

# Case Study: Carr Hill Primary School

Whithaugh Park is a unique Rock UK site located in the picturesque Scottish Borders.

Carr Hill Primary School in Gateshead has been visiting Whithaugh Park for over 20 years for outdoor residential adventures.

We talked to Headteacher Paul Harris about his experiences of bringing groups to the site.

## Please tell us a bit about your school and pupils

Around 70% of our school population is part of the free school meals programme. They come from deprived backgrounds and have often not had the opportunity to get away from the city and take a break from their day-to-day life.

It's part of our philosophy that the children should get to experience the outdoors from farm visits in Reception or Year One through to the residential adventures in Year 4 and 5.

We want to allow them to experience different ways of life, build their personal skills and show them new things.

## Why did you choose Whithaugh Park for your outdoor residential adventures?

After the council-run site that we were using unfortunately shut down, we looked for other venues for our outdoor experiences. We had tried another site but felt it wasn't the right fit. We were looking for somewhere we could participate in activities and have some autonomy over our time. We also wanted somewhere that aligned with the values of our school. We found all these things in Whithaugh Park and we love it there.

## What goals do you set for your groups or individuals for each visit to the centre?

The goals we set for each group or individual will vary depending on their needs.

It might look like improving their abseiling or climbing technique for some individuals. For others, it might just be about getting to the top of the wall. We never force anyone to do any of the activities. We want them to have respect for themselves, for each other and for the challenge in front of them.

Above all, we want them to try, fail, and succeed, working together as a team.



## What activities do you choose when you attend and why?

We attend Whithaugh Park early in the year when it can be pretty chilly. We've even had snow one year which was beautiful. With this in mind, we choose activities like archery, abseiling and high ropes.

They are great activities that the children enjoy and help their personal development.

For us, the downtime that we have to spend with the children is just as important as the activities. We use our time for different things like walks through the forests to the nearby village, putting on talent shows and enjoying the outdoors. All of these things are often new experiences for our students.



To find out more about a school residential adventure with Rock UK please visit:

[www.rockuk.org](http://www.rockuk.org)



## How does your time at Whithaugh Park help your students develop their personal skills?

As well as the scheduled activities, there are plenty of other opportunities for the children to experience different aspects of life to develop their personal skills.

For instance, both at school and at Whithaugh Park, we treat meals like a restaurant. They learn how to sit together, eat, socialise and relax. An experience that not everyone gets at home. It creates a key skill that's often taken for granted, so when they are older and out in the world, they will understand how to behave in these types of social situations.

Being away from home also helps them to gain some maturity and responsibility. They are encouraged to look after their belongings, take on new challenges and learn how to build friendships and trust with more people.

## Tell us about some of your favourite memories when you've seen a group or some individuals have a positive experience while at Whithaugh Park

We're in an area with a high proportion of resettlement programmes, which means we often have children from places like Afghanistan and Syria joining our school.

These children have been bullied, seen their parents persecuted, and experienced bombings and all manner of atrocities. When they come to places like Whithaugh, it's amazing to see them enjoy themselves and see how our existing pupils support them. They see what life can be when they can just be children.

Another memory I have is from a boy who had severe behavioural and emotional issues. He had been excluded from previous schools and is still experiencing these challenges.

When we were at Whithaugh, surrounded by the right adults, in the right environment, he had the space to flourish. We were able to connect with him and build trust that lasted back at school. His behaviour was still a problem, but we were able to establish rules and boundaries that helped him and us.



## What would you say to someone looking to book their next adventure with Rock UK at Whithaugh Park?

This is a great alternative to some of the mainstream locations for outdoor adventures.

It's a safe environment with high-quality food, a great swimming pool and a beautiful location. There are nearby forests, streams and a beautiful village where we have become part of the community when we visit.

The activities are extremely well-led by a team that is empathetic and understanding. They build relationships quickly with the children and help them as individuals. They go out of their way to support both the students and the teachers.



### Activities:

Archery | High Ropes | Abseiling

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