



OUTDOOR LEARNING ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-24

At one with nature



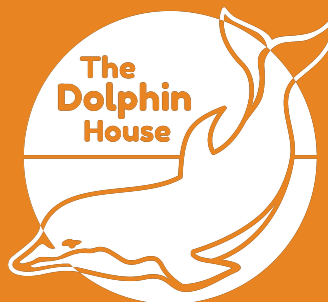


2023-24 has been an extremely busy year at Dolphin House providing our schools and communities with high quality opportunities to learn, explore and develop a wide range of skills and qualities whilst making memories which last a lifetime!

South Ayrshire Council values the impact of outdoor learning through it's continued commitment to our residential centre Dolphin House and popular accreditation initiatives such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and John Muir Award, as well as investment in enhancing infrastructure including the fantastic Access Steps development on the River Ayr creating accessible opportunities for water-based activities for years to come.

We strive to ensure outdoor learning experiences are available locally to all, increasing our provision to allow more people to experience the benefits of the outdoors through learning, having fun and exploring our beautiful area.

This report showcases the breadth and depth of work achieved through 2023-24 and demonstrates how we continue to impact and improve the lives of South Ayrshire people. This year in particular has been extremely exciting for the team, with long term plans coming to fruition with support to increase staffing, allowing our services to be offered to a wider audience and substantial improvements made to accommodation at Dolphin House in addition to the exciting development of the Outdoor Classroom which will transform outdoor learning for visitors.



SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

878

Young people benefitted from a schools residential experience



Supporting our South Ayrshire Schools

31

DIFFERENT SCHOOLS



20%

Have a disability

19%

Are entitled to a Free School Meal

70%

OF SOUTH AYRSHIRE PRIMARY SCHOOLS BENEFIT FROM DOLPHIN HOUSE EXPERIENCES

58%

Of all **PRIMARY 7 PUPILS**

Having a residential outdoor education experience before secondary school



Lots of educational experiences were had while at Dolphin House. The pupils learned so much and have been able to talk about the things they have learned while being there with their peers and other staff members.

Teacher, Braehead Primary



John Muir Award



The award is used at Dolphin House to encourage and foster an awareness and responsibility of the natural environment through visiting and learning about wild places. Each visiting school achieve their award by taking part in a wide range of educational activities to explore the stunning Ayrshire coastline on foot, boat, and bike.

The programme introduces the concept of learning for sustainability, educates about biodiversity in a variety of environments, allows pupils to visit and learn the history of exciting, new places and encourages young people to share their experiences when they return home. Each programme is tailored and planned to help young people develop learning outcomes in line with the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence.

606

AWARDS ACHIEVED

25

SCHOOLS INVOLVED

Conserve **Paddleboarding** Resilience

Wild places

Adventure
Memories Explore
Learning
Fun Curriculum
Teamwork Wellbeing
Outdoors
Respite
Amazing
Trust

Instructors
Inclusion
Confidence
Friendships
Patience
Summer
Apprenticeship



Successful Learners



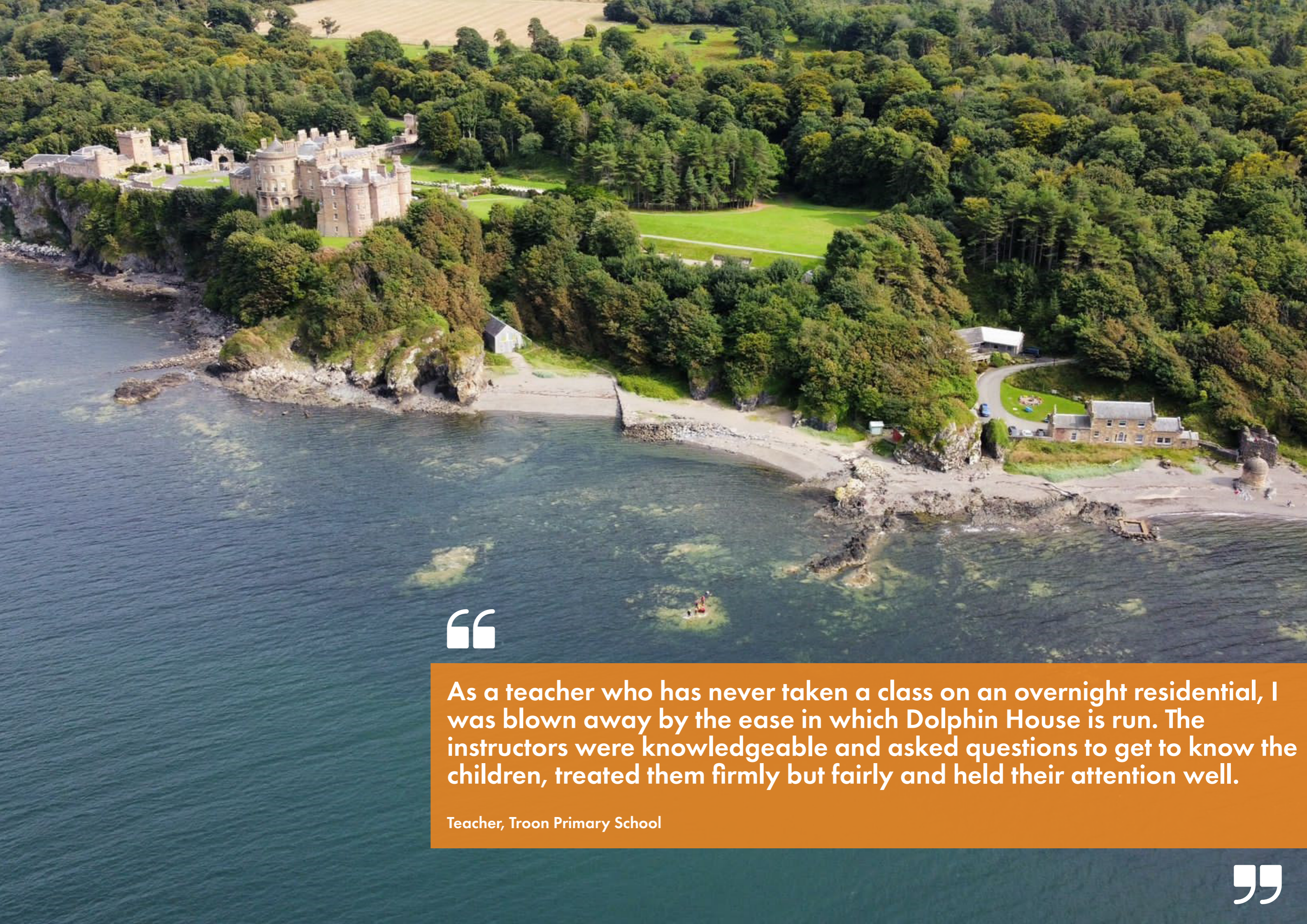
Confident Individuals



Responsible Citizens



Effective Contributors



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As a teacher who has never taken a class on an overnight residential, I was blown away by the ease in which Dolphin House is run. The instructors were knowledgeable and asked questions to get to know the children, treated them firmly but fairly and held their attention well.

Teacher, Troon Primary School

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A CENTRE FOR ALL

Southcraig & Invergarven

This year the centre has been privileged to welcome all of South Ayrshire's Additional Support Needs schools and units to take part in quality outdoor experiences. The programme included new, exciting opportunities for the pupils which they have never experienced before, which allowed positive connections to nature and the outdoors, teaching skills for life.

The activities programme was fun and engaging, empowering the young people to develop independence, work together on team challenges and learn about the history of the local area. The impact of such visits is long lasting and profound, with young people having special memories and experiences from school which can help shape and guide their future.

Adapted activities

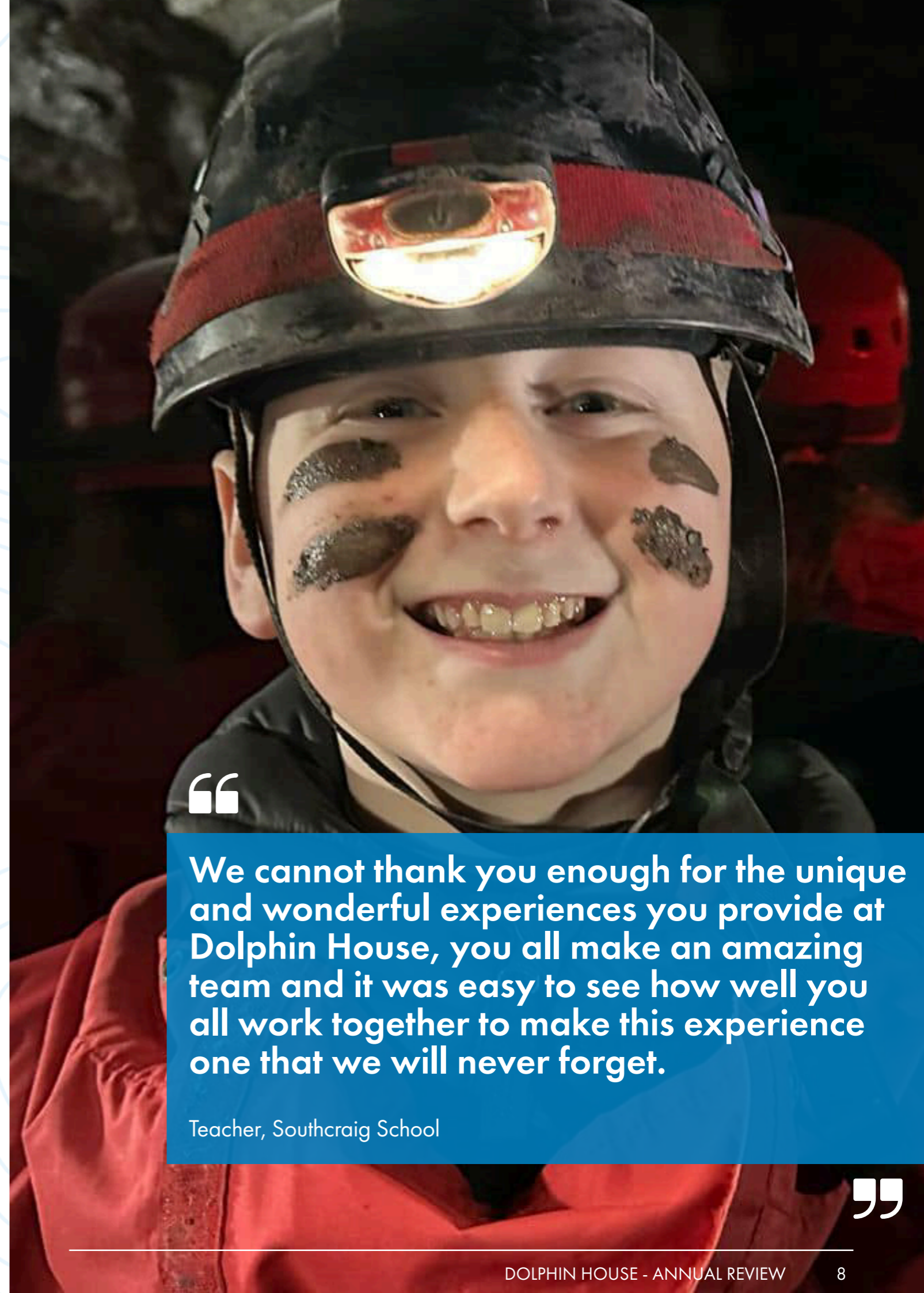
Accessible to everyone

Empowering young people

Braehead

Braehead Primary visit Dolphin House each year for an action-packed week of outdoor learning. The Dolphin House team have worked closely with the head teacher at the school to ensure all pupils are supported to attend the visit. Due to socio-economic challenges facing families, financial support is provided from the school in addition to a reduction in price for pupils in receipt of a free school meal.

Dolphin House instructors have worked closely with the class teacher and head teacher to gain an understanding of the diverse needs of every visiting pupil, designing a programme which best meets these needs and providing additional support and assistance where required.

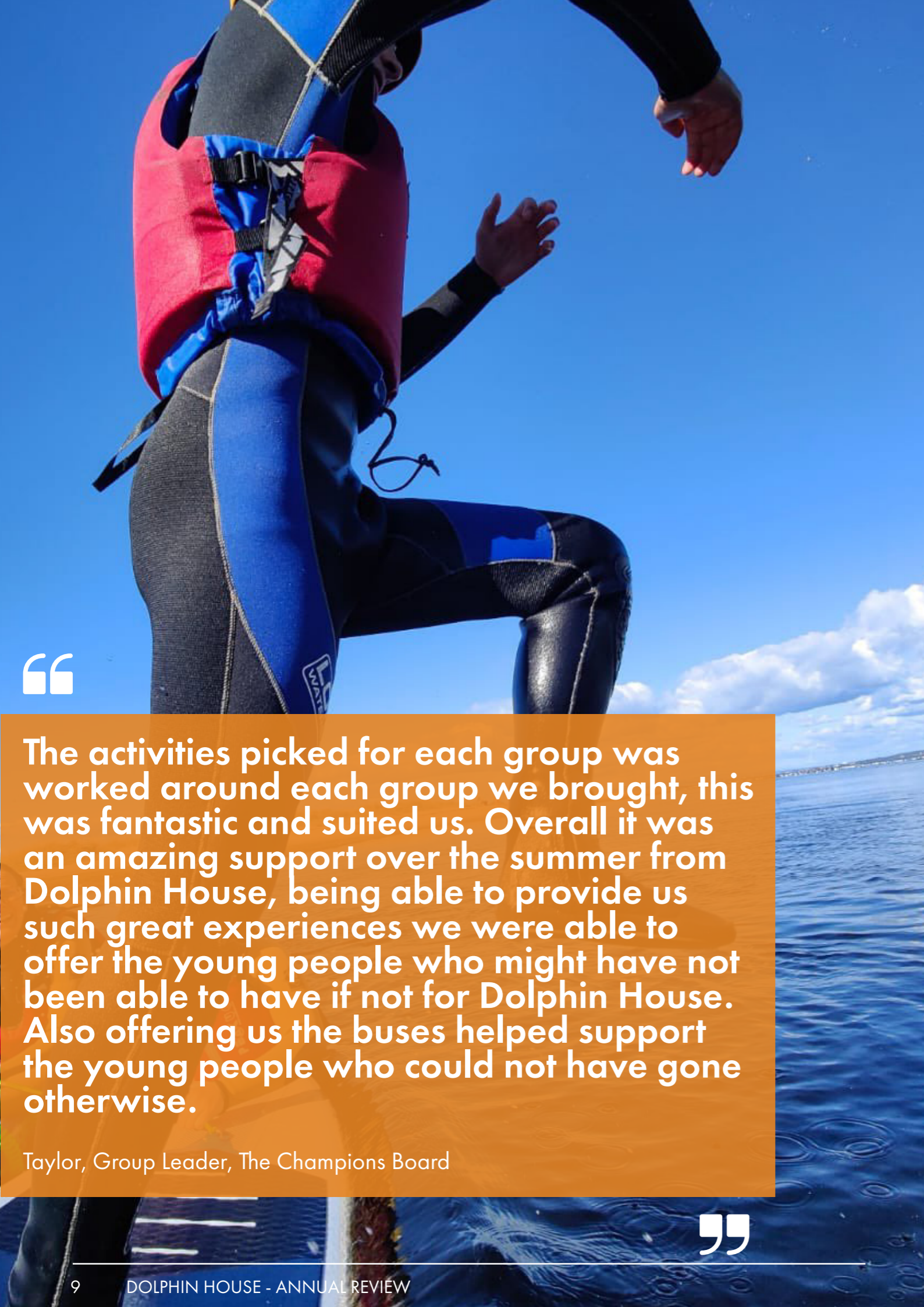


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We cannot thank you enough for the unique and wonderful experiences you provide at Dolphin House, you all make an amazing team and it was easy to see how well you all work together to make this experience one that we will never forget.

Teacher, Southcraig School

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A CENTRE FOR ALL

Supporting Our Young People



Continued opportunities for young people who are care experienced or young carers to access outdoor activities and experiences.

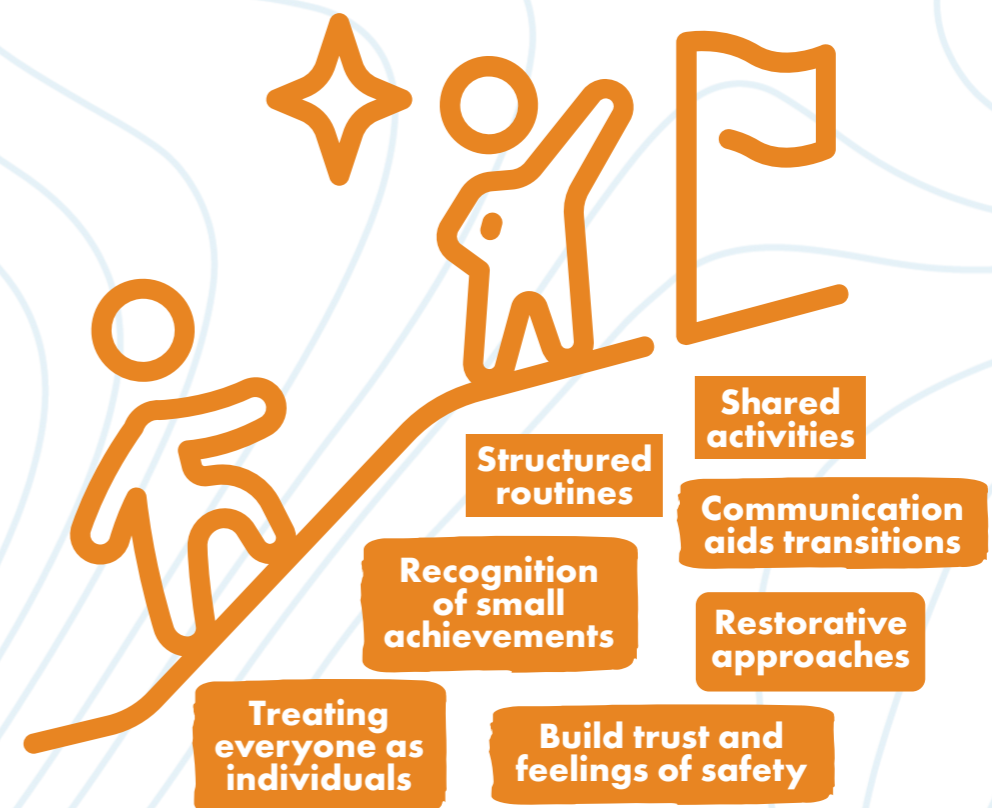
Care experienced young people and young carers have been regular visitors to Dolphin House over the past year, taking part in exciting and stimulating activities in a safe, inclusive environment. To support young people the team have provided a safe space for participants to express themselves and talk about their experiences. Visits allowed family members and siblings the chance to come to a unique outdoor environment away from home where they can have quality time together. Each visit focussed on having fun as well as learning new skills working with staff who are empathetic, encouraging and non-judgemental. Throughout the year positive relationships have been built between the team and participants allowing them to feel comfortable, increasing motivation towards activities and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

The opportunities provided at Dolphin House ensure young people have the chance to try things they wouldn't otherwise be able to and have the confidence to challenge themselves through choice, with a focus on the concept of exploration.



The activities picked for each group was worked around each group we brought, this was fantastic and suited us. Overall it was an amazing support over the summer from Dolphin House, being able to provide us such great experiences we were able to offer the young people who might have not been able to have if not for Dolphin House. Also offering us the buses helped support the young people who could not have gone otherwise.

Taylor, Group Leader, The Champions Board



DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

2023-24 has been an outstanding year for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) in South Ayrshire. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is the largest youth achievement award in the UK! The award is open to 14-24 year olds at three progressive levels; Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each level contains four sections challenging young people to learn new skills, stay active, give something back to their community and work together to complete an exciting expedition. At the Gold level there is an additional residential section where young people have the chance to stay at Dolphin House for a week long residential programme.

Expeditions

For the expedition section, young people plan, train for, and complete an unaccompanied, self-reliant expedition supported by the South Ayrshire team. To complete the section, training, a practice expedition, a qualifying expedition (the one that is assessed) and a final presentation to share their story are all included.

Every expedition challenges young people to work together to progress on their journey exploring some amazing wild places, whether it be the remote hills of the Galloway Forest Park, the picturesque Isle of Arran and the historic Cowal Way, learning skills for life and making memories along the way.

Volunteering



For the first time the team have offered an exciting training, mentoring and volunteering programme focussed on building capacity to deliver the DofE expedition section across South Ayrshire. The team have made increasing DofE Leaders a priority for this year and have offered a range of fantastic training opportunities including National Governing Body approved awards, bespoke outdoor first aid training and minibus driving training.

The support has resulted in new leaders with confidence and skills to take on organising and supervising their own expeditions whilst creating more opportunities for young people to take part in the award at all three levels.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in numbers 2023-2024



486

Young People have started an award

282

Awards have been achieved



58%

Completion rate across all schools and centres

Higher than the national average

Girvan Academy

A model for success

Girvan Academy have developed an impressive model for delivery of DofE within a school setting which is robust, sustainable and person focussed. Over the past 12 months the team have supported 7 members of school staff to access training and development opportunities to increase capacity within the school. Each of the school staff volunteer their time to provide support to young people to work towards an award at all three levels including advice and assistance to access sectional activities, which can be challenging in rural areas, expedition supervision, and assessing and creating a new DofE group for young people with additional support needs which is individually tailored to their needs and abilities.

Girvan Academy have shown outstanding commitment to DofE and enhanced the profile of the award within the school and local community, especially through the volunteering section.

52
Awards achieved

7
New leaders

5
Gold Awards

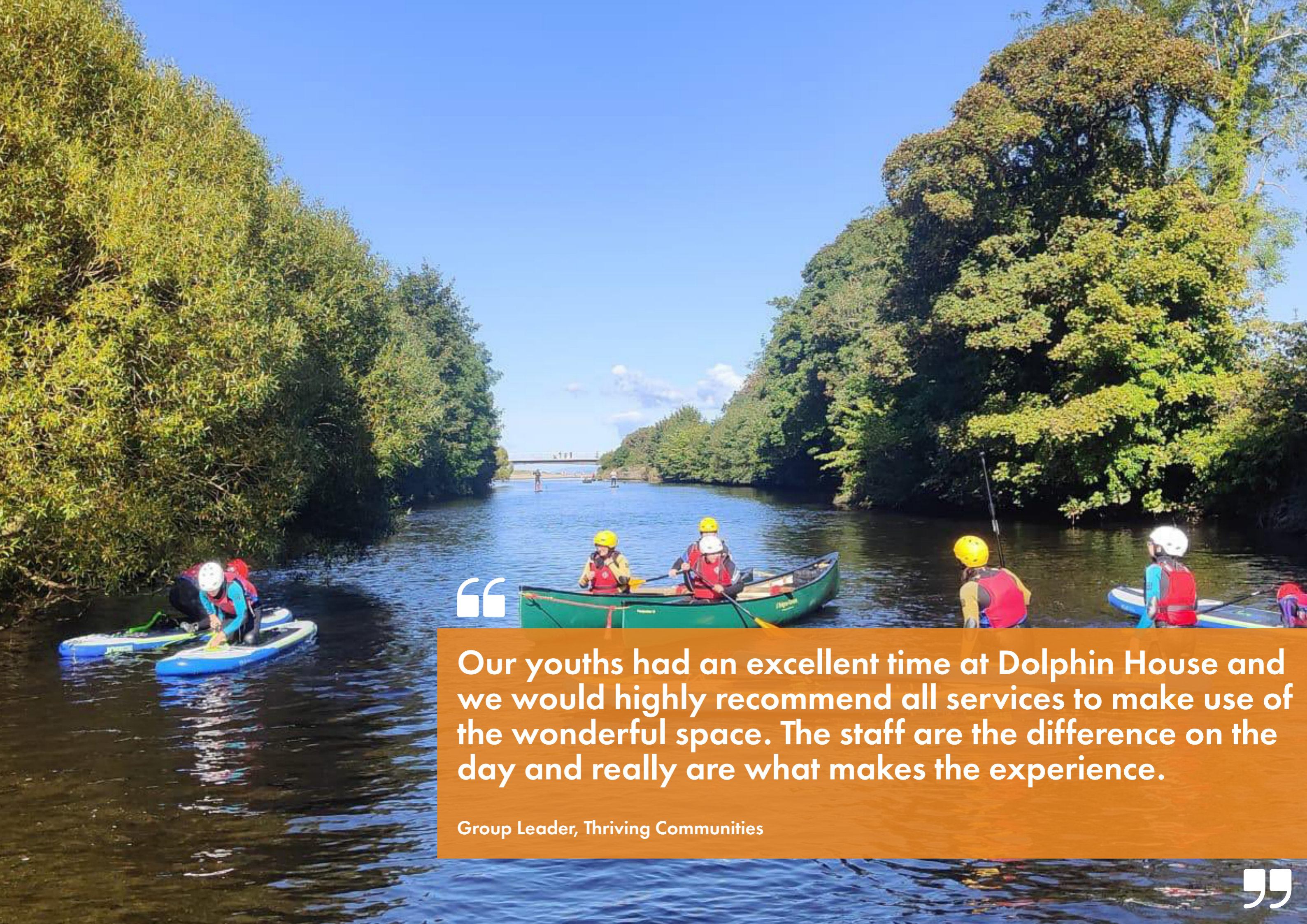
50% Of young people progress to the next award level



Completing training courses has allowed more pupils to take part in Duke of Edinburgh awards, outdoor learning and other outdoor activities by expanding the knowledge and skills of staff to work with pupils in remote environments.

Teacher, Girvan Academy





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Our youths had an excellent time at Dolphin House and we would highly recommend all services to make use of the wonderful space. The staff are the difference on the day and really are what makes the experience.

Group Leader, Thriving Communities

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SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Summer Holiday Programme

Throughout the school summer holidays Dolphin House has welcomed a diverse range of groups to the centre, as well as taking outdoor learning to our communities and delivering activities closer to young people at venues including paddling on the River Ayr and River Doon. Over holiday periods outdoor learning provides young people opportunities to try and experience something new, pushes them out of their comfort zones and has the potential to engage those who may be involved in anti-social behaviour.

This summer groups have been involved from Dundonald to Barrhill including Thriving Communities Youth Provision, Community Safety, Third Sector Youth Organisations, local Sports Clubs and Organisations who support young people with additional support needs.



Canoeing



Mountain Biking



Stand Up Paddleboarding



Coasteering



Caving

Versus Arthritis

Versus Arthritis visited for two residential experiences over the summer holidays with participants from across Ayrshire. The visits involved young people with arthritis visiting accompanied by family members to provide support in addition to group leaders. Collaboratively a programme was developed between the lead instructor and group leaders to meet the needs of participants with shorter sessions, regular rest breaks and additional support provided to ensure the programme was a manageable level for all.

Each of the participants was supported to access experiences they would otherwise not have including many trying paddlesports for the first time, taking a leap of faith whilst abseiling and exploring the dark dives of the historic caves. All of this was possible due to the positive relationships built between participants, family members, group leaders and the Dolphin House team based on flexibility, trust and adaptability.

Individually tailored programme

Challenge through choice

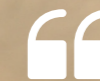
Rest & relaxation activities

Respite, support & wellbeing



Dolphin House is family quality time, learning new activities, coming out of their comfort zones, developing friendships and positive relationships within the group.

Group Leader, St. John's Primary Parent & Child Group



Working with Versus Arthritis has shown me anything is possible in the outdoors and barriers can be broken down with resilience and patience.

Outdoor Instructor, Dolphin House





Completing my apprenticeship has helped me gain confidence by leading groups and improving my leadership and communication skills. I have been helped throughout by the instructors who give me tasks and feedback to support my development.

Charlie, Modern Apprentice



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Inspiring young people to develop skills, confidence and leadership in an outdoor environment.

Proudly supported by



Charlie's Story

Charlie started at Dolphin House on the South Ayrshire Council Modern Apprenticeship Programme having previously taken part in Project Search, a Girvan Youth Trust and Ayrshire College employability initiative. Having previously been unemployed after prematurely leaving formal education, Charlie's journey has been remarkable, inspiring and life changing.

Starting his Modern Apprenticeship in Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing: Operational Services Charlie was shy, apprehensive and extremely quiet due to a range of challenges he has faced throughout his life. After settling in, supported by the team at Dolphin House and Thriving Communities Employability Officers, Charlie began to thrive in the unique outdoor environment around Dolphin House. He quickly became a popular member of the team, building his confidence, resilience and interpersonal skills as well as obtaining a range of nationally recognised qualifications and awards. He has also received glowing testimonials from participants and group leaders. Charlie continued to advance with his confidence and responsibility growing week-by-week whilst receiving support from colleagues to begin to lead his own activities and groups including his favourite activity; archery.

Charlie's development has been outstanding and a testament to his own motivation and commitment, as well as the bespoke support and opportunities provided by Thriving Communities. To date Charlie has achieved; SVQ Level 2 in Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing: Operational Services, Archery GB Instructor Award, PathsforAll Walk Leader, Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Cycling Scotland's Cycle Ride Leader, and Bike Maintenance Level 1.

We are delighted to share that Charlie will be continuing with the team, having been successful for a Tailored Job as an Outdoor Activities Assistant. Over the next 23 months Charlie will be given the opportunity to continue his career development working with a range of visiting groups, and working towards further outdoor qualifications in Mountain Biking, Hill Walking and Paddlesports. Charlie's ambition is to utilise the 23-month Tailored Job opportunity to further prepare himself for a career working in the outdoors.

Interested in a career in the outdoors?

Contact Thriving Communities Employability - thrivingcommunities@south-ayrshire.gov.uk





BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Supporting local groups and organisations to access affordable outdoor education opportunities.

Dolphin House significantly increased the range of visiting groups thanks to a new operational model, increased local outreach venues and improved facilities at Dolphin House. This has provided increased access for local people including families having the chance to visit time and time again.

65

RESIDENTIAL VISITS

110

DAY ACTIVITIES

124

ADULTS PARTICIPATING

490

CHILDREN PARTICIPATING

including

UNIFORMED SERVICES
SPORTS CLUBS
YOUTH GROUPS
EMPLOYABILITY PROJECTS



One of our young people had the best time, we have been working with him for 18 weeks and I have never seen him smile as much as he did when walking through the gorge.

Scottish Sports Futures



FEMALES IN THE OUTDOORS

Trefoil Guild

Dolphin House is committed to ensuring opportunities are offered to all stages of the life course to encourage everyone to experience healthy, active lives. During June 2024 Dolphin House welcomed a group of members from the Trefoil Guild for a action packed weekend of adventure and learning fully immersed in the outdoors. The members worked closely with the lead instructor to plan an engaging tailor made programme which pushed them out of their comfort zones and provided unique opportunities to continue to challenge themselves later in life.

Throughout the weekend each of the Trefoil members showcased impressive teamwork, willingness to try new things and overcame fear through a range of exciting activities including exploring the historic caves below Culzean Castle and paddling a scenic section of the River Ayr. The weekend was not just impactful for the participants but an inspiring and meaningful experience for the team at Dolphin House, gaining a clear understanding of the impact they have on communities first hand.

Dolphin House continues to showcase the opportunity and support for all ages. to take part in activities which remove barriers, challenges stereotypes and enhances mental, and physical, health and wellbeing.

The activity was nonstop, ranging from shell collecting, tree identification, caving, rock pooling, orienteering, and pond dipping. The instructor had designed an incredible time where we learned, laughed and had the best time together!

Patrice, Group Leader



1st Crosshill Guides & Rangers

This year we have welcomed a range of local uniformed services to Dolphin House for both residential visits and day activities over weekends and holiday periods. Supporting groups such as Guides and Brownies provide the chance for girls and young women to access the outdoors.

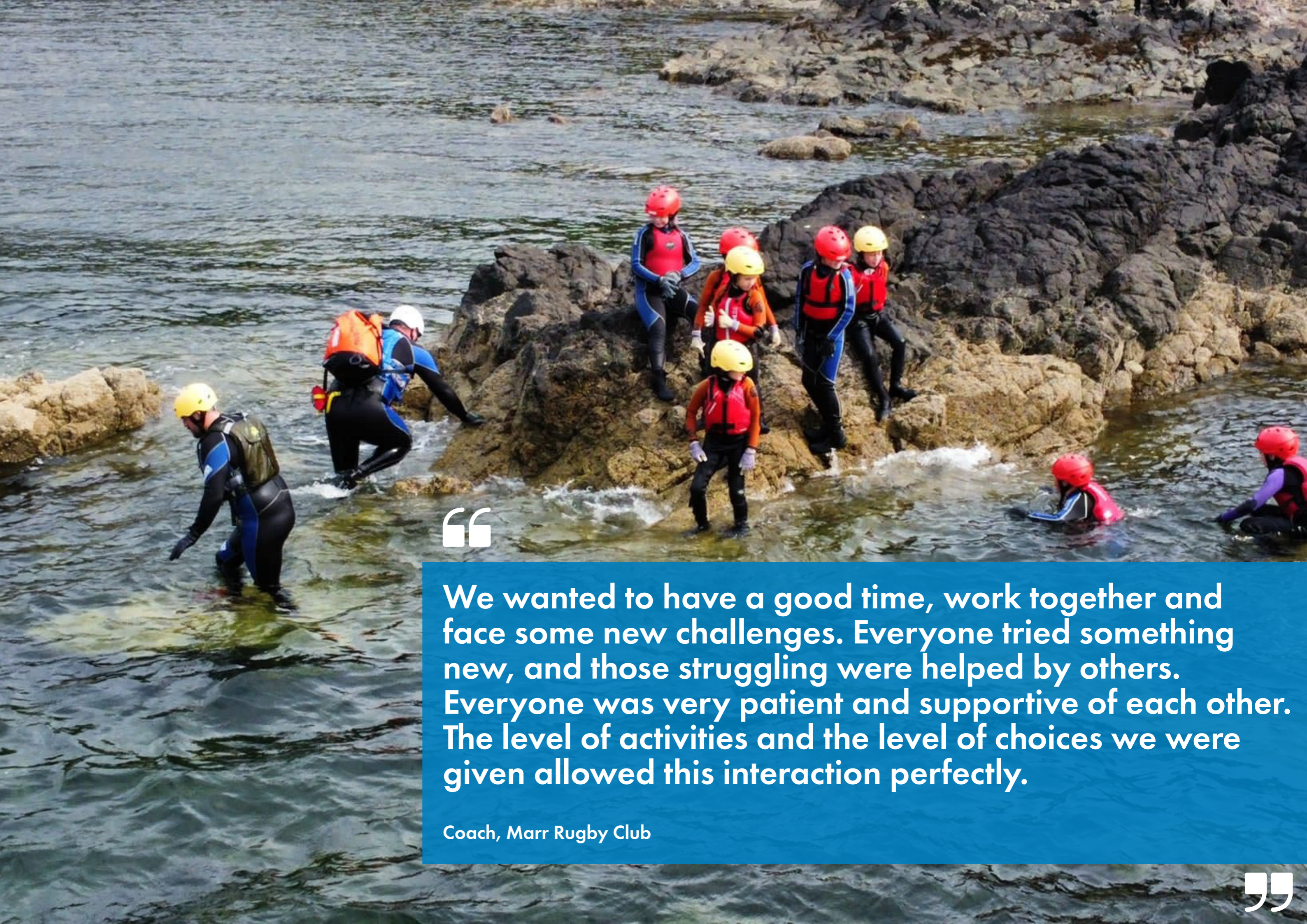
Female-only trips give girls a space they can fully participate and lead outdoor activities without fear of judgement or feeling overshadowed. This setting allows them to push personal boundaries, gain independence, and experience outdoor challenges on their own terms.

Activities like preparing for watersports or climbing can feel vulnerable. A female-only group creates a safe, supportive space where girls can feel comfortable and focus on the experience, without added worries about appearance or judgement. These trips foster connections among girls, promote teamwork and camaraderie in a supportive, empowering space. These friendships and shared experiences can encourage girls to pursue activities in future, knowing they have a network that understands and supports them.



Our goal was to provide an affordable adventurous day out for girls from Carrick District, and to make use of local facilities. The girls had a blast doing both the orienteering and the water sports and we were blessed with beautiful weather too.

Sharon, Group Leader



We wanted to have a good time, work together and face some new challenges. Everyone tried something new, and those struggling were helped by others. Everyone was very patient and supportive of each other. The level of activities and the level of choices we were given allowed this interaction perfectly.

Coach, Marr Rugby Club





August

Marr Rugby Club Under 18s visited Dolphin House for the first time for a residential programme focussing on goal setting, teambuilding and leadership.

Spotty Zebras visited Dolphin House for a family fun day with all activities adapted to meet the needs of young people with Additional Support Needs

September



October

John Kyrle School from Herordfordshire arrived at Dolphin House for a week long Geology study visiting some of South Ayrshire's most historic locations.

Culzean Primary School joined us at Dolphin House for their first visits following the development of the Maybole Community Campus.

November



Scottish Sport Futures took part in an action packed leadership programme. challenging young people to work together while pushing their comfort zones

December



Works began on the development of the Outdoor Classroom at Dolphin House complete with renewable energy pack

July



January

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Silver participants joined us for expedition training including navigation, camp craft and emergency procedures

Thriving Communities colleagues participated in Workforce Development Days designed to promote wellbeing and cohesion

February



Charlie Ellerton, Modern Apprentice represented Dolphin House at SportScotland's Inclusion Conference and achieved a Outstanding People Award in the Outstanding Trainee category

May



June

Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition programme was in full flow with young people from all 8 secondary schools involved



March

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Presentation took place at Troon Concert Hall with over 400 awards presented to South Ayrshire young people



April

Inspire paddling sessions took place on the River Ayr following the development of Access Steps, creating inclusive paddlesports opportunities



The greatest adventure is what lies ahead



A day at Dolphin House

07:45
Alarm call

08:30
Breakfast

09:30
Dorm
inspection

10:00
Outdoor
Activities

12:00
Lunch

13:00
Free time

13:30
Outdoor
activities

17:00
Evening
meal

18:00
Evening
activities

20:00
Showers

20:00
Supper

21:30
Bunkhouse

