



# **Abernethy Trust**

**Explore for schools**

**Religious Observance**

## Abernethy Trust

### Explore for schools

Abernethy is a charitable trust founded on Christian principles. We work with hundreds of school children each year using the outdoors and adventure activities to help young people grow in the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence and to help them learn through their experiences outside the classroom. Through our full activity and Explore programmes we provide rich experiences that seek to engender spiritual and personal development. We follow the ethos of the Scottish Government's current policy on Religious Observance in our Explore programmes.

#### What is Explore?

Explore is an inclusive and valuable time at the end of the day for children and young people to reflect on what they are learning from their residential experience. The session includes games, songs, activities, discussion and stories presented by our staff teams. The spiritual development of children and young people is paramount to Abernethy and we use Explore to make connections between morals, values and how we live our lives using the rich resources of our traditions, history and culture. We do this with a particular emphasis on Christian values using examples and stories from the Christian faith but within the greater framework of the Curriculum for Excellence

#### What is it not?

Explore is not a time to urge people to follow a particular faith. We understand that the children, young people and adults that visit our centres come from a wide variety of faiths and backgrounds including no faith.

Following the government approved structures of Religious Observance in schools we aim to promote development within the 4 capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence. We do not teach anything that is outside of these approved guidelines.

#### Who can take part?

Explore sessions are led by all members of our staff team and are a great way for our guests to get to know us a little better. We encourage participation from all of our guests and hope that teaching staff and pupils from all backgrounds would attend this fun and enjoyable part of the Abernethy experience.

#### Is it optional?

Explore is a standard part of the program at all of our centres. It has been created as a tool to help schools teach about faith and Christianity as required by the Curriculum for Excellence. With this in mind it is hoped that all visiting schools will take part. However, if you wish to opt out, please let us know in advance of your visit so that we can alter your programme accordingly.

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In 2015 Abernethy launched our new Explore series. We produced this series after further study into the Curriculum for Excellence along with the guidelines laid out for religious observance within schools.

Abernethy aims to use residential settings and adventure programmes to create intentional communities where individuals can learn more about themselves, others and God. Through these programmes we promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community, both teachers and pupils and we express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.

The Education Scotland Act 1980 continues to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to provide religious observance in Scottish schools. Scotland is a society with a longstanding Christian tradition and when school groups come to Abernethy we seek to reflect this tradition and we are sensitive to individual spiritual needs and beliefs, whether they are from a Christian faith, other faith or non-faith perspective.

During our Explore sessions we will be sharing the stories of characters from history that have done something to impact society as we know it. These people include Dr Martin Luther King Jr, David Livingstone, Alexander Fleming and Jesus. We focus our evening sessions on the values that these characters passionately believed in and use their examples as illustrations to encourage personal, social and spiritual development.

The Scottish Government recommend that religious observance should be taking place frequently within schools so that it can have a positive impact on the spiritual development of the school community. There is an emphasis that the quality of such occasions is of greatest importance. Abernethy has a long history of planning and delivering these sessions and we strive towards a standard of excellence in the training of our teams and the delivery and execution of these programmes.

The religious observance review group have considered the link between organised acts of worship (such as the Christian songs we would sing, and saying grace before meals) and religious observance. Their thoughts on the matter were: *'Where the school community, whether denominational or non-denominational, is continuous with a faith community, that community's faith is the focus of worship, may be assumed and worship may be considered to be appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school. Where, as in most non-denominational schools, there is a diversity of beliefs and diversity of beliefs and practices, the review group believes the appropriate context for an organised act of worship is within the informal curriculum as part of the range of activities offered for example by religions, non-religious groups, chaplains and other faith leaders'*

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### **Curriculum for Excellence**

Religious observance has an important part to play in the development of school pupils four learning capacities: Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. Religious observance should also provide opportunities for the school community to reflect upon and gain deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual and their contribution to the school and wider community. At Explore we successfully cover all four learning capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence.

#### **Successful Learner**

Our lively sessions help to give the pupils the enthusiasm and motivation for learning. Giving the pupils openness to new ways of thinking and ideas helps them to be their own person and to think in different ways. Our different styles of teaching help to give pupils a variety of new learning skills.

#### **Confident Individual**

From our teaching sessions, pupils will begin to understand something of their uniqueness and self-worth and how their contribution to their activity group, their school and wider community is important and valuable. This helps pupils become more confident in their person, their beliefs and their character.

#### **Responsible Citizens**

As a charitable trust founded on Christian principles our aim is to develop a knowledge and understanding of Christianity and to recognise faith as an important expression of human experience. The opportunity is there to explore moral values and to develop skills in reflection, discernment, critical thinking, evaluations and decision making, thus helping to promote feelings of communal responsibility. Pupils will learn the value and necessity of others within a team context and learn about the impact that these values have on society.

#### **Effective Contributors**

During the interactive evening sessions, pupils get the chance to respond to questions posed to them, to discuss and to ask their own questions. This gives pupils the opportunity to work by themselves or as part of a team to take the initiative and lead.