

TOUCH

DISCOVERING OUR WORLD
THROUGH HAPTIC & NATURAL TOUCH

Feeling the Untouchable:
A practical, tactile toolkit designed for *all* teachers to engage students with learning outdoors.

Student Age
8-13

"Touch helps you, like, describe them better when you can feel them."

WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR?

Feeling the Untouchable is a research-informed, multi-modal resource kit that engages students with the **sense of touch** to design and lead personal and creative inquiries in their school grounds.

Activities are particularly suited for the primary-secondary transition, to introduce students to their local environment and to take positive action on wider sustainability issues.

These activities were first piloted with S1 students at Tynecastle High School with support from classroom teacher, Kathy Johnson, and transition teacher Sam Gilbertson. Feedback on how they can be adapted for use in a variety of contexts, including feeder primaries, is sought.

"That made me happy because it reminds me of primary school."

WHY THIS RESOURCE?

In a world that is increasingly urbanised, digitised and artificially constructed, young people are less exposed to the diversity and richness of textures that enable wildlife to thrive in a human-centred environment.

The central idea is to prompt, encourage and foster tactile curiosity to help students to ***learn to notice*** the natural world, by making detailed and accurate observations of how things ***feel***, how they ***change at the touch*** and how they may ***feel to other creatures***.

For example, students can learn to distinguish and describe the properties of different soils, by feeling their grittiness, stickiness or graininess. These abilities are important for a scientist, as they may be for an artist or a farmer, as well as a common citizen as part of general skills for study, life and work.

This resource pack focuses specifically on the sense of touch as a hidden sense, that can be rediscovered as a primary sense for all students, integrating outdoor experiences, digital technologies, and arts-based approaches.

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CONNECTION WITH THE CURRICULUM

Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan affirms sustainable learning settings as an entitlement for all learners, through **curriculum**, **culture**, **community**, and **campus**, with emphasis on learner voice, place, partnerships, climate and social justice, and outdoor learning (Scottish Government, 2023), in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

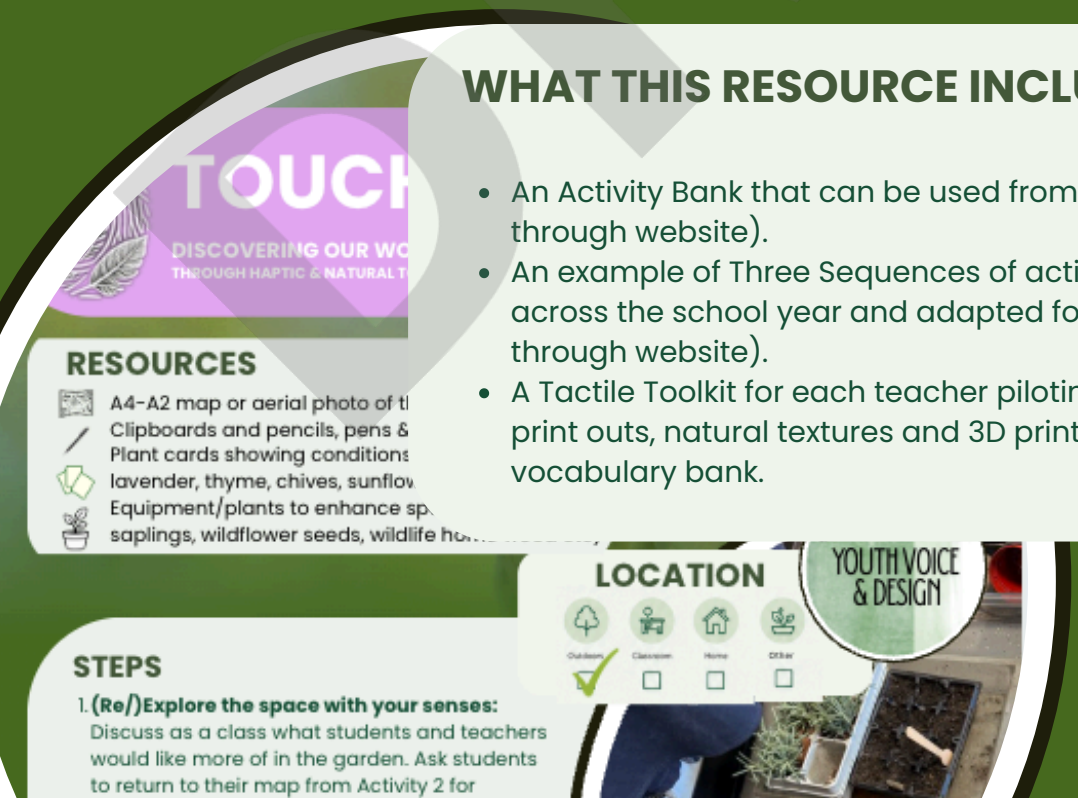
The resources also align with the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change strategy in English schools, as well as the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum.

DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE, INQUIRY AND ACTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Taking an inquiry-led and student-centred ethos, these activities promote:

- **Tactile curiosity** to engage with the physical environment (Campus)
- **Collabortive inquiry skills** with students working together to develop the school grounds for people and wildlife: e.g. investigations into our soil types, and variety of species, plants and textures supporting wildlife (Curriculum)
- **Design** of an outdoor space and **planting** vegetables for food growing and food production (Campus and Curriculum)
- **Inclusive culture,** with teaching staff, catering staff, pupils and families coming together to share the resulting action, enjoy the space and/or cook and transform the produce (Community and Culture)

WHAT THIS RESOURCE INCLUDES



- An Activity Bank that can be used from P6-P7 to S1-S2 levels (available through website).
- An example of Three Sequences of activities that can be integrated across the school year and adapted for primary settings (available through website).
- A Tactile Toolkit for each teacher piloting the resources e.g. a box with print outs, natural textures and 3D printed textures, and a tactile vocabulary bank.

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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

The activities are divided into three strands, that can be sequenced:

- **Back in Touch**: To encourage students **to value the sense of touch** in everyday life e.g. to notice and compare textures of the environment; uncover emotions; start conducting simple inquiries outside.
- **Hidden Environments**: to introduce students **to use touch in a skillful way** to design real-world inquiries as citizen scientists and collect actionable data on key changes, for example, because of rainfall, droughts, or human intervention.
- **Conscious Action:** to support students **to communicate, collaborate, and act** in and for the environment, drawing directly on tactile experiences and inquiries.

KEY PRINCIPLES

This resource is grounded in this set of key principles

- The sense of touch is engaged to gain **understanding of oneself** as well as to generate interest in **inquiry-led learning**;
- The sense of touch may help to slow down observations, inspire ideas (e.g. biomimicry), and **make science learning more personal**;
- Students need to be aware that **not all creatures are amenable to be touched**, and this is a right to be respected;
- Teachers should encourage students to reflect on **the importance for some environments to be 'hidden'** from action by humans;
- There is an ethics of touch, that is not just for manipulation but for engaging in **practices of care**;
- Tactile curiosity may support **artistic abilities and precision of communication** with others.
- Educators in school should be respectful of **children's needs as well as their rights** when introducing them to different spaces in the school (incl. Outdoors). Consider options beyond learning, such as to be creative, to communicate widely, to enjoy convivial activities, and to feel well in general.



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