

Philosophy – Opportunity and Challenge

The philosophy of the Scheme is based on the belief that a civilized society depends upon the freedom, responsibility, intelligence and standards of behaviour of its individual members. Moreover, if the society is to continue to be civilized, it is believed that each succeeding generation must learn to value these qualities and standards. The Scheme aims to bring these rather abstract concepts down to earth, to give individual young people the opportunity to experience these ideas for themselves and based on the widest opportunity for individual choice.

Young people growing up are eager to grasp opportunities for enjoyment, for developing their personalities and for working out their place in a world of which the individual often seems an insignificant part. They show a willingness to accept substantial challenges if they see them to be worthwhile and to have a relevance to the needs of their own societies. They want to prove themselves, to create, to dare and to work out their relationship with friends and the wider community.

The Award is about individual challenge. As every individual is different, so too are the challenges that young people undertake to achieve their Award. With guidance from their Award Leader, Assessor or other Award volunteers, each young person should be encouraged to examine themselves, their interests, abilities, and ambitions, then set themselves challenges in the five different sections of the Award. These challenges should require persistence and determination to overcome. Along the way participants may feel daunted or want to give up, but at the end will have the satisfaction of knowing they overcame the challenges and succeeded, learning about themselves, their hidden depths of character and developing as human beings in the process.

It is important that these challenges are at the right level for the

individual participant – too easy and there will be no sense of real achievement, too difficult and the young person may give up in despair. Young people do not need to excel to achieve an Award, they simply need to set personally challenging goals for improvement and then strive to reach those goals. A demonstration of commitment will help a young person get out of the Award what they put in: essentially, there are no short cuts to a real sense of achievement.

Finally, to help young people overcome their fears and challenges, the Award provides them with opportunities to learn from experience. Kurt Hahn, among others, helped to develop the philosophy of “experiential learning”, a process of making meaning from direct experience.

“The aim of education is to impel people into value forming experiences... to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit... and above all, compassion... It is culpable neglect not to impel young people into experiences.” **Kurt Hahn**

The Award Scheme

The Scheme is a programme of practical, cultural and adventurous activities designed for use by all agencies having a concern for the development of young people; a programme flexible enough to meet their enthusiasms and aptitudes whatever their background or culture, however plentiful or limited their resources may be.

Participants follow their chosen activities, largely in their own time, with guidance from someone knowledgeable in the subjects. Minimum standards of achievement are laid down and when these are met they qualify for an internationally recognized Award. A badge and a certificate is presented to mark an attainment which represents the successful completion of a venture in co-operation between the

young and not-so-young, so that in this way, barriers between generations are eroded.

The Scheme is voluntary in that taking it up is a participant's free choice. It is not competitive since each individual is assessed on his or her progress, perseverance and achievement, and Awards are within reach of all. The Scheme is available to young people belonging to any organization or to none. They may take part individually or together with others of their own age group. In gaining their Awards, young people learn by experience the importance of self-discipline, enterprise and effort. They discover a great deal about themselves and come to know the enjoyment of working with and for other people.

Through a commitment to its programmes, young people will be acquiring self-reliance and a sense of responsibility both of which are essential qualities of citizenship. However, some faith in life is also important. So while it is neither possible nor desirable to test spiritual strength in the context of the Award Scheme, it is hoped that adults who help young people towards an Award will bear in mind, throughout their involvement, this aspect of growth and development .

Guiding principles

Individual

Individuals design their own programme, which can be tailored to suit their personal circumstances, choices and local provision. They start at whichever level suits them best and they can take as long as they wish (within the age limit) to achieve their Award.

Non-competitive

Doing their Award is a personal challenge and not a competition against others. Every participant's programme is tailor-made to reflect their individual starting point, abilities and interests.

Achievable

An Award is achievable by any individual who chooses to take up the challenge, regardless of ability, gender, background or location, with the right guidance and inspiration.

Voluntary

Whilst the Award may be offered within school, college, work time, custody or extra-curricular activity, individuals choose to do a programme and must commit some of their free time to undertake their activities

Development

Participating in their Award programme fosters personal and social development, Individuals gain valuable experiences and life skills, grow in confidence and become more aware of their environment and community transforming them into responsible young adults.

Balanced

The Award provides a balanced framework to develop the individual's mind, body and community spirit by engaging them in range of activities in up to five different challenges.

Progressive

At each level of engagement, the Award demands progressively more time, commitment and responsibility from the participant.

Inspiration

The Award inspires individuals to exceed their expectations. They are encouraged to set their own challenges and goals before starting an activity, aim for these goals and by showing improvement will achieve an Award.

Persistence

The Award requires persistence and cannot be completed with a

short burst of enthusiasm. Participants are encouraged to continue with activities and to maintain their interest beyond their programme requirements

Enjoyable

Participants and Leaders should find the Award enjoyable, fulfilling and rewarding.

Benefits to young people

On achieving an Award and into the future, a young person should have developed many of the following highly transferable skills, behaviors and attitudes:

- Self-belief and self-confidence
- A positive and realistic self-image – they will know and accept their own strengths and weaknesses, and be more aware of their own potential
- An independent and self-motivating attitude
- A sense of responsibility to others
- A connection to their broader society
- New or improved interests, skills, and abilities
- A willingness to try new things
- New friendships and relationships with their peers and other generations
- The ability to make a plan and then make their plan happen
- Lifelong interests
- Life skills – health, negotiation, research, communication, problem solving, presentation skills
- Team skills