



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**OUTDOOR EDUCATION: A BOOST TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**Isis Education Centre, Hyde Park, launches an outdoor science programme to support secondary school students to succeed at KS3-4**

**Wednesday 6 February 2013, London, UK**

The Royal Parks Foundation's education team is launching an outdoor learning programme to support students to succeed in sciences at KS3 and KS4, the first programme of its kind in the Royal Parks. The sessions are free for UK based secondary schools thanks to generous funding from Deutsche Bank, as part of their commitment to bringing learning to life for young people. Sessions take place in state-of-the-art education facilities at the Isis Education Centre in the heart of Hyde Park, London.

Recent school league tables show 215 schools missing government targets for students achieving five GCSE's at A\*-C, but research shows that getting outside and hands-on improves students' attainment particularly in science subjects and helps schools improve their own achievement in teaching these subjects. Outdoor education not only helps students with a deeper understanding of science, but it also helps develop their life skills and enables them to see the application of scientific theory to the real world.

Emma Keegan, Assistant Head Teacher at Queen Elizabeth Jubilee II, says, "The outdoor education programme designed with us by the Isis Education Centre is fundamental to our students gaining meaningful, practical experience, something they can really build on and be proud of. A particular strength of the sessions on offer is that they encourage skills development and reflective learning, providing the students with tools to help them make progress and have something to show for their efforts that people value".

Sara Lom, Chief Executive of the Royal Parks Foundation, the charity responsible for the Isis Education Centre says, "In London many young people have little or no access to green space although it has been shown that contact with nature is beneficial to their education, physical and mental health and wellbeing. "

"Our brand new, purpose-built, environmental education centre in Hyde Park provides children of all abilities with the opportunity to experience inspiring environmental activities. By providing specialist support for the GCSE and BTEC syllabi we are helping raise achievement in science across the secondary age group."

In September 2011, The Science and Technology Select Committee published a [report](#)<sup>1</sup> which concluded that both practical lessons and learning outside the classroom are essential contributors to good quality science education. When looking at barriers to participation, the report focused on the strong need for well trained and confident teachers and for fit-for-purpose facilities to enable effective practical work to take place in the sciences. The Isis Education Centre addresses both areas through training for teachers and trainee teachers in fieldwork techniques, and through the well-equipped ecology rooms situated in the centre of London.

**The Isis Education Centre is open year round – during term time for school bookings and community education during holidays. To find out more visit;**  
[www.isiseducationcentre.org](http://www.isiseducationcentre.org)

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **Secondary School League Tables / Government Targets**

School league tables are produced every year from official data published by the government on pupils' achievement in England. The key government benchmark for secondary schools is the percentage of pupils gaining at least five A\*-C GCSEs passes, including English and maths. Last year, a school was said to be failing if fewer than 35 percent of its pupils got five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including Maths and English in 2011. This year the threshold for 2012 exam results has been raised to 40 percent.

2012 league tables, published on 24 January 2013 shows, 594 (23.4%) of the 2,540 schools teaching A-levels had no pupils with the two As and a B in the subjects recommended for top degree courses. The data also shows 215 schools missed the new government target of 40% of pupils obtaining five A\*-C GCSEs.

### **Research: Benefits of outdoor education and raising attainment**

The Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, introduced by the previous Government in 2008, summarised the benefits from working outside the classroom which included:

- improving academic achievement;
- providing a bridge to higher order learning;
- developing skills and independence in a widening range of environments;
- making learning more engaging and relevant to young people;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/school-science/>

- developing active citizens and stewards of the environment;
- nurturing creativity; and
- providing opportunities for informal learning through play.

In response to the Government's Manifesto, Ofsted published a [report](#)<sup>2</sup> in 2008, evaluating the importance of practical experiments in primary and secondary school science lessons and science field trips. It identifies strengths and weaknesses in practice and shows how schools and colleges overcome common barriers that can limit successful learning outside the classroom. Ofsted also told the Science and Technology Select Committee that "in the schools which showed clear improvement in science subjects, key factors in promoting students' engagement, learning and progress were more practical science lessons and the development of the skills of scientific enquiry" They pointed out that "where students progress in science was no more than satisfactory, the opportunities for them to design and carry out experiments were limited; too much of the practical work was prescriptive, with students merely following instructions".

The Science and Technology Select Committee [report](#)<sup>3</sup> published in September 2011 evidenced that "Trips provide a valuable means by which learning in school can be transferred to different settings. They encourage pupils to make connections between knowledge they have gained in their science lessons and the "real" world, as well as linking different areas of the curriculum; both desirable outcomes which can be difficult to achieve within the normal school setting. Trips can also provide an effective way to help pupils see the scope and range of STEM-related jobs, breaking down stereotypes and providing exposure to the wide range of careers which STEM qualifications can lead to."

### **Royal Parks Foundation**

**The Royal Parks Foundation** is the charity that helps support London's eight amazing Royal Parks. Established in 2003, the charity reaches out to make the Parks part of more people's lives - raising funds for a wide variety of projects from wildlife conservation and landscape restoration, to community sport, art and education. The registered charity number is 1097545, for more information, please visit [www.SupportTheRoyalParks.org](http://www.SupportTheRoyalParks.org) or visit The Royal Parks at [www.royalparks.org.uk](http://www.royalparks.org.uk)

### **Isis Education Centre at The LookOut, Hyde Park**

The Royal Parks Foundation fundraised £2.2m to transform a dilapidated row of metropolitan police dog kennels and an area of derelict land into a new state of the art eco-friendly venue that opened in October 2011. It was created to provide an exciting venue for city children to explore nature and the environment, outside the classroom. The Royal Parks previously delivered sessions only for primary schools. The Royal Parks Foundation is now launching its secondary school programme called 'Inside Outside' alongside what is currently offered for primary schools.

The centre features nature trails, a dipping pond with underwater endoscopes, a mini-allotment, butterfly bank, lightning tree and mini-beast habitats. It incorporates a rubble roof, natural ventilation and a grey water system, and provides education programmes linked to the National Curriculum all year round, for 5-18 year olds.

It is easy to reach by public transport ([TfL offers free transport](#)<sup>4</sup> to all London based schools) and the centre is fully DDA compliant. Sessions are affordable to all due to the financial support of Halcyon Gallery and Deutsche Bank. The primary education programme is subsidised and there are bursaries available for those who are unable to meet the subsidised rate and meet the set criteria. The secondary education programme is free of charge to all British based schools.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/learning-outside-classroom>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/inquiries/school-science/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tickets/14311.aspx>

## **Deutsche Bank**

Deutsche Bank has a longstanding commitment to providing exciting educational opportunities for young people, enabling them to fulfil their potential. The Bank's education programmes support thousands of young people in the UK each year, benefitting both curricular studies and broader life skills. Deutsche Bank is proud to partner with Royal Parks Foundation and the Isis Education Centre to bring STEM education to life for London schools.