

LOCAL FAMILIES – LOCAL ACTION



SHORTLEES PRIMARY SCHOOL JOHN MUIR FAMILY AWARD NOVEMBER 2020



In the midst of restrictions Primary 1 teachers Miss Cardie and Miss Fulton introduced pupils and their families to the John Muir Family Award encouraging quality time outdoors together.

Why?

Miss Cardie believed that completing a Family John Muir Award would help keep pupils and their parents/carers engaged with learning whilst spending time in nature during school restrictions. The Award also offers opportunities for literacy, numeracy and encourages connecting and caring for nature which is well documented to improve wellbeing. These outcomes are very much in tune with the Scottish Attainment Challenge targets with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

17 families signed up and began their Award journey. Activities were suggested, and families were supported to meet the Award criteria in a way which suited each family.

Literacy outdoors develops creativity when writing. Wind on our face or birdsong in the garden can give a feeling of being in the moment. Liliana, age 5, and Mum wrote this poem about two black crows on top of a lamppost.

"It started off more as Liliana telling a story about what we could see and hear all around us. When we got back home, we worked together to create the poem. Liliana came up with all of the ideas on her own, I only helped with where to put each line". Alison Lobban, Liliana's Mum.

More ideas, resources and examples can be found at the John Muir [Literacy in nature](#) webpages.

Numeracy

Throughout the Award there were plenty of opportunities for families to utilise a range of numeracy and maths skills previously explored in class. Pupils sorted and categorised different leaves on walks and used classroom-based knowledge of seasons to find out about the look of different trees. One family also made bird feeders which involved weighing and measuring of the different ingredients as per the recipe.

Health and wellbeing

"The John Muir Award allowed us to step away from the chaos of COVID-19 and focus on something structured that we all enjoy. Getting outside in the fresh air allowed the boys to

Two Black Crows

Today we saw 2 black crows flying at the bottom of the road.

Up on the lamppost high in the sky, "Squawking" and screeching as we walked by.

They were black and grey with a silver beak, flapping their wings all through the week.

They were hungry and fighting to get food, finding a worm would be good.

They flew away across the sky, 2 black crows flying so high.

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run about while learning and it tired them out. We also seemed to have more energy and the drive to get up and go when we had something to do and focus on.” The Jack Family.

The connection to nature and local wild places was further encouraged when the family planted a tree. Gaining that sense of place and belonging will be with the family for many years to come.

“Both Riley and Rody said that planting the tree was their favourite part because it’s something they have never done before, and they love going back to see their tree when we go out a walk.” The Jack Family.

The John Muir Award gave families something to look forward to especially with not having school as an option at the time.

“We had a great time being a part of it and learned a lot more about nature when taking the time for that alone.”



“The health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors were some of the most positively commented on aspects of our remote learning. Our John Muir Award families are now being gifted with materials to extend their work and interest across the Spring break and we have planned a renewal programme for classes back full time.” Wendy Connelly, Head Teacher.

“The John Muir Award was really helpful during lockdown; it allowed our families to “reset” whilst in the outdoors and more importantly gave them a break from screens. When checking in and catching up with families the Award was often the most popular topic of conversation. I could just tell how much the families were enjoying it and some families relying on it. It could not have come at a better time.” Abbie Cardie, Class teacher.

Thanks to Shortlees Primary School families and staff for sharing their John Muir Family Award journey with us.

Download [‘Closing the Gap: How the John Muir Award helps raise attainment in Scotland’](#) [link] that reports on how different learning establishments use the John Muir Award to support equity in education and raise attainment.

