

# ► MINDSETS: A CASE STUDY

## HELPING PUPILS TO DEVELOP MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDES



### An Outward Bound® exploration of Mindset for children from service families

#### AIM

This programme was jointly funded by the Ministry of Defence and Midlothian Council and targeted the service pupils of Beeslack Community High School.

As a result of their parents' deployment service pupils were found to need more support in areas such as confidence and resilience. The primary aim of the programme was to strengthen the support network within the school service community.

The secondary aim married the educational values of the school with the academic expertise at The Trust's Loch Eil centre, to bring together a programme built around Mindset. Its stated aims were:

To raise aspirations and build resilience, giving service youngsters confidence and the ability to recognise their potential and the determination to realise it

To build a strong sense of community and enhance the capacity for mutual support and encouragement

To develop leadership skills in students to enable them to take responsibility for sustaining and developing future projects

To support young people to set themselves goals and make a plan of action so that they can transfer their learning back to their own lives and feel confident about making positive choices about their future.

#### EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Mindset is a model developed by Professor Carol Dweck, the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, in the United States. At its heart is the distinction between students' perceptions of their abilities.

The belief that you have certain innate, unchanging capabilities is called a Fixed Mindset. The belief that you can develop your capabilities through hard work and practice is called a Growth Mindset. The implications of these two are very significant, and speak right to the heart of what Outward Bound courses are about.

When faced with a significant obstacle or setback, a fixed mindset can lead to feelings of helplessness and to students giving up too easily. Whereas a growth mindset encourages a re-doubling of efforts, variation of strategy, and the idea that all experience is valuable for learning.

At The Outward Bound Trust, pupils are introduced to this model, and given the opportunity to experience the link between effort and reward. Instead of being inhibited by challenge, they practice what it feels like to push past feelings of uncertainty and emerge from difficulty a stronger person.

**+** A GROWTH MINDSET ALLOWS YOU TO THINK YOU CAN PASS YOUR LEVEL 4 & 5 EXAMS WHEN IT COMES TO IT. A FIXED MINDSET MAKES YOU THINK YOU CAN'T DO IT.  
**JEREMY, PUPIL, BEESLACK COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL** **+**

## THE PROGRAMME

26 pupils began the programme in their own 'back yard', with a challenging mountain rescue exercise in the Pentland Hills, designed to set their expectations for the residential. This day also allowed us to introduce the programme to parents and relatives at the barracks' community centre, further involving the whole service community in the learning process.

Their residential programme at Loch Eil followed approximately six weeks later. The young people from across the whole school were grouped according to age, in three 'clans'. The course was then tailored to these groups, and comprised a series of progressively more adventurous days, culminating in a three-day expedition in the West Highlands, including an ascent of Ben Nevis by the older clan.

Having comprehensively explored the Mindset model through workshops and reviews, the clans put together a presentation, which was the highlight of the end of the course. This was then re-presented to the Beeslack service community at the school during a final celebration day.

## THE IMPACT

Evaluation of the programme showed that the pupils had particularly low well-being in relation to how they felt about school and their lives in general. The programme itself was effective in developing their skills, building their confidence to cope with challenges, and in fostering greater determination to achieve their goals.

Back in school, teachers observed a positive change in their attitude and behaviour: they were more determined to succeed when faced with tasks and the younger pupils in particular had more independence and confidence around school.

The most tangible benefit for Beeslack Community High School was the support network that the programme created. There is now a particularly strong bond between the pupils, which will help them to cope with the effects, often devastating, of deployment of a family member.

**+ OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE STARTED TO SEE THE FUTURE – A FUTURE THEY DIDN'T SEE BEFORE. THEY HAVE BEGUN TO THINK ABOUT HOW THEY CAN REACH THEIR GOALS AND WHAT CHALLENGES THEY NEED TO OVERCOME TO GET THERE. +**

**CLAIRE POPPLETON, BEESLACK TEACHER**



## FURTHER READING

Don't just take our word for it, read about Mindset programme, and other similar Outward Bound courses in the press:

### Success – It's all in the mindset:

TESS Feb 2013

### Loch, listen and learn:

TESS Oct 2011

### Going for growth is a challenge in itself:

Scotsman Feb 2013

### The Outward Bound Trust's Social Impact Report

### Listen to Olympic Gold Medal-winning boxer, Luke Campbell, on the benefits of a course at The Outward Bound Trust

Short video

An additional thank you to the Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing in Glasgow, who helped advise on the project concept and design.

For more information go to:  
[www.centreforconfidence.co.uk](http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk)

Further information on Mindset Professor Carol Dweck's biography, and her book 'Mindsets, the new psychology of success' are available via this link:  
<http://mindsetonline.com/abouttheauthor/index.html>

## CONTACT DETAILS

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