



# Loanhead After School Club



## Location

Loanhead, Edinburgh

## Summary

After school club which encourages members of staff and children in their care to be more physically active outdoors by wildlife gardening, walks around the local nature reserve and visits to the local park.

## Health benefits

- Significant and wide-ranging physical health benefits from increased exercise, fresh air and fitness
- Establishing healthy living, exercise and eating habits

## Keys to success and learning points

- Nature walks, wildlife gardening and other activities are fun for the participating children, who enjoy taking part without necessarily being aware of the health benefits.
- As a result of their increased outdoor activity at the after school club, many of the children have become more confident and keen to be more active at home and in the rest of their lives.
- Walking to local woods, nature reserves or parks rather than using the minibus provides more exercise.
- Children are much more likely to take part if they have been involved from the start in coming up with ideas
- Staff enthusiasm for wildlife and the good example they set in becoming more physically active themselves inspires children.
- Allowing children free choice in what they do but offering them a stimulating range of outdoor activity in attractive natural environments is key to maximising participation.
- Development of interesting high quality greenspace on the doorstep such as the community garden linked to Loanhead After School Club ensures everyone has immediate access and unlimited scope for increased physical outdoor activity with associated health benefits.

## About the project

Loanhead After School Club provides after school care for up to 150 children aged 2-14 on a daily basis. One of the club's main objectives is to increase outdoor activity by 50% over the next 12 months. Team consultations involving all of the staff and some of the children came up with ideas of how this might be achieved.

Children have been involved in building a community garden linked to the after school club, where wildlife gardening, planting, building hedgehog boxes, wormeries and other projects all provide enjoyable, stimulating physical activity as well as developing environmental interest. The children particularly enjoy watching butterflies attracted by what they have planted, or watching snowdrops they have planted come into flower.

Children are free to choose for themselves what they do but are always keen to join daily excursions to the local park. Walks to the local nature reserve at the other end of the village which are timetabled into the club's programme of activities two to three times per week to encourage everyone to be more active are also very popular.

The club has invested in pedometers for staff and children and everyone taking part sets personal goals to try to increase the number of steps they take each day. A weekly step club meeting has been set up to build a routine into the children's day and a wall chart keeps the ideas fresh in their minds. A monthly healthy lunch with healthy smoothies has been developed to reward those who have become more active.



*“ The garden is fun. It keeps us fit and healthy. ”*

*“ Being in the garden makes me feel happy. ”*

*“ Fresh air is good for you and watching the plants growing from seed teaches us how to care for ourselves and other people and other things. ”*

## Further information

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**Source:** SNH Health and Natural Heritage Case Studies report,  
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