“A further bonus? Children talk to each other, build trust, see each other in different lights and certainly in ways that social media cannot accommodate.

“This includes the sound of each other’s laughter, an element that is invaluable in building good mental health and securing the one thing we all truly wish for in our children – happiness.” ■

**SCHOOLS DIRECTORY**

**ADCOTE SCHOOL**  
adcoteschool.org.uk

**ANDERSON EDUCATION**  
andersoneducation.co.uk

**CHAFYN GROVE**  
chafyngrove.co.uk

**CHRIST COLLEGE BRECON**  
christcollegebreccon.com

**DAUNTSEY’S**  
dauntseys.org

**THE DOWNS MALVERN**  
thedownsmalvern.org.uk

**THE DUKE OF YORK’S ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL**  
doyrms.com

**THE ELMS SCHOOL**  
elmsschool.co.uk

**FARLEIGH SCHOOL**  
farleighschool.com

**GORDON’S SCHOOL**  
gordons.school

**HABERDASHERS’ MONMOUTH SCHOOLS**  
habs-monmouth.org

**LVS ASCOT**  
lvs.ascot.sch.uk

**MOUNT KELLY**  
mountkelly.com

**ROYAL ALEXANDRA AND ALBERT SCHOOL**  
raa-school.co.uk

**SALISBURY CATHEDRAL SCHOOL**  
salisburycathedral school.com

**ST LAWRENCE COLLEGE**  
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**THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING IN A COMMUNITY**

Maria Young, Headmistress of St Mary’s School, Shaftesbury

WE HEAR regular news stories about the effects of social isolation on children’s mental health. Human beings are hard-wired for social interaction and school is a good place in which to hone the soft skills needed for communal living and working.

When we are looking for a school that will truly promote our children’s wellbeing, results and the co-curricular offer are only part of the story. We should also be seeking a profound sense of ‘community’, warmly valued and proudly described by

pupils and staff alike.

In a boarding school, a sense of family is facilitated through the house structure, under the care of a housemaster/mistress and their team of pastoral staff.

Here, in dorms and shared rooms, best friends for life are made and a sense of building the common good arises from shared social, sporting, cultural and charitable activities. Everyone has to pull together to make the house community function.

You soon find out who are the doers, the listeners,

the enablers, the creative visionaries and those who will step up to take the lead.

Both within the house and in the wider school community, a child will encounter a sense of who they are in the world, how they fit in, and what they might like to do to help their community flourish.

Living as part of a functional, nurturing community, a child soon develops a sense of self-worth, which is key to enabling them to fulfil their potential in the classroom and beyond.

To read more from Maria Young, visit [armyandyou.co.uk/category/educationalad](http://armyandyou.co.uk/category/educationalad)